



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Forty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1141st MEETING (Chamber B)

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 23 May 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. KHATTAB

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Third periodic report of Mexico (continued) (CRC/C/125/Add.7, CRC/C/MEX/Q/3 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. de Alba, Mr. Aguilar Valdez, Ms. Barrio Villareal, Mr. Becerra, Mr. Campuzano, Mr. Coarasa, Mr. Domínguez Armengual, Mr. Flores, Ms. González Domínguez, Ms. González Morel, Mr. Hernández Vélez, Mr. Macedo, Ms. Narváez Soto, Ms. Payán Cervera, Mr. Pérez López, Ms. Rosas, Mr. Ruiz Matus and Ms. Sosa (Mexico) resumed places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. PARFITT asked whether children with disabilities attended regular or special schools, and whether parents had to pay to send their children to special schools. He wished to know what support was offered to such children by the National Children's and Adolescents' Council and the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family (DIF).
3. He asked to what extent the programme to assist spouses in obtaining maintenance payments had been successful, and requested statistics on the number of women helped under that programme.
4. Regarding optional alternative care, he wondered whether members of the extended family were considered as possible caregivers for children. Regarding foster care and institutional care, he asked what safeguards were in place to protect children, what qualifications were required of caregivers, how facilities were monitored, what complaints mechanisms were available to children, whether there were regular visits by inspectors, and what programmes were in place for family reintegration. He also wondered whether there was a prohibition on the use of corporal punishment in such facilities.
5. Mr. POLLAR asked whether the right of minors to be informed promptly and directly of the charges against them, in the presence of their legal guardian, was respected. He wished to know whether children were informed of their right not to give testimony or confess guilt, their right to privacy and their right to appeal. He asked whether interpreters were provided for those children who did not speak Spanish. He would welcome further information on the juvenile courts and the regulations governing their procedures.
6. He asked what contact children deprived of liberty had with their families, and whether they were allowed temporary release in exceptional circumstances, such as a death in the family. He wished to know whether juvenile detention facilities were independently monitored and whether children's sentences were reviewed periodically. He asked whether adolescents were offered vocational training and what support they received on release.
7. The CHAIRPERSON requested additional information on the Government's efforts to extend educational opportunities to vulnerable groups such as street children. She also wished to know how the high dropout rate was being addressed. She would also welcome additional information on the hotline for children.

8. Ms. GONZÁLEZ DOMÍNGUEZ (Mexico), referring to the role of international cooperation in the field of children's rights, said that Mexico had a close relationship with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).
9. Mr. COARASA (Mexico) said that mandatory military service had been replaced by a civilian social service, but even when there had been mandatory military service, less than 1 per cent of those eligible had been called up, and conscription had been based on a weekend system.
10. Ms. GONZÁLEZ DOMÍNGUEZ (Mexico) said that the Government had conducted campaigns to encourage the registration of births, and certain states now had a civil register in even the most remote areas. In other areas there was an automated system whereby the person inserted money into a machine in order to receive a birth certificate. However, there were no precise data on how many states had full coverage.
11. Mr. COARASA (Mexico) said that the allocation of resources to states was decided by Congress on the basis of the size of the population and access to services. It was a progressive budget in that it was used to address disparities between states. At its inception in 2000, the Opportunities programme had involved the participation of 2.5 million households, and by 2004 it had reached its target of 5 million households. The programme's budget had initially been 9.5 billion pesos, but had been increased to 35 billion pesos. The National Children's and Adolescents' Council was an institutional coordinating mechanism and therefore did not have its own budget.
12. Mr. RUIZ MATUS (Mexico) said that the health sector had been reformed in order to ensure equal access to quality services and the financial protection of disadvantaged families. To that end, a people's health insurance scheme had been established to provide health-care services to families that had no social security cover. It was hoped that the scheme would cover between 3.5 and 4 million families by the end of 2006. Other programmes included the "Equal Start in Life" programme, which aimed to overcome the differences in life expectancy of children born in urban and rural areas. The "Lifeline" strategy ensured comprehensive health checks, including vaccinations and eyesight tests, for children, regardless of the reason for their visit to the health centre. New vaccinations against pneumococcus and the rotavirus infection were being introduced, initially in the poorest municipalities.
13. Between 2000 and 2005 the number of births to mothers aged between 15 and 19 had decreased by 21 per cent, from 316,000 to 247,000. The fertility rate for that age group had fallen from 60 births per 1,000 women in 2000 to 46 per 1,000 in 2005. Particular emphasis had been placed on the use of contraceptives, and 57 per cent of sexually active women under 20 now used contraceptives, as compared to 14 per cent in 1976.
14. Although the principal means of HIV/AIDS infection among children was still mother-to-child transmission, there had been a significant decrease in the number of in-utero infections, from 98 in 2000 to 56 in 2005. In the past five years the rate of detection of syphilis among pregnant women had increased sixfold. The current rate of HIV infection among

