



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2885th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Friday, 16 May 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Kiladze

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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 Iraq (continued) (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** said that the Labour Code (Act No. 37 of 2015) prohibited the employment of children under 15 years of age. According to the Code, persons who employed children under that age were liable for fines of up to 5 million dinars (ID). Iraq had ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). In cooperation with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), the Government had implemented campaigns to raise awareness of the consequences of child labour, including the increased risk of school dropout, and the punishments applicable to persons who violated child labour laws.
3. Financial assistance was provided to poor families in order to mitigate the harmful effects of poverty on the enjoyment of children's rights. Since the election of the current Government in 2022, the number of persons benefiting from social assistance programmes had increased to over 2.35 million. Financial assistance was provided to families with school-age children, benefiting over 2 million children enrolled in school and enabling a large number of children to return to school. The Government cooperated with international organizations, including ILO and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), with a view to eradicating child labour. In collaboration with ILO, the Government had launched a system for monitoring child labour and providing support to children engaged in labour. It had also launched a skills development programme that had benefited more than 3,700 children and young persons. In cooperation with ILO, the Government had rolled out a national campaign to combat the worst forms of child labour, which had benefited more than 10,000 children and their families. The campaign included awareness-raising activities in schools in areas where child labour was most prevalent. The Government was implementing a project to extract children from the worst forms of child labour and to train older siblings to undertake income-generating activities.
4. In cooperation with UNICEF and ILO, child protection units had been established in a number of governorates to increase the capacity of the authorities to respond effectively to reports of child labour. Special programmes were implemented in areas that had been liberated from Da'esh in order to support children who had been forced to leave school, engage in work or join an armed group. Beneficiaries of the programmes were given psychological and social support and were reintegrated into the education system or vocational training programmes. Work was currently under way to launch a comprehensive national plan to eliminate child labour by 2030. In line with the Sustainable Development Goals, a strategy to promote decent work had been implemented.
5. Inspection teams established under the Labour Code visited places of employment and recorded instances of child labour that were in violation of the law. A large number of such cases had been identified and legal action had been taken. Persons violating child labour laws were issued with warnings or fines or were referred to the courts. Children who had dropped out of school in order to work had been enrolled in fast-track education programmes and awarded school certificates. The general census conducted in 2024 showed that 4.5 per cent of children were engaged in some form of work.
6. The employment of children between the ages of 15 and 18 was subject to strict conditions. Such children could not be employed in hazardous or unhealthy work and could not work for more than seven hours per day or be employed at night or on late shifts. Children had the right to earn the same wage as adults undertaking the same job. Working children received regular medical examinations to monitor their physical and mental development. They had the right to a safe working environment that was free from violence, coercion and exploitation. Work undertaken by children must not interfere with their enjoyment of the right to education.

7. According to the Ministry of Planning, more than 60 per cent of working children were employed in the informal sector, which hindered efforts to monitor them. Although the number of inspectors employed by the Ministry of Labour was insufficient, given the size of the labour market, the Government was working with ILO to support inspection teams and step up the measures taken to protect children. Inspectors carried out regular visits to workplaces, including special visits to monitor child labour. In 2019, 225 such visits had been conducted and over 100 children engaged in labour had been identified. A total of 227 warnings had been issued to employers, 259 training courses had been held and 296 cases had been referred to the courts.

8. In 2020, during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, inspection teams had continued to conduct visits to places of employment. Children found to be working had been referred to the authorities, warnings had been issued to employers, cases had been referred to the courts and the children concerned had been enrolled in training or education courses.

