



General Assembly

Sixty-eighth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 November 2013

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 18 October 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. von Haff (Vice-Chair)..... (Angola)

Contents

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

- (a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)
- (b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*)

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be sent as soon as possible, under the signature of a member of the delegation concerned, to the Chief of the Documents Control Unit (srcorrections@un.org), and incorporated in a copy of the record.

Corrected records will be reissued electronically on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/>).

13-52145 (E)



Please recycle 



In the absence of Mr. Tafrov (Bulgaria), Mr. von Haff (Angola), Vice-Chair, took the Chair.

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

Agenda item 65: Promotion and protection of the rights of children *(continued)*

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children *(continued)* (A/68/257, 253, 263, 267, 274, 275 and 487)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children *(continued)* (A/67/269)

1. **Ms. Murillo** (Costa Rica) said that poverty was the greatest obstacle to meeting children's needs and protecting and promoting their rights. It affected children, especially marginalized children, disproportionately. To break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and social exclusion, it was necessary to give children equal access to public services and, above all, education. Children were also affected by environmental, social, cultural and family-related problems. Her country's considerable achievements in promoting and protecting children's rights were being threatened by economic recession, natural phenomena, violence, organized crime and drug trafficking. As it strove to build the capacity required to maintain those achievements, the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had proved invaluable.

2. Her Government was deeply concerned about the impact of transnational organized crime and drug trafficking on children, particularly disadvantaged children and adolescents, who were attractive targets for organized criminal activities. With the support of the United Nations Development Programme, it had developed a sustainable security policy that sought to combat organized crime and drug trafficking by attacking both their manifestations and their underlying social causes. She called on the United Nations system to support the efforts of countries affected by those scourges.

3. The Costa Rican school curriculum reflected a belief that school should be an enjoyable place of self-discovery and empowerment, not just a place of learning. The new information and communication technologies had brought tremendous benefits and opportunities for education, leisure and virtual participation. In cooperation with the International

Telecommunication Union, Costa Rica had hosted the recent BYND 2015 Global Youth Summit, whose actual and virtual participants had produced an outcome document with many ideas for the post-2015 development agenda. Her delegation supported the mandates of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict and the Special Representative on Violence against Children, which should remain fully independent and be adequately funded from the United Nations regular budget. In closing, she announced that her country would soon be depositing its instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, following its adoption on 17 October by the Legislative Assembly.

4. **Ms. Semasinghe** (Sri Lanka) said that her country ranked first in South Asia for the child-friendliness of its Government, which also scored very well on health, education and child-protection outcomes. The Government took seriously its obligations to children under the Convention and the first two Optional Protocols thereto, as well as under the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) of the International Labour Organization (ILO). It had established a national child-protection authority and the Penal Code criminalized child labour and had been amended to prohibit cybercrimes against children, soliciting children for sexual purposes and recruiting children for armed combat. Corporal punishment was strictly prohibited. The National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights had a section on children and the Attorney General's Department maintained a separate unit for the prosecution of child abuse offenders, funded in part by UNICEF. Village committees and alert groups monitored offences against children and schoolteachers received training in child counselling. Most police stations had desks for dealing with child and women victims of abuse or violence and children had access to child helplines.

5. The success of her Government's policies and programmes for children was due largely to its consistent focus on service delivery to rural areas. Nearly all children were born in health-care facilities and infant and maternal mortality rates were low. The quality of infant milk products was monitored and immunization was universal. More than 90 per cent of children had birth certificates and maternity leave was

generous. Absolute poverty had declined by more than half, to a little over 6 per cent, between 2006-2007 and 2012, with poverty levels in former conflict zones keeping pace. The goal of universal primary education would be easily achieved by 2015 and the recent introduction of Child-Centric Budget Analysis would ensure that children became more visible in government economic policies.

6. Despite those gains, maternal and child malnutrition remained a major challenge in certain areas and cases of child abuse were being reported in the media. Her Government would redouble its efforts to address those issues and to consolidate its achievements, in partnership with United Nations agencies, donor governments, civil society and private-sector actors.