pregnant women was only 0.09 per cent. Pregnant women with HIV/AIDS received comprehensive care, including treatment with antiretroviral drugs, and the baby's health was monitored for two years. There had been a significant increase in the resources allocated to HIV/AIDS: universal access to antiretroviral drugs had been achieved in 2003 and 30,000 patients were currently receiving treatment.

15. The National Anti-Addiction Council organized a series of activities to combat addiction, prevent the sale of cigarettes and alcohol to children and ensure a smoke-free environment in schools. The council also ran a 24-hour hotline for teenagers. With a view to preventing drug trafficking, a bill establishing the quantity of drugs which could be held by addicts for their own consumption was currently under discussion.

16. Mr. LIWSKI asked what action was being taken to address the problem of suicide among teenagers and what mental health programmes were in place for young people.

17. Mr. RUIZ MATUS (Mexico) said that the National Mental Health Council was the governing body for psychiatric hospitals. Community mental health centres provided support to children and families. There was currently no specific programme to prevent suicide, although there were plans to develop one.

18. Mr. AGUILAR VALDEZ (Mexico) said that the reform of the juvenile justice system had established alternative penalties for young offenders, such as cautions, community service and probation. Imprisonment was considered a last resort and was reserved for serious crimes. There was ample opportunity to be released on bail. The rights to a defence and a fair hearing and all rights related to due process were respected. The minor had the right to be heard, to refuse to make a statement and to come face-to-face with his or her accusers or witnesses. At the request of the minor or the minor's family, any proceedings could be conducted in private. The duration of judicial proceedings involving minors could not exceed one month. There was a range of remedies available to minors, including the right to appeal. There were interpreters for children who did not speak Spanish. Under the reform, special training was provided for all public servants involved in juvenile justice, especially police officers.

19. Children under the age of 12 who committed criminal acts were subject exclusively to measures of rehabilitation and social assistance. The Convention on the Rights of the Child was invoked frequently in proceedings involving children, especially by public defenders. Minors had full contact with their family during and after proceedings. Although there had been few such cases, a minor was generally allowed to attend the funeral if there was a death in the family. The juvenile judge reviewed cases every three months. Non-governmental organizations attended the Minors Council if they were interested in a particular case, and, without prejudice to the right of the minor to confidentiality, they were provided with the necessary information.

20. Mr. ZERMATTEN asked whether children were able to remain with their mothers if the latter were deprived of their liberty, and if so, up to what age. What health-care services were provided for those children, and were they entitled to visits from their fathers?