9. **A representative of Iraq** said that the budget allocated to the Ministry of Health, which had risen significantly in recent years, was used to fund health programmes for women and children, to purchase life-saving medicines and to refurbish hospitals and health centres, especially in remote areas. Over the previous two years, a significant number of new hospitals, emergency rooms and operating theatres had been opened. New health centres and clinics had been established throughout Iraq, including in rural and remote areas. More than 40 centres specializing in oncology, diabetes, endocrinology, tuberculosis, blood diseases and dentistry, among other areas, had been opened. A total of 164 hospitals, 21 specialist centres, and 86 primary healthcare centres had been renovated or expanded, and a 150-bed hospital specializing in the treatment of childhood cancers had been opened in Baghdad. The country's first department specializing in the surgical treatment of congenital heart defects in children had been opened. It was equipped with the latest medical technology and had 4 operating theatres, 20 intensive care beds and a 30-bed children's ward. It also included a recreation room and a children's play area.

10. Neonatal wards with incubators had been opened and a multidisciplinary clinical care system had been implemented in more than 50 health centres to prevent patients from having to move between hospitals to receive different types of treatment. A total of 149 clinics provided specialist care in a range of areas, including general surgery, dermatology, ophthalmology and orthopaedics. Family planning services were provided in over 100 health centres.

11. Under the National Immunization Programme, the Government coordinated with the relevant authorities to deliver vaccines to vulnerable and at-risk groups, including displaced persons, refugees, asylum-seekers, children in orphanages, prisoners and persons living in remote areas. Under the Public Health Act, it was mandatory for all children to be vaccinated in the first years of their lives. The issuance of identity documents to children had been made conditional on their completing an immunization programme. Around 88 per cent of children in kindergarten and 91 per cent of children in primary school had completed their vaccination programmes. A campaign to vaccinate children who had dropped out of school was also being implemented, and around 43,000 children living in refugee camps had been vaccinated. The Government was planning to launch a lifelong immunization programme in 2025 that would provide vaccination services to the entire population, irrespective of their gender, ethnicity, religion or nationality.

12. More than 1,800 health organizations made use of health data management software and an integrated online platform was used to manage the vaccine supply chain. As of January 2024, Iraq had completed the polio transition process, which involved shifting responsibility for the eradication of polio from the Global Polio Eradication Initiative to national health systems. Iraq had joined the Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health, and had been declared free of trachoma.

13. A screening programme had been launched to promote early diagnosis of genetic diseases in newborns. More than 6.95 million children had visited health centres in 2023, and the cognitive, linguistic, social and motor development of nearly 3 million children was being monitored under the Early Childhood Development Programme. The Ministry of Health, in cooperation with international organizations, was taking measures to combat child obesity.

In that connection, classes on health and nutrition were taught in schools and campaigns were conducted to raise children's awareness of the importance of eating a healthy diet and being physically active. Health workers were trained to provide nutritional advice to children.

14. Steps were being taken to reduce the amount of sugar and fat in school meals and school nutrition programmes were being run in coordination with the Ministry of Education. Children in schools were regularly screened for early signs of obesity or eating disorders and schools were supported in their efforts to provide physical education classes, sports facilities and community sports events for children.

15. Iron and vitamin tablets were distributed at health centres to pregnant women and children. Iron supplements were distributed under school health programmes, and pregnant women and children under 5 years of age were regularly tested for anaemia. Measures were taken to raise mothers' awareness of the importance of a healthy diet and to promote food security for poor families. The Government supported humanitarian organizations that provided subsidized food to children. The Early Childhood Development Strategy was being expanded to more than 350 health centres and 95 centres were now implementing an integrated newborn and child healthcare programme. A total of 86 health centres – 21 of them in areas liberated from Da'esh – were implementing family health programmes.

16. A manual for medical staff responsible for implementing the integrated newborn and child healthcare programme had been updated and a guidebook on healthcare for parents had been published. Under the Early Childhood Development Strategy, informational materials covering the various stages of child development had been printed and distributed. In schools and kindergartens, most newly enrolled pupils underwent nutritional assessments, hearing tests, eye tests, psychological assessments and dental examinations. Measures were taken to ensure the safety of drinking water in schools and to keep bathrooms and toilets in good condition. School buildings were adapted to the needs of children with disabilities.

