



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 2890th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 20 May 2025, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Kiladze

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* No summary records were issued for the 2886th to 2889th meetings.

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

Consideration of reports of States Parties *(continued)*

Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Romania (CRC/C/ROU/6-7; CRC/C/ROU/QPR/6-7)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Romania joined the meeting.*
2. **A representative of Romania**, introducing her country's combined sixth and seventh periodic reports (CRC/C/ROU/6-7), said that, in recent years, Romania had experienced profound changes and pressures at the national, regional and global levels. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had exposed the vulnerabilities in the country's education, health and child protection systems. The arrival in Romania of thousands of children and families fleeing the war in Ukraine represented both a humanitarian and institutional challenge. The Government had rapidly mobilized to provide emergency care, protection, psychosocial support and schooling to the children concerned. It had established the region's first "Blue Dot" support hub for Ukrainian children and families and had begun to use the Child Protection Information Management System (CPIMS+) to register and manage the cases of almost 40,000 refugee children.
3. The Government had taken steps to integrate the principles set out in the European Union Strategy on the Rights of the Child into national policies and strategies. Efforts were under way to implement the 2023–2030 national action plan for giving effect to the European Child Guarantee, the aim of which was to reduce the number of children at risk of poverty or social exclusion by at least 500,000 by 2030; most of the €19 billion earmarked for the plan would be provided by the European Union.
4. Protecting and ensuring the realization of children's rights remained at the heart of the country's social development and human rights agenda. Recent efforts had focused on consolidating the child rights framework and pursuing key structural reforms. Between 2022 and 2024, the proportion of children at risk of poverty and social exclusion had fallen from 41.5 to 33.8 per cent. Relevant measures included the adoption of Law No. 100/2024, which set out amendments to a number of laws on social assistance aimed at improving the way in which local social services were organized, financed, monitored and evaluated. The Law also provided for the introduction of the minimum social assistance package, as part of which social workers cooperated with community nurses, school counsellors, health and educational mediators and other specialists to prevent poverty and social exclusion. At least 80 per cent of the financing for the package would eventually be drawn from the State budget. Another significant measure had been the implementation of Emergency Ordinance No. 96/2024 on the provision of humanitarian support and assistance to foreign nationals or stateless persons fleeing the armed conflict in Ukraine, the purpose of which was to establish a legal framework to guarantee refugees' access to education, health and protection services and social benefits.
5. In December 2024, Law No. 272/2004 on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights had been amended to ensure that children were able to participate in public decision-making processes through the organization of consultations and the development of tools that would facilitate their meaningful involvement.
6. Several programmes designed to support the implementation of national strategies in the area of children's rights had been launched with financial assistance from the European Union. As part of such programmes, steps had been taken to improve the 119 hotline service for reporting cases of abuse, neglect, exploitation and any other form of violence against children. Community services for children and families were being enhanced in order to prevent family separation and promote the reunification of children being cared for within the special protection system with their relatives. Some 200 integrated community centres and 150 day-care centres for children, including rehabilitation centres for children with disabilities, had been established. Integrated community health, education and social assistance services had been set up in 2,000 marginalized rural communities, and specialized services had been established for children with behavioural disorders. Efforts were being made to diversify the range of early childhood education services and make them more

flexible. Activities were being organized to promote the inclusion of children and young people with special educational needs.

7. Challenges persisted despite the progress made. Disparities between rural and urban areas remained. While 7 out of 10 poor persons lived in rural areas, just 1 in 3 social workers were assigned to such areas; many rural communities still lacked access to basic social services as a result. Limitations in local administrative capacity meant that it was difficult to translate national policies into concrete results on the ground, in particular when it came to delivering integrated services for children with disabilities or complex needs and those who were facing poverty, discrimination or separation from their families. The need to tackle such challenges had been emphasized by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children on her visit to Romania in 2024, during which she had also commended the authorities for their openness to dialogue and strong commitment to reforming the child protection sector.

8. The aforementioned challenges had not prevented advances in certain areas, such as deinstitutionalization. The 18 remaining residential centres were due to be closed shortly; the 445 children concerned by the closures would be cared for in small group homes or by foster carers or members of their extended families. Funding provided by the European Union had been used to support the training of foster carers and the establishment of day-care services. Laws had been amended to ban the placement of children under 7 years in residential care and prohibit the relevant facilities from housing more than 12 children.