7. **Ms. Dagher** (Lebanon) said that, as a party to the various international instruments on children's rights, her Government was proud of its progress on promoting and protecting the rights of children, including its national strategy to protect children from all forms of violence, abuse and neglect; its national reproductive health project; the interactive dialogues with adolescents organized without regard to gender, sect or region; and the Lebanese children's forum held in cooperation with the Arab Council for Childhood and Development.

8. More than half the children in her country were Syrian and Palestinian refugees. Despite its desire to protect their rights, her Government did not have the capacity to accommodate them in Lebanese schools, provide them with health services or assist the most vulnerable among them. She appealed to the international community to support her country in its voluntary role as host to more than a million and a half refugees, the majority of whom were children. Pledges of assistance were still falling short of what was urgently needed to confront the humanitarian crisis.

9. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that his Government had recently deposited its instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and urged States that had not yet done so to accelerate their ratification of the Optional Protocol so that it could enter into force. His Government had strengthened its normative framework for children's rights by criminalizing child sexual abuse, trafficking and forced marriage and by enacting a law on social and child welfare, together with a

welfare strategy. Further children's rights measures included a new national action plan for children and a national child-protection database. Alongside a successful campaign to change attitudes towards children with disabilities, the Government had made significant improvements in the area of inclusive education. Another campaign, designed to promote child fostering, had almost halved the number of children living in institutions since 2007. Montenegro had joined other countries in the region in pledging to end the institutionalization of children aged under three and hoped to be among the first to ensure that all its children grew up in a family environment. It was recognized as a regional leader in victim-offender mediation for juveniles.

10. From 28 October to 1 November 2013, his country would be hosting the first meeting of heads of UNICEF offices in Central and Eastern Europe and the Commonwealth of Independent States. Noting the vital support that Montenegro received from UNICEF, he thanked the UNICEF Executive Director and the head of the UNICEF Montenegro office for their efforts and leadership.

11. **Ms. Peña** (Peru) said that her Government had made significant headway on children's rights. Under its National Plan of Action for Children and Adolescents 2002-2012, it was implementing a strategy for generating sustainable development in Peru's rural Amazon areas with a focus on investing in children and adolescents. It was nearing its 2013 target of having a children's ombudsman in 60 per cent of towns of more than 500 urban dwellings. It had adopted strategies for the prevention of family and sexual violence in rural areas and for eradicating child labour. It had also adopted guidelines for preventing violence against students by school staff and was implementing policy guidelines on comprehensive sex education. It was establishing rural educational networks to provide quality education in rural areas. In 2012, its national spending on children and adolescents had increased by more than 90 per cent over the previous year, while regional spending had increased by almost 340 per cent.

12. **Mr. Do Hung Viet** (Viet Nam) said that his Government had introduced laws, mechanisms and creative measures for protecting the rights of all children. It had designed policies and programmes to provide special support to poor or marginalized children, such as Action Month for Children 2013,

which had focused on poor and ethnic minority children, and a major community-based project to improve care and assistance for orphans, street children, children with severe disabilities, children living with HIV/AIDS and children affected by disasters. Every two years, it organized a children's forum on a topic of interest, produced a record of the forum's discussions and recommendations and forwarded it to the relevant agencies for consideration and adoption. As a result of those and other efforts, the Government had met or was on target to meet all the child-related Millennium Development Goals. It could not rest on its laurels, however, and would continue to work beyond 2015, in partnership and cooperation with civil society and the international community, to provide greater protection and care for its children.

13. Children around the world still lacked access to health care, social services and quality education. They were frequent victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Girls were often forced into early marriage and subjected to harmful traditional practices. In many countries, violence against children continued to be condoned and girls were still treated as second-class citizens. In that connection, he reiterated the importance of education for girls. His Government stood ready to work with Member States, United Nations agencies and partners to protect children, especially girls, from all forms of violence, exploitation and abuse and to ensure that they had greater opportunities to participate in and contribute to their communities.