17. Under a national strategy for improving the health of schoolchildren for the period 2024–2030, over 90 per cent of pupils in nursery or primary education had received health examinations. More than 4,700 pairs of glasses had been provided to schoolchildren in 2025, compared with approximately 2,800 in 2024, and children with vision issues were referred to ophthalmology clinics. Nearly 190 school medical units had been set up to provide children with hearing tests and other essential care; those found to have hearing issues and had been referred to specialist medical centres. Psychological support services had been made available at some schools. More than 1,250 children had been examined at psychological health centres and, if necessary, provided with follow-up care. Nearly 95 per cent of nursery school children and more than 90 per cent of children in primary schools had undergone nutritional assessments. Children suffering from malnutrition were referred to medical centres and received nutritional advice. More than 70 per cent of children had been provided with vitamin A to combat anaemia. Some 99 per cent of children with special needs had been able to attend special classes.

18. Obstetric care services were provided at medical centres and in hospitals with delivery rooms. Programmes were being run to monitor the causes and reduce the number of neonatal deaths and to diagnose hereditary diseases early. More than 700 medical centres performed health tests on newborn infants. Hospitals and medical centres provided family planning assistance to women who had given birth or undergone miscarriages. The number of early childhood care centres had been increased to 350 and the number of centres providing comprehensive care for children had been increased by 95 per cent. Under an early childhood care programme, 70 medical centres provided nutritional services and additional care for children under the age of 5. The number of mothers who breastfed their children for at least six months had risen by 10 per cent. Provision of psychological care services had risen by 11 per cent in 2023.

19. Under a strategy for improving the health of mothers and children, the Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region delivered free services through 235 units providing basic healthcare, 7 specialist hospitals, 7 maternity wards and other facilities. Between 2022 and 2023, the maternal mortality rate had declined and the number of births attended by specialist doctors had risen by 96 per cent. In 2024, vitamin and iron supplements had been dispensed

to pregnant and breastfeeding women and more than 4,600 children suffering from acute malnutrition had received care.

20. The Government was drafting a law prohibiting the sale of tobacco to children under the age of 18 and a parliamentary commission on health had proposed prohibiting the import, production, marketing and sale of electronic cigarettes. The prohibition of smoking in schools was monitored by the Ministry of Health, and an anti-smoking initiative had been developed in which 1,200 schools would participate.

21. In 2021, the Council of Ministers had approved a document on the country's nationally determined contribution to the global response to climate change. The document, which had been drafted in collaboration with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and national partners, set out the country's vision for meeting its commitments to combat climate change, including those made under the Paris Agreement, and to diversify its resources through renewable and sustainable energy programmes, with a view to transitioning to low-carbon technologies. The first report submitted by Iraq to the secretariat of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in 2016 included information on the country's greenhouse gas emissions and steps that the Government was taking to combat and mitigate climate change in different sectors; the directorate for climate change was currently preparing the second report, in collaboration with the United Nations.

22. The national adaptation plan set out steps for combating climate change by strengthening and integrating adaptation capacities and measures into all sectors and at all levels. The plan, which was currently being finalized in collaboration with the United Nations Environment Programme and national partners, covered 13 different sectors. More information on the plan would be published at the end of 2025. In collaboration with United Nations partners and NGOs, documents had been drafted on climate change mitigation programmes in the national context and the technical and financial requirements for their implementation, and on the country's technological needs in the energy, agriculture, industry and water resources sectors in the context of climate change. A technical plan of action had been developed that would be implemented through various actions on the basis of a ministerial road map. A national framework document for facilitating the country's transition to a low-carbon economy and better adapting it to climate change was currently being drafted in collaboration with UNDP and national partners. It also envisaged funding strategies to be implemented in cooperation with the Green Climate Fund.