9. Steps had been taken to increase support for children at risk of school dropout and promote inclusive schooling for children with disabilities and children from Roma or refugee backgrounds. Policies had been drawn up to facilitate the return to education of children who had dropped out of school during the pandemic. More resources were being allocated to schools in deprived communities, whose students benefited from school meal programmes, transport subsidies and learning support for children with special needs. Investment in early childhood education had increased. Efforts in the health sector had been focused on expanding community-based services in the areas of reproductive health, adolescent care and early child development. The Government was working to expand the range of mental health services for children and adolescents, increase early screening for developmental disorders and support the delivery of such services by community health workers in hard-to-reach areas.

10. Developments in the justice sector included the improvement of protection for child victims and witnesses and the development of non-custodial alternatives for children in conflict with the law. Justice officials had been provided with guidance and training in order to help them prevent the retraumatization of children involved in legal proceedings. Efforts were being made to improve the data and monitoring systems used in all sectors.

11. In the period up to 2030, the Government intended to reduce the number of children affected by poverty and social exclusion by enhancing the availability of community-based services, investing in early childhood care and expanding school meals and housing support programmes. Steps would continue to be taken to strengthen the capacity of the relevant professionals to identify and support child victims of violence and those at risk of being separated from their families. The Government was committed to translating the pledges made at the first-ever Global Ministerial Conference on Ending Violence against Children into action on the ground. In education, the goal was to increase the rate of enrolment in early childhood education. Support for children with disabilities, the development of “second chance” programmes for school dropouts and digital equity would remain priorities. One of the objectives in the healthcare sector was to reduce preventable deaths among children by 20 per cent compared to the level observed in 2021. Children would be given a role in shaping national systems through participatory budgeting and monitoring processes and youth-led policymaking initiatives.

12. The Government had sought to ensure that its work on child-related matters was guided by the principles contained in the Convention. While it recognized that progress in the area continued to be hampered by structural shortcomings, capacity limits and social attitudes, it was committed to addressing such challenges through evidence-based reforms. It

would continue to draw inspiration from children and young people, whom it considered to be its partners in building the society desired by all.

13. **Mr. Chophel** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that he wished to begin by acknowledging the support provided by the State Party to Ukrainian refugees. With regard to the State Party's legislation, he would like to know what steps had been taken to ensure the effective implementation of the amendments to the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights. Further information on the impact of all the measures, strategies and action plans outlined by the head of delegation would be welcome, as would an explanation of whether the specific impact of the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights had been assessed. The delegation might describe what steps the State Party had taken to ensure that its budgeting processes were child-friendly and that budget allocations were sufficient to cover the needs of vulnerable groups. It would be interesting to learn what had been done to decentralize and monitor the management of resources. He would be grateful for information on the collection and analysis of disaggregated data through the National Adoption Information System.

14. He wished to know whether children had access to independent, confidential and child-friendly complaints mechanisms, what had been done to raise children's awareness of their right to file complaints under such mechanisms and whether professionals working with children received training on child-friendly procedures and remedies, children's rights and the Convention. He would appreciate information on the visibility, capacity, resources and impact of the Children's Ombudsman and the steps that that institution took to improve children's knowledge of the Convention and address any complaints that it received. He wondered whether activities designed to raise awareness of the Convention were organized specifically for vulnerable children, in particular those with disabilities and those living in rural areas or residential care centres. An explanation of the measures taken to strengthen civil society organizations, in particular their access to sustainable funding, would be appreciated.

15. **Ms. Scerri Ferrante** (Country Task Force) said that she would welcome an update on the status of the National Strategy for School Desegregation and information on any other measures introduced to ensure compliance with the principle of school desegregation and address hate speech. She wondered whether the permanent commissions set up to tackle violence, corruption and discrimination in schools made complaints mechanisms available to children and their parents or guardians. She wished to know what had been done to promote the inclusion of Roma children and children with disabilities in mainstream schools and ensure that unaccompanied migrant children faced no discrimination in asylum proceedings. It would be interesting to learn what impact Law No. 100/2024 would have in terms of the prevention of discrimination against children and persons with disabilities and what steps were taken to ensure that the General Directorate for Social Assistance and Child Rights Protection and the Public Social Assistance Service carried out their duties in a non-discriminatory manner. The delegation might comment on the stance taken by the Government with respect to the proposed legislative amendments that would introduce provisions designed to protect children from material deemed to promote homosexuality or transgenderism and indicate whether the National Council for Combating Discrimination and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had been invited to give their views on the amendments.