21. Mr. FILALI requested further information on the right to a defence. He particularly wished to know whether the presence of a lawyer was obligatory during juvenile trials, and whether there was an institution responsible for the appointment by the courts of defence lawyers for minors in conflict with the law. He asked what procedures were in place to deal with juvenile offenders caught in flagrante delicto, and whether they were taken into detention immediately. He wondered what the maximum custodial sentence was for minors who had committed serious crimes. He also wondered whether the same juvenile judge who dealt with a case during the pre-trial period and the trial itself would oversee the enforcement of the sentence.
22. Mr. LIWSKI requested information on the torture or ill-treatment of children, and asked how many cases of such treatment had been filed with the National Human Rights Commission. He asked what had been done to deal with the recent outbreak of violence in San Salvador Atenco.
23. Mr. PARFITT asked how the National Human Rights Commission monitored the situation of juveniles in detention. He wished to know whether representatives of the Commission visited detention centres on a regular basis to carry out inspections and ensure that the conditions complied with the provisions of international human rights instruments.
24. Mr. DOMÍNGUEZ ARMENGUAL (Mexico) said that families were entitled to visit their young relatives in juvenile detention institutions once a week. Training and counselling were also available for relatives of juvenile detainees, in order to ensure that the latter received adequate support from their families. Although they had committed crimes, juvenile offenders were considered victims, as they often came from unstable family backgrounds. Sports and cultural activities were organized for them and they received visits from representatives of civil society organizations, religious groups and the National Human Rights Commission. State bodies had free access to detention institutions to investigate complaints about detention conditions.
25. Basic primary, secondary and vocational education was available for young people in detention, and a proposal to allow detainees access to university programmes through distance learning on the Internet was currently under discussion. Young detainees had the opportunity to learn a practical trade, such as building or masonry, and workshops were held where they could sell their products. Half of the money earned at such events was used to pay for the tools required, and the other half was distributed equally among the students and kept in personal bank accounts to which the detainees would acquire access on their release.
26. Psychologists and psychiatrists were on hand to provide counselling and support to young detainees. Doctors were on duty at all times in juvenile detention institutions to address straightforward medical problems, and in the event that specific medical care was required, the detainee concerned would be transferred to the nearest appropriate hospital. The selection process for guards and inspectors for juvenile detention centres was particularly rigorous, and prison guards received specific training in how to deal with minors. Moreover, efforts were made to detain minors in a centre near to their families.
27. Very young children could stay in detention centres with their mothers until they reached the age of 4 years, after which they would be sent back to the family home, a foster home or a care institution, depending on the family's circumstances. There were currently five babies in

detention with their mothers; three of them had been born in the detention centre. Pregnant women in detention were provided with prenatal medical care and had the opportunity to attend post-natal clinics in the company of a member of the prison staff. Children who remained in detention with their mothers received nutritional and medical care, and could be visited by members of their families. An initiative was under way to encourage visits between mothers and their children in cases where the mother was detained in an adult detention centre and the child in a juvenile detention centre. In certain cases minors were granted leave to visit their families or were allowed to visit parks or leisure centres where entry was free of charge.

28. With regard to torture and ill-treatment, the case mentioned by the Committee had been an isolated case, and the Government was particularly careful to ensure that the police and prison staff did not abuse their authority and that any complaints of ill-treatment were investigated thoroughly.

29. Mr. RUIZ MATUS (Mexico) said that the right to a defence was an absolute right guaranteed by law. No proceedings could be conducted without the presence of a defence counsel. There was a public defence unit for minors, which had a highly skilled staff. Although, the Constitution provided for the detention of a minor caught in flagrante delicto, the juvenile judge could review the appropriateness of such punishment on a case-by-case basis. The maximum custodial sentence for a minor was five years. Juvenile judges involved in trials were not responsible for the enforcement of sentences.

30. Ms. GONZÁLEZ DOMÍNGUEZ (Mexico) said that, in response to the acts of violence committed in a detention centre in San Salvador Atenco, measures had been taken to re-establish law and order, possible abuses committed by the authorities were being investigated and sanctions would be imposed if necessary. Information on the progress of the investigations was available to the public.

31. Ms. PAYÁN CERVERA (Mexico), referring to the windfall received by the State in taxes from the oil company Pemex, said that 50 per cent of the additional revenue would go directly to the Treasury and the remaining 50 per cent would be spent on improving the country's infrastructure.

32. The Government was aware that considerable efforts were required to ensure that indigenous people enjoyed the same rights and services as the rest of the Mexican population. Efforts were already being made to increase the number of indigenous students in further education, in order to improve their employment opportunities. Although many indigenous people lived in cities, the Mayan population tended to stay together as a group, and greater efforts were required to integrate them into society while maintaining respect for their culture and language.

33. An inter-institutional programme had been developed for migrant children, and seven children's shelters had been built on the borders to provide care for children for 24 to 48 hours after their arrival in Mexico.

34. Mr. ZERMATTEN asked whether the armed rebel groups, which were present in certain regions of Mexico, recruited children.