23. **A representative of Iraq** said that all national and denominational minorities in Iraq enjoyed the same rights as other citizens and none were discriminated against under any laws, which were, if anything, intended to discriminate in favour of such groups. Legal quotas for members of minorities were set forth in the laws regulating elections and the civil service. Members of minorities participated in decision-making at the national level and had nine seats reserved for them in the parliament. The vice-president of the parliament was a Feyli Kurd and ten governors were members of minorities, as were five members of the Council of Ministers. Five seats in the Government of Kurdistan Region were also reserved for members of minority groups.

24. The rights and privileges enjoyed by members of minorities had encouraged many families to come back to the country. In fact, more than 7,300 Christian children had been able to return to their places of origin with their families, as had nearly 54,700 Yazidi children and 38 Sabeen-Mandaean children. Seventy-nine NGOs were working ceaselessly to promote the rights of minorities, particularly children, and to uphold the implementation of the Convention. The best interests of the child were taken into consideration at all times, as was the right of children to freedom of expression, which was anchored in Iraqi tradition. The country applied a principle of positive discrimination in favour of children from minorities. Four Christian churches and nearly 22 Turkmen and Shabak mosques had been restored under a programme to reverse the destruction wrought by Da'esh.

25. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Kurdistan Regional Government undertook to ensure that children with disabilities received the services they required and the Council of Ministers had launched a fund for supporting such children. There were currently 72,000 persons with disabilities in the Region, and the Regional Government had taken steps to

support them that included opening five care centres in cooperation with UNICEF. Some 35,000 children now benefited from procedural and institutional protection.

26. Free health and dental care was available for children in need while care centres provided healthcare services to nearly 75 per cent of children with disabilities. The Regional Government had provided support to around 185,000 boys and girls who had been abducted by Da'esh, and some 1,000 survivors had been sent to Germany to receive additional healthcare. The Ministry of Health in Kurdistan Region had developed databases containing comprehensive information on children with disabilities with a view to upholding their rights, and a rehabilitation programme for persons with disabilities had been set up. Some 45 regional and interregional organizations cooperated with the Regional Government to support persons with disabilities. A code for raising awareness of the rights of persons with autism had been established. Wheelchairs were provided by care centres.

27. A large number of procedures and laws had been adopted with a view to upholding the rights of religious and other minorities. Since 2003, the Ministry of Endowments had issued guidelines for the construction and restoration of places of worship.

28. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he would welcome information on the content of the child protection bill and the proposed timeline for its enactment, given how long it had already been under discussion. He would also welcome information on child marriage, on a reported amendment to the Personal Status Act that would allow children as young as 9 years old to marry and on the institution of temporary marriage (*mut'ah* marriage), specifically the minimum age to enter into such a union, the fate of children born of such unions and the rights of the wife after the union had ended. He wondered whether the practice of forcing girls to marry their cousins was still followed and, if so, as of what age, and whether the exemption to the forced marriage ban was still in force.

29. He was curious to know whether the Government intended to disseminate and enforce the decision of the Federal Supreme Court which specified that there was no legal right to inflict corporal punishment on children. Were there any plans to amend the relevant Criminal Code provision, which was evidently unclear if the Federal Court had had to rule on it? He was also curious as to whether there was a confidential, child-friendly complaint mechanism and how strictly the prohibition of torture was enforced, including in detention centres. He would be interested in hearing about the prevalence of female genital mutilation, particularly in Kurdistan Region, and about any measures being taken to counter that practice. Information on any demining and other weapons-clearance programmes would also be of interest.

30. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Task Force) said that the Committee would be grateful to receive more detailed information on the tangible impact of the increase in resource allocations to the healthcare sector. Information would also be useful concerning the impact on children of the rise in drug use in the State Party, the measures taken to remedy that situation and the effect of the enforcement of the Narcotics and Psychotropic Substances Act.

31. **Ms. Ianachevici** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome an explanation of the expanded role of the religious courts in family matters, as well as information on how the State Party intended to ensure that children's rights were not adversely affected by the courts' rulings.