16. Information on the specific measures taken to fulfil the State Party's goal concerning the reduction of preventable deaths among children would be welcome, as would an explanation of what was being done to reduce the number of children who were at risk of poverty. She wished to learn about any steps taken to regulate the issuance of the medical opinions required for the authorization of child marriages and about the training provided to medical professionals to ensure that they gave due consideration to the child's best interests in such cases. A description of what was done to apply that principle in all fields in which decisions affecting children were made would be appreciated. She wondered how the State Party's efforts to respect children's views and take their best interests into account could be reconciled with reports that parents continued to use physical violence to discipline their children. It would be helpful to know whether the State Party would consider adopting a national parental education strategy to help train parents and professionals working with

children in educating children without physical punishments. She would welcome information on the measures introduced to enforce child labour laws.

17. The delegation might indicate whether the State Party had established mechanisms to guarantee children's participation in decision-making processes, in particular those concerning refugee or asylum-seeking children. She would like to know whether officials had been provided with training in supporting children's participation in such processes, whether children had access to free legal aid and information on their rights and what support was provided to child victims of violence, abuse or neglect who wished to bring legal proceedings.

18. Information on the steps taken to strengthen the capacity of the social welfare service to offer alternative forms of care would be appreciated, as would an explanation of what was being done to ensure that children with disabilities were prioritized as part of the ongoing reform of the care system. She wondered whether the National Adoption Information System contained data on children in alternative care and whether children in alternative and foster care could be placed for adoption. It would be useful to know what the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption did to monitor compliance with adoption regulations and whether it was empowered to impose penalties or bring legal action for violations thereof. She wished to know what measures had been taken to combat the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad and whether any bilateral or multilateral agreements had been concluded in that regard.

19. The delegation might comment on any steps taken to raise awareness among professionals of the impact that the incarceration of a parent had on his or her children, the support that was provided to such children and the visiting arrangements that were in place. It would be useful to learn what body was responsible for reviewing the care plans drawn up for children and what support was available to young people leaving institutional care. With regard to cases of abuse or neglect within families or other situations in which parents were not capable of caring for their children, she would like to know whether the State Party's laws provided for special protection measures that meant that the children concerned were placed in alternative care only as a last resort. A description of any plans to scale up investment in efforts to prevent family separation, including through the State budget, would be appreciated.

20. **The Chair** (Country Task Force) said that she would like to know whether all children, including those belonging to the Roma community, from Ukraine or born to refugee mothers, had access to birth registration services in practice. It had been brought to the Committee's attention that the State Party had failed to introduce mechanisms or procedures to determine and prevent statelessness and grant protection to stateless persons; the delegation might indicate whether that information was accurate and, if so, whether the State Party planned to address the issue. It would be helpful to learn, too, whether the State Party generated disaggregated data on statelessness among children.

21. A description of the measures taken to protect children from excessive screen use, online bullying, disinformation, misinformation and other digital threats would be appreciated, as would an explanation of what the State Party was doing to encourage businesses to comply with the Committee's general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. She wished to know what steps were being taken to address the risks presented by artificial intelligence while also ensuring that children could take advantage of the opportunities it offered. It would be helpful to learn what was being done to promote digital literacy among children, parents and teachers and what role the media played in such efforts.

22. **Mr. Jaffé** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to learn what the State Party was doing to discharge its duties as a member of the Pathfinding Global Alliance on Ending Violence against Children and whether it had taken steps to fulfil its pledge to conduct a study on the prevalence of sexual abuse and develop comprehensive policies and strategies to address that issue. He would be grateful for information on the efforts made to ensure that all members of the public were aware of the need to report all forms of violence against children and to improve the response to such reports by the law enforcement authorities and professionals from the judicial and health systems. The delegation might comment on reports

that cases involving abusive sexual encounters between adults and children were often classed as sexual abuse rather than rape, which meant that the perpetrators were handed less stringent penalties.