35. Ms. GONZÁLEZ DOMÍNGUEZ (Mexico) said that since Mexico was not at war, children did not tend to be involved in armed conflicts.
36. Mr. LIWSKI asked what measures were being taken to provide humanitarian assistance to children on the southern border between Mexico and Guatemala. The immigrant holding centres in the region did not have the capacity to cope with the vast numbers of immigrants. He wished to know how the Government planned to tackle the situation and whether it would take any joint measures with the Government of Guatemala. He wondered whether measures would be taken to ensure that the staff of the holding centres were competent to deal with the problems faced by immigrants, and to ensure that any violations of human rights committed by the staff were reported and investigated. He asked what measures were being taken to protect migrant children from traffickers. Efforts should be made to ensure that migrant children were only repatriated with their families if it was in their best interests, rather than as a matter of course.
37. Ms. ROSAS (Mexico) said that a series of measures had been adopted to deal with migration problems in the south of the country. In February 2005, for example, the first shelter for migrants had been set up. A forum on migration policy had also been held, which had covered various topics, including protection mechanisms and repatriation policies. It had focused on the situation in the State of Chiapas with a view to seeking appropriate solutions.
38. Ms. PAYÁN CERVERA (Mexico) said that a number of shelters with suitably qualified staff had been established in the north of the country, too.
39. The CHAIRPERSON asked for more information on the situation of internally displaced persons.
40. Ms. SOSA (Mexico) said that, between 1994 and 2000, approximately 12,000 people from more than 10 municipalities had been displaced in the State of Chiapas for a variety of reasons, including inter-community conflicts but most often on political grounds. Efforts had been made to resolve the ongoing conflicts by state and municipal authorities with the assistance of the representative of the Secretary-General on internally displaced persons. The aim was to gain a better understanding of the phenomenon and seek appropriate solutions so that eventually the internally displaced persons could return to their homes.
41. With regard to social programmes for indigenous people, the National Commission for the Development of Indigenous Peoples had invested considerable resources in a programme to help indigenous people who had been forced to flee their homes to rebuild their lives. The Chiapas authorities also provided assistance with the purchase of farmland and the construction of housing. Social programmes were complemented by anti-discrimination legislation that provided indigenous people and other vulnerable sectors of the population with certain guarantees and remedies for infringements of the legislation.
42. Ms. SOSA (Mexico) said that the Government had conducted preliminary studies to take stock of the situation of internally displaced persons, with a view to producing relevant policies. In relative terms, the situation was not as serious as in some other countries, where there were millions of such persons.

43. The CHAIRPERSON asked how the Government ensured that indigenous people had equal access to health care given that their overall health status was reportedly poorer than that of other sectors of the population.

44. Mr. RUIZ MATUS (Mexico) said that a series of measures had been adopted to redress the imbalance in health-care services provided for indigenous people. As a result, between 2000 and 2005, there had been a 6 per cent increase in the use of contraception by indigenous women and a 25 per cent reduction in child mortality. Both those indicators compared favourably with the national average. Moreover, the 50 poorest municipalities in the country were given priority in the construction of health facilities, the recruitment of health staff and the implementation of vaccination programmes.

45. Mr. COARASA (Mexico), responding to questions on education and, in particular, school attendance, said that although the Government still faced many challenges, such as providing education in over 100,000 localities with fewer than 50 inhabitants, on balance considerable progress had been made. For instance, as a result of the implementation of the education component of the Opportunities programme, there had been an increase of almost 10 per cent in the enrolment rates for primary schools, and more young people, including girls, were now completing secondary education thanks to the scholarships provided. There had also been a reduction in child labour.

46. Greater progress had been made in rural areas than in urban ones, which showed that the Government's policy of bridging the gap between rural and urban areas, with a particular focus on indigenous people, was bearing fruit. It was worth noting that of the 5 million families benefiting from the Opportunities programme, more than 1 million were of indigenous origin.

The meeting was suspended at 4.40 p.m. and resumed at 5.00 p.m.

47. Ms. ROSAS (Mexico) said that since the 1980s expenditure on education had risen from 4.6 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) to 7.33 per cent. During the same period, the average number of years a child spent in school had almost doubled and illiteracy rates had been halved. The current illiteracy rate was 8 per cent and concerned mainly adults over the age of 40. The gender gap in education had been bridged and there were now more girls than boys in secondary schools. Between 2000 and 2005, the primary-school completion rate had increased to more than 90 per cent and the secondary-school completion rate to almost 80 per cent.