32. **Mr. Jaffé** said that the programmes relating to domestic violence, developed with support from the World Health Organization, were wholly inadequate given the endemic nature of violence against children in the State Party. In that connection, he wished to know why the State Party had not been among the more than 100 countries at the Global Ministerial Conference on ending violence against children, held in Bogotá in November 2024, and what steps it was taking to expand the coverage of the children's helpline beyond Kurdistan Region.

33. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi**, noting that the Committee's objective was to support the State Party in implementing the Convention, said that the Committee would welcome the delegation's comments on the deeply concerning reports that the Personal Status Act would be amended to reduce the minimum marriageable age to 9 years. It was particularly worrying that marriage contracts might be concluded by the various religious authorities outside the

formal legal system, which would lead to further discrepancies among communities and would seriously undermine family, and ultimately social, cohesion. It would also be helpful to understand how the State Party defined and determined the best interests of the child, especially in cases of early marriage and in the light of the fact that most authorizations for underage marriage were granted to girls rather than boys.

34. **Ms. Taleb Moussa**, inviting the State Party to keep an open mind with regard to the points being raised by the Committee, notably the concern about the possible lowering of the marriageable age, said that she wished to know what measures were in place to protect vulnerable girls from *mut'ah* marriages and whether there were any school programmes for the promotion of a gender perspective. Did rape victims have access to contraceptive medication? She also wished to know what measures were being taken or envisaged to address school dropout, especially in rural areas and among girls, and whether, in the case of polygamous unions, husbands were required to undergo medical tests for HIV/AIDS. She remained highly concerned about the provisions in the Criminal Code under which husbands could discipline to their wives, almost as if the latter were animals, and she hoped that action would be taken to rectify that situation before the State Party's next periodic report.

35. **Ms. Scerri Ferrante** said that she wished to hear more about measures in place for children who could not be reintegrated into their family, the authority that regulated and monitored children's residential care homes, the mechanisms for ensuring that the relevant authorities were made aware of the cases of children who were being harmed or were at risk thereof and any programmes to support children of incarcerated parents. It would be useful to know what appeal procedures were available to migrant children, especially unaccompanied minors, and how age assessments were conducted, by whom and whether they were appealable.

36. **Ms. Correa** said that it was her understanding that some lawmakers had denounced the fact that there had not been quorum at the time of the adoption of the amendment allowing children to marry as of age 9, thus opening the law up for appeal. In that context, she wished to know whether the child protection agency or any other party had sought to have the amendment repealed and, if not, how the State Party reconciled the amendment with its strategy for the prevention of sexual exploitation.

37. **Ms. Aho** said that she would be interested in hearing how, given the number of refugees and displaced persons in the country, the State Party ensured that polio did not resurface and how it tackled the issue of zero-dose children, especially those without identity documents. She also wished to know what was being done to address tuberculosis, high road traffic deaths among children, overweight, early detection of disability and obstetric fistulas.

The meeting was suspended at 11.40 a.m. and resumed at 12.05 p.m.

38. **A representative of Iraq** said that, to offset possible interpretation difficulties, the delegation would reply to some of the repeat questions in writing. He also wished to draw the Committee's attention to the importance of drawing information only from official sources.

39. **A representative of Iraq** said that the amended Personal Status Act had not been imposed by the Government but, rather, was the fruit of two democratic processes: firstly, tabling by parliamentarians, who had been elected in internationally recognized elections; secondly, broad public consultations in which even the media and foreign diplomatic officials had been involved. He urged the Committee not to rely on media sources but to go directly to the law, which would show that its concerns were unfounded.

40. The Personal Status Act – both the original Act and its new iteration – established 18 years as the minimum marriageable age, with possible exceptions as young as 15 years. However, there was no provision allowing 9-year-olds to marry, which might be possible under sharia but not under the Act. For an early marriage to be authorized, the children must approach the court themselves. Then both fathers had to approve the union and a medical certificate attesting to the children's mental and physical capacity had to be obtained. There were no religious courts in Iraq; however, to facilitate certain procedures, offices had been set up where couples could register their marriage. The offices would be strictly regulated under the new Act, and only marriage contracts signed by a State court would be valid.