14. **Archbishop Chullikatt** (Observer for the Holy See), recalling that the child's right to life was enshrined in article 6 of the Convention, said that he was encouraged by the Secretary-General's conclusion in his report on the status of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ([A/68/257](#)) that the goal of ending all preventable child deaths was within reach. The Convention afforded the child the right to prenatal care and thus, implicitly, the right to be born, without discrimination or selection on any grounds, including sex, disability or eugenic principles. Prenatal diagnosis for the purpose of deciding whether or not a child would be born was thus inconsistent with the Convention.

15. The Holy See took a holistic view of health and education, both of which were identified in the Secretary-General's report as being essential elements for the achievement of all rights of the child. It agreed

with the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography concerning the importance of prevention and welcomed the attention devoted in her report to the indispensable protective role of the family. Given that role, States had a duty to protect, support and strengthen the family. Moreover, parents' primary responsibility under the Convention for their children's physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development confirmed their fundamental right to freedom of religion, including their freedom to choose schools other than those established by the public authorities.

16. Emphasizing that the General Comments of the Committee on the Rights of the Child were simply opinions and did not constitute agreed language or judicial precedents, he took issue with some elements of General Comments 14 and 15, especially the use of the expression "sexual orientation", on which no international consensus existed, and the recommendation that States should consider allowing education and guidance on sexual health, contraception and so-called safe abortion without the consent of a parent, caregiver or guardian. The Holy See urged the Committee on the Rights of the Child to revise those General Comments in order to bring them into line with its guiding international instruments.

17. **Mr. Kyaw Thu Nyein** (Myanmar) said that his Government was working to address the concerns and recommendations formulated by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in response to Myanmar's combined third and fourth periodic report submitted pursuant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Under a programme instituted in 2011-2012 to promote free, universal access to primary education, more than 5 million students in Myanmar had received free textbooks and exercise books. To increase educational opportunities, the Government had recently enacted a law allowing private schools to teach a full curriculum. Myanmar's education system was co-educational and human rights had been included in the curriculum since 2004-2005.

18. Initiatives taken by his Government to provide better health care for children included the National Plan of Action for Children (2006-2015), the Five-Year Strategic Plan for Child Health Development in Myanmar (2010-2014), the Myanmar National Strategic Plan on Adolescent Health and Development (2009-2013) and a national immunization programme implemented in cooperation with the Japan Committee

for Vaccines for the World's Children and UNICEF. Since signing the action plan to end underage recruitment, the Government had been able to eliminate the recruitment of children and to discharge underage soldiers and return them to their families. It was doing its utmost to ensure that Myanmar was removed from the list of countries that used child soldiers much earlier than the target year. It had renewed its invitation to the Security Council Working Group on Children and Armed Conflict to visit the country and would continue to cooperate closely with the office of the Special Representative on Children and Armed Conflict.

19. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that her Government was reforming Georgia's child welfare system and harmonizing its laws with the Convention. The National Action Plan for Child Welfare and Protection 2012-2015, for which UNICEF had provided valuable assistance, introduced fundamental changes that would, inter alia, optimize institutions and provide recovery services for child victims of violence. The Government had established crisis centres to provide rehabilitation, education and training for street children and had enacted legislative changes to make the adoption system more flexible and simplify adoption and foster care procedures. It had also developed a number of programmes to improve children's health and provide access to affordable, high-quality health care.

20. Unfortunately, children in the occupied regions of Georgia were being deprived of such rights as freedom of movement and the right to education in their native language. In 2013, separatist forces had confiscated textbooks and computers from Georgian-language classes and Russian soldiers stationed along the occupation line had prevented schoolchildren of Georgian ethnicity from crossing it, in some cases by beating them, so that they had been forced to go to the Russian-language school. Children had been detained and kidnapped. In 2012, a boy requiring medical care had died because his parents had been detained. She thanked the international community for supporting Georgia's endeavours on behalf of its children and expressed the hope that it would take effective action to combat the illegal activities and human rights violations taking place in the country's occupied regions.