23. He would like to know what steps were being taken to reduce the prevalence of corporal punishment and address bullying and cyberbullying. Further information on the 119 hotline would be appreciated. The delegation might specify what percentage of girls in the State Party were married before turning 18 years, outline what was being done to tackle the high rates of child marriage among members of the Roma community and address reports that a court in Sibiu had upheld a decision to drop the charges against a 17-year-old boy who had entered into an informal marriage with an 11-year-old girl. Lastly, it would be useful to hear about any policies governing surgical interventions on intersex children and what was being done to protect the bodily integrity of such children until they were capable of consenting to any necessary surgery.

The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.

24. **A representative of Romania** said that the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights established the obligation of all public bodies to seek children's views on matters that affected them. The National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption had developed three sets of guidelines to assist those bodies in adopting the necessary procedures, appointing staff responsible for organizing consultations with children and monitoring and reporting on the outcomes. The guidelines had been submitted for public consultation and would then be sent to the Minister of Labour and Social Solidarity for approval.

25. The National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights 2023–2027 and the national action plan concerning the European Child Guarantee were complementary to one another, the main difference being that the latter covered the period up to 2030. An independent assessment of the implementation of the National Strategy had been conducted as part of efforts to develop the national action plan. The establishment of specific budget lines for children had long been on the Government's agenda; it was piloting a system that would enable it to set up such lines within the general budgets allocated to each ministry.

26. **A representative of Romania** said that the Ministry of Education had taken a number of steps to ensure that all students enjoyed equal opportunities and had access to a high-quality education. It provided certain students with school meals and grants to purchase school supplies and computer equipment and organized remedial classes for students from disadvantaged or rural communities. Parents were provided with vouchers for kindergartens and the purchase of food and school supplies. The range of school scholarships had been extended to include scholarships for adolescent mothers.

27. **A representative of Romania** said that the healthcare budget was not divided into specific budget lines for each age group. The funds earmarked for primary healthcare had increased each year since 2017, which had enabled family doctors to expand the range of services they offered. Such services included support for children who had committed self-harm or were facing bullying, depression or issues relating to their sexuality.

28. **A representative of Romania** said that the Government had established a digital platform, known as the national child observatory, to identify children at risk of being separated from their families. It had done so on the basis of its previous experience using the "Aurora" platform developed by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had shown that the cost of taking preventive action was lower than that of supporting a child who entered the child protection system. The new platform had been made available to all local authorities, whose staff were tasked with inputting information on children whom they had identified as being at risk of family separation using the set of indicators provided for in the relevant law. The data entered into the platform would be used by the local authorities to develop specific measures to help the most vulnerable families and by national bodies to formulate targeted policies and strategies. Training in using the platform had been delivered to social workers by the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption. The Government was currently working with UNICEF to test a system that would ensure the interoperability of the databases used by each institution working on child-related

matters, with a view to obtaining a broad picture of children's enjoyment of their rights in a number of areas.

29. **A representative of Romania** said that testimony given by children was recognized as important in determining the outcome of court cases. Children gave their statements in rooms created specifically for that purpose. Psychologists were on hand to provide them with support throughout the process. Ongoing training in taking statements from children was delivered to court staff by the National Institute of Magistracy.

30. **A representative of Romania** said that 29 special rooms for interviewing children had recently been set up in prosecutor's offices across the country. An additional 10 such rooms would be established as part of the new national strategy for the development of the judicial system. Cases involving children were handled by specialized prosecutors, who followed the protocol for interviewing children established by the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development of the United States of America.

31. **A representative of Romania** said that the office of the Children's Ombudsman worked closely with all institutions dealing with children's rights. It conducted investigations into any alleged rights violations, following which it issued recommendations to the institution responsible for remedying the situation.

32. The recommendations contained in the Committee's previous concluding observations ([CRC/C/ROU/CO/5](#)) had been translated into Romanian, published online and disseminated across the country with the help of local bodies working with the National Authority for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and Adoption. The National Authority sought children's input in all its work and had developed the section on child participation in the National Strategy for the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights based on the views expressed by the children involved in the consultation process. Civil society organizations were also involved in such processes and played a role that was greatly valued by all government ministries.