48. There were many education programmes targeted at the vulnerable sectors of the population from the preschool stage onwards. They included community-based programmes that encouraged parents to exchange information on how to bring up their young children as well as more formal programmes in nursery schools in rural communities. Various care programmes for very young children were also run under the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family, such as the child development centres (CADI) and the community child-welfare centres (CAIC). There was also a specific programme to combat the problem of street children ("De la Calle a la Vida" - "From the Streets Back to Life"), which had provided assistance to 17,000 communities and grants for 15,000 children.

49. Bilingual intercultural education programmes were aimed at bridging the education gap between the indigenous communities and other sectors of the population. More than 40,000 children in some 900 schools had benefited from such programmes. Reading materials in indigenous languages for the programmes had been prepared with the assistance of UNICEF.

50. Funds allocated for rural education had enabled more than 30,000 children who had previously had no access to education facilities near their homes to attend primary and secondary schools. Some 11,000 grants had also been given to pregnant teenagers to allow them to continue their education. There was a nationwide system of grants and scholarships from which 130,000 children had benefited in 2004-2005; some 5.4 per cent of the beneficiaries were of indigenous origin.

51. Mr. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Mexico) said that the Government attached great importance to the problem of children in care. Pursuant to legislation introduced in 2004, all activities in that area were coordinated under the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family. There were currently 20,000 children in care in Mexico, in more than 670 public and private institutions. Around 8,000 children lived in the 102 institutions supervised by the offices of the National System.

52. Owing to the difficulties encountered in monitoring the situation of children in care at the state and municipal levels, a new system for collecting and updating information was being developed with the help of experts from all states. Some 10 million pesos had been invested in the project, which was scheduled to be launched nationwide in June 2006. It was hoped that the system would serve as a useful management tool and would provide the indicators required to assess the real situation of children in care and to review adoption procedures. The efforts deployed to establish the new information system showed the Government's commitment to improving the management of childcare institutions and standardizing adoption procedures. One way of achieving that was to promote the adoption of childcare models and to establish adoption councils at the federal and state levels. Although the Government now had greater control over the situation in the public sector, much work remained to be done in the private sector. Legislation would not suffice and steps were being taken under the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family to provide advice and guidance to private institutions.

53. Ms. SMITH enquired whether all 20,000 children placed in care lived in institutions.

54. Mr. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Mexico) said that all 20,000 children were in institutions. Some 85 per cent of them were in the process of being reunited with their families and the remaining 15 per cent were candidates for adoption. In 2005, 1,500 children had been adopted and it was expected that around 2,000 would be adopted in 2006. Until 2005, the concept of foster families had not existed in Mexico. It was hoped to introduce a model for fostering procedures in August 2006. Efforts to improve the situation in childcare institutions and adoption procedures were coordinated by the federal Government. The aim was to devise models which would be reproduced at the state level.

55. It was very important to follow the principles of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption so as to ensure that adoption procedures were transparent and officially recognized. The Government had therefore brought together some 850 attorneys from the Office for the Defence of Minors and the Family and the persons responsible for adoption in each state to devise regulations for adoption. Those regulations were now in force, and made it possible to interpret the principles of the Hague Convention and to establish criteria for adoption. Their joint efforts had also made it possible to amend the civil codes of states accordingly. By inviting private institutions to take part in the councils, the Government hoped to exercise better control over the adoption process and to provide more technical assistance. There were already 24 state-run adoption boards in place; 8 more were in the process of being formed.

56. The follow-up of international adoption was assured by Mexican consulates with the help of specialized agencies. It lasted for at least one year, and sometimes longer, as adoptive parents were requested to sign agreements to permit follow-up for two years. A written report on the child's development, health and situation was requested every six months. Within Mexico, the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family was responsible for the follow-up of the situations of adopted children and children in foster families. The follow-up continued on average for one year for children under 6; for those between 6 and 18, it lasted for two or three years, and sometimes longer.

57. Mr. ZERMATTEN asked why there was such a large discrepancy between the number of children that the delegation reported as being adopted every year and the annual statistics given in the replies to the list of issues. He also asked if the adoption procedure was free of charge.

58. Mr. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Mexico) said that the adoption procedure was free of charge in public institutions, but that some fees were charged in private institutions. The discrepancy in the adoption statistics was attributable to the fact that the Government was dependent on reports from the individual states, and there was no systematic data-collection procedure. That problem would be addressed in the near future, with the implementation of a centralized information system using the Internet.