Violations of the regulations would carry the penalty of 3 to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine.

41. **A representative of Iraq** said that the Federal Supreme Court was the highest court in the country and its judgments were binding and final. It had the power to interpret the law and to require lower courts to follow its interpretations. In 2019, it had ruled not only that article 41 of the Criminal Code did not permit violence against children or wives, but also that anyone who breached the article, including parents, husbands and teachers, was liable to punishment under the Code. Cases of corporal punishment fell under the jurisdiction of the community police service.

42. **A representative of Iraq** said that various departments and institutions had been created within the Ministry of the Interior to ensure the security of Iraqi society, including the Directorate for Protecting Families and Children from Domestic Violence, the directorate to combat human trafficking and the community police service. The results that had been obtained by those entities were excellent and sometimes exceeded what had been achieved in many other countries around the world.

43. Combating begging was one of the biggest challenges currently facing his country. To address the issue, the Ministry had, inter alia, run family support programmes in partnership with the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, developed legislation criminalizing begging and the exploitation of children, organized awareness-raising campaigns carried out by mobile police units, taken measures in partnership with international organizations and established rehabilitation centres for children engaged in begging. Moreover, the Government had launched a major campaign involving various public agencies with the aim of returning such children to their families and receiving a commitment from the parents that their offspring would not return to the street. All relevant law enforcement agencies and NGOs had been asked to report all the cases of begging they came across during their work on the ground.

44. The Trafficking in Persons Act envisaged both sanctions for perpetrators and protection measures for victims. The Ministry of the Interior and other stakeholders provided victims with all the forms of protection set out in the Act, including safe accommodation in shelters. Forced labour, slavery, the slave trade, trafficking in women and children and the sex trade were all prohibited under article 37 (3) of the Constitution, and the national strategy for the protection of children for the period 2023–2026 included a section on human trafficking. In 2024, around 1,800 people had been arrested for human trafficking or related offences, including sexual exploitation, trafficking in human organs, begging and the sale of children. Given the serious, complex and transnational nature of the crime, stronger ties had been established between the Ministry and the security and intelligence services, in order to allow greater sharing of information and the investment of greater resources in that area.

45. The Ministry of the Interior chaired an interministerial committee that had been formed to oversee the implementation of the national anti-drug strategy for the period 2025–2030. The Ministry also worked alongside partners to run awareness-raising and information campaigns, including a programme undertaken in collaboration with the Ministry of Education to inform educators and councillors about how to deal with cases of drug abuse. Random drug testing was conducted on members of the public in different sectors of society but, in accordance with the Government's modern approach, drug addicts were considered to be victims rather than criminals. In that regard, 16 rehabilitation centres had been established to ensure their safety and reintegration into society. Iraq had adopted a leading role in convening regional conferences and events to combat the trade in illicit drugs and had signed a number of bilateral agreements in that area. Many international criminal networks had been dismantled thanks to the country's engagement in international cooperation. The United Nations had praised the efforts of the Ministry of the Interior to confiscate illicit drugs and dismantle drug networks, as a result of which fewer drugs were circulating illegally. The 911 hotline had been set up to enable the public to report incidents related to illicit drugs and other issues that fell under the purview of the Ministry.

46. The Ministry, which had confiscated more than 89,000 weapons, chaired a national committee to regulate the movement and use of arms in Iraq. Since many Iraqi citizens took pride in owning weapons, the Ministry had launched a campaign through which it offered to

purchase the most dangerous weapons from members of the public. Plans had been made to establish a database containing records of all light firearms owned by citizens, and the Government also worked in partnership with the Global Firearms Programme.