21. **Ms. Mballa Eyenga** (Cameroon) called for continued emphasis to be placed on protecting

children, especially girls, from violence, economic exploitation and trafficking. In accordance with General Assembly resolution 66/140, her Government had launched a campaign for girls' education and had sought to ensure that girls were equally represented in vocational training, higher education and employment. It placed special emphasis on encouraging girls to develop their potential and on providing guidance for women and girls, especially girls in difficult circumstances. It had recently instituted a programme for awarding stipends to young women to encourage them to study for scientific careers and it held information fairs on careers for young people that particularly targeted girls.

22. Her Government had analysed its laws, policies and programmes on violence against women and girls and assessed the situation on the ground. Although female genital mutilation was currently practised by only 1 per cent of the population, a five-year action plan had been implemented to eradicate it entirely by various means, including the establishment of local anti-mutilation committees and the provision of material, technical and financial assistance to cutters to enable them to change occupation. A programme to combat violence against women had been launched in 2011 and women, families and community leaders were being educated about the adverse consequences of female genital mutilation and child and forced marriages. Community and regional radio operators also received training in the prevention and management of gender-based violence.

23. Her Government had ratified the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2012 and was a party to the ILO Minimum Age Convention (No. 138) and the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), but had insufficient financial and other resources for implementing strategies on behalf of children. She urged Member States and the United Nations system to work harder to include the promotion and protection of children's rights in national, regional and international development objectives, including in the context of the post-2015 development agenda.

24. **Mr. Nkerabigwi** (Rwanda) said that his Government had ratified almost all the international children's rights instruments, including the Convention and the first two Optional Protocols thereto, which had been incorporated into domestic law in 2011. It had submitted its combined third and fourth periodic report

to the Committee on the Rights of the Child in May 2013. Its policy initiatives included a national policy for the elimination of child labour and a national policy on orphans and vulnerable children, with specific strategies for addressing different vulnerabilities. Its National Commission for Children ensured respect for children's rights through committees at the national, district and village levels. Annual summits allowed children's representatives to discuss children's rights with the President, Cabinet ministers, members of Parliament and civil society organizations.

25. Rwanda had achieved a significant reduction in under-5 mortality rates and almost universal immunization of children aged under one year. It had a community-based nutrition programme for combating malnutrition among children under the age of five. As part of its programme to achieve universal 12-year basic education, it had increased primary school enrolment and almost doubled secondary school enrolment, with enrolment rates for girls and boys at near parity at both levels. It had also introduced education for children with physical and mental disabilities. Rwanda's President had received the Children's Champion Award of the United States Fund for UNICEF in 2009 and Rwanda often ranked among the best countries in which to be born a girl.

26. **Ms. Fahmy** (Egypt) said that it was crucial to put the status of children at the heart of the post-2015 global development agenda. Essential measures included mentorship programmes for schoolgirls, the deployment of mobile education technology and the strengthening of partnerships among governments, regional organizations and United Nations special procedure mandate-holders. Commending the recently launched UNICEF initiative to end violence against children, she urged that special attention be paid to children with disabilities. With respect to children in armed conflict, it was vital to criminalize all violations of children's rights and to end impunity for perpetrators. The problems of disabled children and their families and the issue of landmines, which were a major cause of childhood disability, must also be addressed.

27. Despite the challenges it faced, Egypt was continuing to build on the achievements of its long partnership with UNICEF and was on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Egyptian law prohibited all forms of violence against children and programmes were in place to combat trafficking in

children, child marriage and female genital mutilation. A recent initiative, launched in collaboration with the private sector and civil society, addressed the underlying causes of child homelessness.

28. **Mr. Kafou** (Libya) said that under the Qadhafi regime, many Libyan children had not had access to education or health care, especially in rural or remote areas, and that during the revolution children had been coerced or enticed into armed combat and even used as human shields. Many children had died, lost limbs or suffered psychological trauma. Turning the page on the past, the interim Government had instituted new curriculums and conducted a survey to assess the quality of education and was currently reassessing Libya's teaching corps by subject area. It had established a Department of Family and Childhood in the Ministry of Social Affairs and was implementing strategies, plans and programmes of action for children, based on Cabinet recommendations and Arab and international initiatives.