59. The CHAIRPERSON expressed concern at the reliability of the information submitted by the States.

60. Mr. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Mexico) said that the current system was indeed cumbersome and inefficient, but the new centralized information system would be based on a national agreement which would remove a great deal of uncertainty, as the central authorities would automatically be kept abreast of the statistics in each state. There would also be safeguards to guarantee the confidentiality of the information.

61. Mr. LIWSKI said that while government policy was clearly aimed at deinstitutionalization, there were many - some 20,000 - children who remained in institutions, many of which were private. Were private institutions taking part in the implementation of the policy? Were they convinced that they should play a different role? To what extent did records of mistreatment and abuse figure in the information systems devised by the Government, and

how could such information be used in practice to prevent and address such problems? Was there any legislation that specifically penalized corporal punishment? Noting that there was an enormous number of children - over 3 million - engaged in work of one kind or another, he requested further information on measures to combat child labour.

62. Mr. PARFITT expressed concern about the quality of control over institutions, whether private or State-run. What guarantees were there that staff were properly qualified, what monitoring systems were in place, and how were complaints about deficiencies or abuse handled? Were such issues addressed in the Government's plan? Did the Government consider that it had the power to persuade the various States to adopt the plan?

63. Ms. NARVÁEZ SOTO (Mexico) said that it was estimated that in the 10 regions with the highest concentration of indigenous populations, about 35 per cent of indigenous children, or some 340,000, were working; about half were girls, who were predominantly employed as domestic servants. About a quarter of indigenous child workers did not attend school. The federal labour inspection service was responsible for monitoring the working conditions of persons over 14 years of age. Inspectors visited companies and industries to ensure that working conditions were in keeping with national standards. Certain sectors, such as textiles, electronics, cinema, mining and metalworking were within the jurisdiction of the federal authorities, while others were the responsibility of the states. The federal Ministry of Labour had carried out over 19,000 inspections between 2002 and 2005, and had issued over 1,300 authorizations to work for persons between the ages of 14 and 18. The Ministry sought to conclude framework agreements covering occupational health and safety, the exchange of information, and measures to combat child labour among children under 14, and to ensure the best possible conditions for those between 14 and 18. There was also an alternative, voluntary incentive scheme whereby employers undertook to comply with certain minimum standards for workers between 14 and 18 years of age in exchange for recognition as a socially responsible employer. The federal Ministry of Labour had issued a handbook on child labour for use by the state labour departments, and worked to raise awareness of child labour issues among its own inspectors. The Criminal Code and the federal occupational health and safety regulations set out specific penalties for persons who employed children under 14 years of age.

64. The Ministry of Labour was interested in ratifying the International Labour Organization (ILO) Minimum Age Convention (No. 138). It had held meetings in various forums with civil society organizations, legislators, government officials and trade unions to identify their positions on the question of ratification. In the meantime, as Mexico had ratified the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, (No. 182), the Government was conducting activities to raise awareness of the need to combat child labour and of its risks and consequences. Such activities were all the more necessary because in Mexican culture it was considered normal for children to work. Certain sectors, even in the public administration, continued to perceive work as something that ensured personal dignity, including among children. In that context, the federal Government was trying to explain and publicize the concept of child exploitation and to explain the harm done by child labour to children's education, health and overall personal development. The Ministry of Labour conducted awareness-raising programmes, including children's drawing competitions, on that theme. It had a programme for the prevention of child

labour and was working on a handbook for employers on that subject. Legislative bills had been introduced in the Chamber of Deputies to protect children from hazardous forms of work and to raise the minimum age of employment. In addition, a programme to prevent and discourage exploitative labour practices in urban areas was being implemented under the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family and further efforts were being made under the Opportunities programme to prevent child labour, mainly in rural areas.

65. A programme to combat the sexual exploitation of children was being conducted in conjunction with ILO; it involved activities for the prevention of the worst forms of child labour and for the protection and care of children involved in such work. The activities involved the media, companies involved in tourism, and both employers and workers. Studies had been conducted in Acapulco, Guadalajara and Tijuana with a view to revising the criminal codes of the corresponding states. In a first phase, the programme on sexual exploitation and child trafficking was being implemented primarily in those three cities, where the Government had ascertained that there were high incidences of such problems. However, all documentation and materials developed under the programme were shared with all Mexican states. To raise awareness among lawmakers, the Ministry of Labour held videoconferences with the legislators of the federal states; as a result, bills on child labour had been introduced in Tamaulipas and Jalisco, and one was under consideration in Baja California. The estimated number of street children in the 100 largest Mexican cities had declined in recent years, from 114,000 to about 94,000.