47. **A representative of Iraq** said that, following the first reading of the child protection bill, a committee had been established to review the proposed legislation and suggest amendments to align it more closely with the Convention. The new law would offer protection to all persons under 18 years of age who held Iraqi citizenship or who were resident in Iraq. It was intended to guarantee a comprehensive range of rights for all children, including the right to life, the right to protection against all forms of neglect, exploitation, abuse and violence, the right to nationality, the right to have a name that did not humiliate them and the right to express their opinion. It also prohibited enslavement, the slave trade and the involvement of children in armed conflicts or in prostitution or pornography.

48. In addition, the bill provided for the transferral of guardianship in cases where a child's parents were failing to assume their parental responsibilities. It also envisioned the creation of a children's health card to facilitate the provision of healthcare services, and it laid down a series of actions to be taken by schools to prevent illness, accidents and the spread of communicable diseases, and to raise awareness about the dangers of smoking. Lastly, the bill envisaged a range of measures intended to guarantee children's cultural rights, including the creation of cultural centres in the different governorates, the dedication of a share of media and press output to educational and cultural activities for children and initiatives to promote digital awareness.

49. Regardless of the status of the child protection bill, the State already provided parentless children with all the social, healthcare and educational support they required.

50. **A representative of Iraq** said that the use of corporal punishment in schools was prohibited by law. Such practices were a flagrant violation of children's rights and dignity and were incompatible with his country's international obligations. The State and Public Sector Employees Disciplinary Act provided for disciplinary measures against any teachers or headteachers found to have harmed the health of their pupils. Every year, the Ministry of Education published clear instructions on the absolute prohibition of corporal punishment and disseminated them to all schools. Inspection committees were formed to investigate allegations of corporal punishment and offenders were liable to face criminal charges, particularly if their actions were deemed to have constituted psychological or social abuse.

51. The Ministry of Education had incorporated the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations into school textbooks, and special committees had been established to monitor any violations of children's rights in schools. Legal action could be taken against schools found to have violated the rights of their pupils.

52. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck**, thanking the State Party for its contribution to an important and fruitful dialogue, said that the proposed law on child protection sounded very promising. While it was to be hoped that the bill would be passed into legislation very soon, he wished to remind the delegation that legislative measures alone were not enough. Once adopted, the Government must take the further steps necessary to implement the new law, including through the allocation of sufficient budgetary resources, and to raise awareness of its provisions among children.

53. The State Party still faced many challenges in respect of its implementation of the Convention, not least in relation to the high numbers of refugees that it received from the Syrian Arab Republic. The Committee would be interested to know what measures the Government intended to take to address the needs of the child refugees who were entering the country. Generally speaking, the Committee was happy to hear that there was strong political will to uphold children's rights and that the Federal Supreme Court took the Convention into account when considering cases concerning children. However, children did not read the Court's decisions so proactive measures were needed to inform them about their rights.

54. **A representative of Iraq** said that the dialogue had provided his country with an important opportunity to highlight the progress that it had made towards implementing the Committee's previous recommendations. It had also revealed the nature of the challenges

that the Government had faced and continued to face in relation to its efforts to uphold children's rights. His delegation had listened with much interest to the contributions of the Committee, and the Government would give a great deal of attention to the concluding observations when formulating future policies, laws and programmes relating to the rights of children.

55. **A representative of Iraq**, thanking the Committee members for their input to the dialogue, said that his Government welcomed the Committee's efforts to analyse the progress made and identify the challenges ahead. It was to be hoped that his country could build on its constructive collaboration with the Committee with a view to shaping a better future for the children of Iraq. The delegation would provide written replies to all questions and issues that remained unaddressed, including information on relevant national legislation, meaning that the Committee would not need to consult the unreliable information provided via social media or other unverifiable sources.

56. **The Chair** said that she wished to assure the delegation that the Committee did not rely on information disseminated via social media or the yellow press. It received submissions from various sources, and one of the aims of the constructive dialogue was to establish the veracity of the information in its possession. The concluding observations would reflect the reality on the ground in Iraq, taking into account both the State Party's achievements and the challenges that it faced.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.