29. **Mr. Al Riyami** (Oman) said that his Government had ratified the various child-related international instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first two Optional Protocols thereto and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the Convention on Transnational Organized Crime. It had taken steps to comply with its children's rights obligations by establishing a Follow-up Commission on Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and by drafting a Children's Act, which was in the final stages of approval. Through the Follow-up Commission, the Ministry of Social Development worked with other ministries and numerous civil society organizations to address the needs of children, focusing on education and physical and emotional well-being. The Ministry of Health monitored child abuse by means of a reporting mechanism and through health centres. The National Human Rights Commission had a comprehensive programme for raising awareness of children's rights in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and the media and organized children's rights presentations in schools and scout camps.

30. **Mr. Bamba** (Côte d'Ivoire), recalling the many serious and sometimes life-threatening problems that children faced, said that he could neither understand nor accept that sexuality and sexual choice should be

an educational priority. While children should have access to technology, it was necessary to protect them from technology that encouraged moral turpitude. Children had the same right to life as adults and abortion was therefore prohibited under Ivorian law.

31. Since the 2010-2011 post-electoral crisis, his Government had taken steps to allow children to be given names in keeping with their origin and culture and to permit any child born in Côte d'Ivoire to acquire Ivorian citizenship. School was free and mandatory for the first 10 years and human rights were part of the curriculum. In keeping with the priority accorded to children's access to health care and with the support of non-governmental organizations such as the Children of Africa Foundation, his Government had recently begun construction of a maternity and children's hospital and was implementing programmes to combat endemic and epidemic childhood diseases through the country's many hospitals and clinics. It had made eradication of the worst forms of child labour a priority across all sectors of the economy. It had signed cooperation agreements with Mali and Burkina Faso on cross-border trafficking of children and would spare no effort to eliminate that and other scourges that afflicted Ivorian children.

32. **Mr. Momen** (Bangladesh) said that his country's commitment to the rights of children, enshrined in its Constitution, was demonstrated by its ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first two Optional Protocols thereto, the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182), the Convention on Consent to Marriage and the child-related conventions of the South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation. It had adopted various laws and policies in line with that commitment, including the Children's Act 2013, the National Children's Policy 2011 and the National Child Labour Elimination Policy 2010. Its National Education Policy 2010 had extended compulsory education to grade 8 and made education for girls free up to grade 12, with free books, free school meals and a stipend. Special schools had been established for children with disabilities. By promoting delayed marriage, the Government had lowered infant mortality, and its vitamin A supplementation, oral rehydration, polio vaccination and universal immunization programmes had saved many lives. Special programmes had been implemented for abandoned children, street children and disabled children. The Government's various child-related

programmes received support from civil society, non-governmental organizations and development partners, including United Nations agencies.

33. Healthy, well-educated children were essential for development and development partners needed to support the modest efforts of developing countries, especially least developed countries, to improve children's health care and education while respecting their cultural and religious sensitivities. A sustained effort to eradicate poverty and more family-centred policies were also vital. Children's lives could be improved only through partnerships across the broadest spectrum, concerted and consistent action, and implementation rather than advocacy.

34. **Ms. Gerengbo Yakivu** (Democratic Republic of the Congo) said that her Government had ratified the Convention and the first two Optional Protocols thereto, as well as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children. It was implementing a national strategy for the protection of vulnerable groups, a national action plan for orphans and vulnerable children and a national strategy to combat maternal and infant mortality. It had adopted a law on child protection and a law protecting persons living with HIV/AIDS. It conducted campaigns to encourage birth registration and school enrolment, provided stipends for students and had established social welfare centres.