33. **A representative of Romania** said that all forms of discrimination in the education system were explicitly prohibited under Law No. 198/2023 on Pre-University Education. The Integrated Information System of Education had been modified to include data on segregation. Each school was required to set up its own body to promote inclusive education and identify and address any cases of segregation. Content on intercultural dialogue and children's rights formed part of the mandatory curriculum and was also taught through extracurricular programmes organized in partnership with NGOs. A number of school places at the secondary level were reserved specifically for Roma students or students with disabilities, and a similar scheme would soon be introduced in kindergartens. The Ministry of Education had provided teachers and other education professionals with training in working with students who were from disadvantaged areas or might be at risk of discrimination. Special services had been set up to ensure that such students had access to a high-quality education at all stages and prevent them from missing or dropping out of school.

34. **A representative of Romania** said that the State allowance for children was one of the most important welfare benefits administered by the Ministry of Labour and Social Solidarity. It was not only for children, however, as young adults who were studying remained eligible for it. Ukrainian families with children had been made eligible for the allowance pursuant to Emergency Ordinance No. 96/2024. Other State benefits included various forms of support for families with children, monthly aid for refugees, paternity leave and, since January 2024, a minimum income for inclusion.

35. **A representative of Romania** said that statistical data from the national child observatory facilitated the non-discriminatory provision of social services. Bill No. 243/2022, under which the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights would be amended to include provisions regarding the protection of children against the popularization of homosexuality, was currently before Parliament. Whether it would ultimately be made law remained to be seen.

36. **A representative of Romania** said that an intergovernmental group devised procedures and drafted prospective legislation with a view to combating forced marriage.

37. **A representative of Romania** said that the Ministry of Health had introduced a regionalized system of care to ensure that all children were born in facilities that could provide the necessary level of care with a view to reducing neonatal mortality – the deaths of children of up to 1 month old – which accounted for around half of all infant mortality, defined as the deaths of children of up to 1 year of age. The Ministry of Health set aside funds from its budget for the operation of neonatal intensive care units, and various forms of financial support were provided for the training of healthcare workers responsible for mother-and-child care. A prenatal pathology centre had been set up in Bucharest in 2016. To increase prenatal diagnostic and genetic counselling capacity – genetic malformations were the third leading cause of death in children – the Ministry, drawing on public funds, had established six genetic medicine centres.

38. Every year since 2002, the Ministry had taken thematic measures within the framework of the National Programme for Women's and Children's Health. The National Institute for the Health of Mothers and Children oversaw the implementation of the Programme. A new strategy had been adopted in a bid to continue reducing neonatal and infant mortality. Incubators, more than 900 in all, had been distributed to medical facilities in all parts of the country.

39. **A representative of Romania** said that support services were being set up countrywide in an attempt to move beyond welfare payments alone as a means of tackling child poverty and in so doing help families in vulnerable situations.

40. **A representative of Romania** said that one of the major components of the programme under which the minimum income for inclusion had been introduced was an incentive for parents to enter the labour market.

41. An integrated social services project had been launched in 2024 to provide social workers with advanced in-service training. Such training would make it possible to better serve rural areas, where there was a shortage of social workers, and marginalized areas in the vicinity of large urban centres, where poverty was increasing. Ultimately, the idea was to build local capacity and ensure that intervention was direct and effective.

42. **A representative of Romania** said that the children who were consulted on matters affecting them naturally included refugee children. In all parts of the country, a person was made responsible for overseeing such consultations. Those people, who were made familiar with the rights of the child, learned how to use child-friendly methods of involving children in consultations.

43. **A representative of Romania** said that accredited providers of social services were required to comply with relevant quality standards, as verified by a national inspection agency with offices throughout the country. Institutionalizing children under 7 years with disabilities was prohibited by law in most circumstances, and as a result steps were being taken to identify families that could foster such children and give them the necessary training. When there was no choice but to remove a child from his or her family, priority was given to placing the child with his or her relatives or other people in his or her social circle. Other options, such as family-type homes or foster families, were resorted to only later. Protection orders could be issued to keep the perpetrators of domestic violence away from their victims.