66. Ms. ROSAS said that the programme entitled “From the Streets Back to Life” coordinated the work of government and civil society organizations working with street children. In 2005, the programme had been active in 32 states, with the participation of 83 municipal offices of the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family and 96 non-governmental organizations.

67. Mr. DOMÍNGUEZ ARMENGUAL (Mexico) said that violence against children was punishable under all the local criminal codes, and that all prosecutors’ offices had specialized services to receive complaints of such behaviour, nearly all of which included representatives of state human rights commissions and non-governmental organizations. To ensure that children were not dissuaded from reporting such offences, some 800 outreach offices of the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family had been established throughout the country to receive complaints and to refer victims to the appropriate local authorities. When the identity of the perpetrator was known, penalties were imposed. Such penalties were more severe in cases where the perpetrator was a close family member. Notwithstanding the provisions of the federal Press Act, the press and media often directly or indirectly identified minors who were victims of violence or who had been badly treated.

68. Mr. FILALI asked how the State party proceeded with investigations into the disappearance and murder of minors, and requested that the delegation provide information on specific cases.

69. Mr. DOMÍNGUEZ ARMENGUAL (Mexico) said that the Department for Preventive Action and the Treatment of Minors (DEPTM) dealt with cases involving violence committed against children by minors, but that when such violence was committed by adults, the prosecutor’s office handled the case. When the authorities learned that a child had disappeared

or been the victim of homicide or violence, they were obliged to automatically open a case, regardless of whether the information came from an anonymous complaint or from police reports. In cases involving disappearances, apart from searching for a body, the investigation also attempted to ascertain the reasons for the disappearance, such as the possible involvement of criminal groups, or family problems.

70. Ms. NARVÁEZ SOTO (Mexico) said that the National Human Rights Commission had established a national programme on children and teenagers who had disappeared or been illegally abducted, with the aim of combating and eradicating the phenomenon. In the federal Office of the Attorney-General there was a specialized service devoted to abducted, exploited and missing children, which maintained links with Interpol, particularly in cases where one of the parents illegally left the country with the child in question.

71. Ms. PAYÁN CERVERA (Mexico) said that in cases of complaints of violence against children, the National Human Rights Commission or a state human rights commission was regularly involved. At the national and state levels, prevention programmes were carried out by the offices of the National System for the Comprehensive Development of the Family to raise awareness among children, teachers and parents of the need to avoid domestic and sexual violence. There was also a hotline for reporting violence committed against children, whether it was committed by family members, other adults or the police.

72. The CHAIRPERSON asked about the Government's policy towards breastfeeding.

73. Mr. RUIZ MATUS (Mexico) said that breastfeeding was traditionally prevalent in Mexico. It had been estimated that nearly 60 per cent of mothers breastfed their children at least until the age of 6 months. In 1992 the Government had signed an agreement with baby formula manufacturers and distributors that prohibited the distribution of free samples, advertising in hospitals and the sale of formula below the market price. The Government's advice was to breastfeed for the first six months of life, in accordance with the recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). Mexican labour law stipulated that lactating mothers were entitled to two feeding periods during each shift at work. It was estimated that 92 per cent of mothers breastfed their children upon their return home after delivery in a public hospital.

74. Mr. PÉREZ LÓPEZ (Mexico) said that there were approximately 1,250 centres for disabled people in Mexico, about half of which were primary rehabilitation centres that had opened in the past five years. The states and the federal Government had both shown a clear interest in bringing services for disabled people closer to their homes and families, as the costs of moving to be near a centre for the disabled were often prohibitive. For most families, it was of the utmost importance to have access to a diagnosis and to therapeutic and rehabilitation services that involved family members and were located near the patients' homes. The Government had also set up some 70 mobile rehabilitation centres to serve communities in isolated areas. There were an estimated 1.7 million disabled people in Mexico, including 300,000 who were under the age of 18.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.