35. Her Government was grateful to the Secretary-General for his involvement in the adoption of Security Council resolution [2098 \(2013\)](#), which had expedited the signing of the Addis Ababa Framework Agreement, bringing the hope of food for the malnourished and an end to rape and violence against children. It deplored the recruitment of children by M23 and other rebel groups and had signed an action plan with the United Nations for ending the recruitment and use of children within its own ranks. As a result of cooperation with UNICEF and its partners, more than 3,000 child soldiers in the region had been demobilized.

36. **Mr. Nazirli** (Azerbaijan) said that his Government was working to bring its laws into line with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the first two Optional Protocols thereto, as well as the ILO conventions on child labour. It had made tremendous strides towards meeting the needs of refugee and internally displaced children and had consistently supported international efforts on behalf of children in

areas affected by armed conflict, including the work of the Special Representative for Children and Armed Conflict, whom it urged to attend to the suffering of all children in armed conflict. The real solution to all such suffering was sustainable peace and development, which could be achieved only by attacking the root causes of war.

37. **Mr. Azazi** (Eritrea) said that in order to accelerate and coordinate action in favour of children, his Government had established an interministerial committee, backed by a technical body and with civil society participation. To encourage enrolment in education, it provided free primary, secondary and higher education, paying special attention to girls, nomadic communities and disabled children. Primary schoolchildren were taught in their mother tongue. Although it was still far short of its goal of universal elementary education, it had more than doubled the enrolment rate since the country's independence in 1991.

38. Eritrean law contained provisions protecting vulnerable children from abuse, exploitation and violence and the Government had implemented a plan of action to combat the commercial exploitation of children, as well as a public awareness campaign to combat trafficking in persons. Street children and other vulnerable groups were reunited with their extended families or cared for in group homes. Female genital mutilation and corporal punishment were banned. Under Eritrean law, the minimum age for admission to employment was 14 and no contract was enforceable against a person under the age of 18. An effective legal mechanism prevented the recruitment of underage children. To improve the protection of children in conflict with the law, the Government had established juvenile probation services, separate chambers for hearing juvenile offenders and separate detention facilities. It looked forward to working with the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the occasion of the consideration of its fourth periodic report.

39. **Ms. Kugot** (Ukraine) urged Member States that had not yet done so to accede to and implement such children's rights instruments as the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the three Optional Protocols thereto and the Council of Europe Conventions on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, Action against Trafficking in Human Beings and Cybercrime. Her Government was working to comply fully with the Convention on the Rights of

the Child through a national action plan and additional measures undertaken in response to the 2013 concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on its seventh periodic report. Most recently, it had implemented programmes targeting homeless or neglected children, families and human trafficking. It had also undertaken a reform of institutions for homeless and orphan children, who were being placed increasingly in adoptive or foster families or family-like settings. It had established an ombudsman for children and an advisory council on child rights protection. As the current Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), it had organized the 2013 OSCE Youth Summit. It greatly appreciated the support provided by UNICEF and remained fully committed to creating a favourable environment for all children.

40. **Ms. Deer** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC)) said that children who were not members of armed forces or armed groups were entitled to special protection, over and above the general protections afforded to civilians. Persons aged under 18 should not be recruited into armed forces or armed groups and the unlawful recruitment or use of children in hostilities should be prosecuted without exception. She urged States to follow through on the pledges that they had made at the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent to comply with their obligations under international humanitarian law. To assist them, ICRC had recently developed a fact sheet of guiding principles for the domestic implementation of a comprehensive system of protection for children associated with armed forces or armed groups, as well as model legislative provisions. However, the best solution was to prevent their recruitment in the first place. Because prevention required an understanding of the specific context, ICRC supported community-based approaches. Once children had been recruited, formal disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programmes were needed to address the often major challenges of returning them to their families and communities. Children unlawfully recruited or used in hostilities and later accused of domestic or international crimes should be regarded primarily as victims and States should set a minimum age for criminal responsibility of not less than 12 years.