44. Reuniting a child who entered the child protection system with his or her biological family was always the priority, but if such a reunion proved infeasible, the child could, with the approval of the court, be put up for adoption. If, after a year, no suitable adoptive parents had been found in the country, the child could be adopted by Romanian nationals living abroad. After an adoption was completed, the authorities continued to monitor the child's development.

45. **A representative of Romania** said that all the legislative amendments necessary to ensuring that children could visit their incarcerated parents had been made. As a result, all prison facilities had appropriate visiting rooms and children's visits, including extended visits and group visits, had been facilitated. Visits could take place without separation devices even in maximum security facilities. In addition, the authorities worked with international organizations and NGOs to help incarcerated parents develop their parenting abilities. A newly adopted strategy for the reduction of reoffending had been informed by the knowledge

that education and healthy family relationships played large roles in keeping released offenders from returning to prison.

46. **A representative of Romania** said that, since the adoption of recent legislative amendments, young people could remain under the limited supervision of the child protection system until they turned 26; otherwise, they could decide to leave the system when they turned 18, and if they found work or were studying they would receive a welfare payment of around €500 a month.

47. **A representative of Romania** said that the most recent amendments to Law No. 21/1991 on Romanian Citizenship provided that the consideration of applications for Romanian citizenship submitted by stateless persons, including minors, should be given priority.

48. **A representative of Romania** said that efforts were being made, in particular in the context of a strategy for the digitalization of education, to develop digital skills among students, teachers and parents. Issues such as cybersecurity, online safety and data protection were also being addressed. As part of one recent project, a number of teachers had been given training on developing instructional applications and using them in their work. The Ministry of Education, for its part, had initiated the development of a digital library known as Edulib. In addition, it ensured that school computer labs were properly equipped. During the pandemic, students had been given laptops, tablets or other digital devices, and in 2024 a digital platform had been used to assess student performance on national school-leaving and other examinations.

49. **A representative of Romania** said that the authorities, drawing on recently adopted European legislation, had devised a national artificial intelligence strategy. Awareness-raising and educational programmes would be organized within the framework of the strategy.

50. **A representative of Romania** said that a project to improve the digital skills of civil servants was under way. Training on artificial intelligence applications for medical diagnoses and treatment was being offered to medical personnel.

51. **A representative of Romania** said that the findings of the study on the prevalence of violence against children, which would help the authorities target the measures they took more effectively, would be made available shortly. The national children's helpline, 119, was a toll-free line staffed by specialists who were available around the clock. Another helpline, operated by an NGO, did not offer counselling services. It simply made the appropriate referrals. Plans were being made to modernize the national helpline. Artificial intelligence, for example, would be used to develop a chatbot that would provide information and advice without compromising callers' privacy.

52. **A representative of Romania** said that, since the adoption of Law No. 217/2023, the rape of a minor and the rape of an adult had been separate criminal offences with more severe penalties for the former. Minors under the age of 16 were deemed unable to consent to sex with adults, and minors under the age of 14 with anyone over 14, including other minors, except when the age difference between the victim and the perpetrator did not exceed five years.

53. **Mr. Jaffé** said that he wondered what was being done to ensure that all children with disabilities, including those who might not have a disability certificate – because they lived in remote areas, for example, or because they never left their homes – had access to community-based social services. He would welcome further information about the annual assessments that informed decisions about whether to bring children with disabilities into the orbit of the social services system. In particular, he wondered how the assessments worked, who was responsible for them, how children who were not in school were identified and whether there were any campaigns to raise awareness, especially in rural, poor or minority communities, of the social services that children with disabilities were entitled to. He wondered, too, whether the implementation of the National Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities had led to improvements to the quality of the services provided to such persons, what was being done to enhance the expertise and increase the number of the

relevant specialists and to what extent there had been a shift to a human rights-based approach to disability.

54. Removing children with disabilities from institutions and placing them in family settings, as the State Party was evidently planning, was clearly good practice, but he wished to know how many such children were still in institutions and when the last of those institutions would shut their doors. He wished to know, too, whether the prohibition on placing children with disabilities under 3 in institutional settings was enforced.

55. He wondered whether the aims of the recently adopted laws on pre-university and higher education were being achieved and whether the funds to see ongoing educational reforms through to completion had been set aside. He wondered, too, what percentage of gross domestic product was invested in education. It would be interesting to know, in addition, whether there was a direct channel through which children could express their concerns about the school system and whether their concerns were taken seriously.