41. **Ms. Klein Solomon** (Observer for the International Organization for Migration) said that

according to the latest figures, there were some 35 million international child migrants, of whom a third were aged between 15 and 19. She was particularly troubled by the increase in child trafficking because child migrants, especially girls in domestic employment, were highly vulnerable. While there was an urgent need for States to step up capacity-building and training for immigration officers, border officials, police officers and labour officials, among others, combating child trafficking was not just a government responsibility. Greater partnership was also needed among international organizations, civil society and the private sector. She was alarmed by the continuing cross-border recruitment of children, as well as their displacement by humanitarian crises and armed conflict. Effective cross-border coordination was needed to ensure the safe return of children who had fled conflicts and measures to reintegrate children should be included systematically in post-conflict recovery strategies. She deplored the absence of specific legal protections for the rights of unaccompanied migrant children and called upon States to implement such protections holistically in the spirit of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

42. **Mr. Lindal** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that half of newborn deaths occurred within the first 24 hours after birth, as a result of premature birth, severe infection or asphyxia. Access to neonatal care and safe birthing facilities was therefore of the utmost importance. The Order of Malta ran neonatal health centres around the world: in Argentina, where its Buenos Aires hospital had helped to almost double the survival rate for premature babies; in Chad, where one of its four health centres was 24 hours by ox cart from the nearest hospital; in Israel, where its Holy Family Hospital provided intensive care for premature infants, regardless of the origin, religion or income of their families; and in many other countries. It also ran successful programmes for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as well as homes that cared for abandoned babies infected with HIV. It operated several programmes specifically for girl children and its educational initiatives sought to enrol equal numbers of male and female students.

43. **Mr. Cassidy** (Observer for the International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that the elimination of child labour remained central to the mission of ILO, which was providing child-related technical support and awareness-raising activities and projects in

90 countries. A recent ILO report on ending child labour in domestic work outlined the abuses suffered by more than 17 million children worldwide. The report called for improved data collection and statistical tools and urged governments to ratify and implement the Minimum Age Convention (No. 138), the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) and the Domestic Workers Convention (No. 189). The Child Labour Platform, a recent joint initiative by ILO, the International Trade Union Confederation, the International Organization of Employers and the Global Compact Office, identified supply-chain and community-related obstacles to the implementation of ILO conventions, as well as ways of overcoming them and catalysing collective action. As a result of ILO efforts, a number of large multinational companies had already developed practical strategies for combating child labour in their global supply chains.

44. At the Third Global Conference on Child Labour, held in Brasilia from 8 to 10 October 2013, participants had called on governments to create child labour-free zones, ensure child labourers' access to justice, guarantee a child's right to education and provide rehabilitation programmes. Its outcome document advocated an integrated, coherent and effective use of public services and policies to ensure that all children completed school and training instead of engaging in child labour and acknowledged the need to promote decent work and full employment for adults so that families were not dependent on the income generated by child labour.

45. **Ms. Bar-Sadeh** (Israel), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that by repeating baseless accusations at the Committee's previous meeting, the observer for the State of Palestine had once again trampled on the Committee's procedures in the same way that Palestinians trampled on the rights of their own children, using them as suicide bombers against Israeli children and poisoning their minds with lies about Israel.

46. **Ms. Abelulbaai** (Saudi Arabia), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, advised the representative of the Syrian Arab Republic not to make accusations against her country in the absence of confirmed reports. Sheikh Muhammad al-Arifi had no official status in Saudi Arabia and had in any case totally denied having issued the alleged fatwa of sexual jihad by temporary marriage, which was, moreover, in violation of her country's values.

47. **Ms. Rasheed** (Observer for the State of Palestine), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, said that her statement at the Committee's previous meeting had been a brief but accurate portrayal of the bitter reality of life under occupation. Israel's statement in exercise of the right of reply attempted to distort the facts and distract attention from Israel's violations of international humanitarian and human rights law. It was the racist statement of an occupying Power that somehow believed that Palestinian parents did not love their children in the same way that others did and would willingly place them in harm's way. The State of Palestine continued to condemn the killing of all children, Israeli and Palestinian, and called on Israel to do likewise. The only way to give both Israeli and Palestinian children the life they deserved was for Israel to cease its occupation.

The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.