56. It would be helpful to learn how the authorities were responding to the poor academic performance, as shown by the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA), of a large percentage of the State Party's schoolchildren and what efforts were being made to lower the percentage of children, in particular rural children and children from Roma communities, who left school early. It would be useful, too, to hear in greater detail what was being done to combat segregation based on, for example, ethnicity, disability and special educational needs, in the State Party's schools, make early childhood education more widely available and improve the quality of vocational training for older children.

57. Although education was free in the State Party, he wondered whether children or their families were asked to help pay for classroom supplies and, if not, whether school attendance involved other hidden costs. He wondered, too, whether there were any educational programmes for disadvantaged children other than the school meal and afterschool programmes that had already been touched on. It would be interesting, lastly, to learn more about the mission and activities of the Ministry of Family, Youth and Equal Opportunities.

58. **The Chair** said that she wished to know whether the necessary resources had been set aside for the measures that the State Party was taking to continue lowering its comparatively high rates of infant and child mortality and whether all children had access to healthcare and insurance coverage. She wished to know, too, how the authorities were dealing with anti-vaccination activism, whether any steps were taken to promote breastfeeding, what was being done to combat childhood obesity and how the ban on selling unhealthy food in close proximity to schools was enforced.

59. She would welcome an indication of whether relevant data on mental health were being collected and whether the State Party had a comprehensive mental health strategy and action plan. It would be helpful to know, too, whether mental health services were available countrywide, whether the State Party had as many psychiatrists and psychologists as it needed and what was being done to address the stigma often attached to mental health problems.

60. According to some sources, the State Party had the largest number of adolescent mothers in the European Union. She therefore wondered what plans had been made to lower the rate of adolescent pregnancy and ensure that reproductive health education was made a mandatory part of the school curriculum. She also wondered whether children had access to addiction treatment, including in respect of gambling.

61. The State Party had made commendable efforts to provide a safe haven for children fleeing the war in Ukraine. She nonetheless wished to know what steps would be taken to integrate those and other refugee children, as well as to reunite them with their families. She wished to know, too, whether there were delays in enrolling such children and their family members in the social welfare system and, if so, whether they received any cash benefits in the interim. In addition, she wondered whether there were plans to put an end to the practice of placing families with children in migration detention, whether asylum-seeking children benefited from the provisions of the Law on the Protection and Promotion of Children's Rights, whether there were criteria for the selection of the people who helped unaccompanied or separated children with their applications for asylum, whether those people had clearly defined responsibilities and whether unaccompanied migrant children had access to social

services and education, including help learning or communicating in Romanian and, for Ukrainian children, instruction in their mother tongue.

62. She would welcome an update on the measures that had been taken to eliminate child labour, including begging by children. Information on the steps that were being taken to bring perpetrators of trafficking in children, who reportedly included current or former government officials, to justice would also be welcome. In addition, it would be useful to learn whether victims of trafficking in children had access to the rehabilitation and other services they needed, including legal aid.

63. She would like to know whether the juvenile justice system was operational countrywide, whether the police, prosecutors and judges had the training to work effectively with children and whether legal aid was available to children in conflict with the law. Were such children detained only as a last resort?

64. **Mr. Chophel** said that he wondered whether children in the State Party were still nearly three times more likely than the average child in the European Union to experience severe material and social deprivation. It would be helpful, in connection with combating such deprivation, to hear more about the minimum social assistance package introduced in 2024.

65. He wished to know how policy frameworks for addressing climate change and its impact had helped address environmental challenges, especially in relation to children, what approach was taken to environmental education in the State Party's schools and what was being done to involve children in all aspects of environmental policies and programmes, as well as disaster preparedness plans.

66. It would be useful to learn more about the mechanism that redirected tax receipts to civil society organizations. An indication of whether major private sector projects were preceded by assessments of their likely impact on the rights of the child would also be welcome.

67. **Ms. Aho** said that she wished to know what immunization rates in the State Party were and, in view of a recent measles outbreak, what the health authorities were doing to win back public trust in vaccination. She wished to know, too, what was being done to familiarize the public with the provisions of the Criminal Code on rape and what happened when the 30-day deadline for registering a birth was missed.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.