



General Assembly

Sixty-ninth session

Official Records

Distr.: General
12 November 2014

Original: English

Third Committee

Summary record of the 18th meeting

Held at Headquarters, New York, on Friday, 17 October 2014, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Mesquita Borges (Timor-Leste)

Contents

Agenda item 64: 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/>).

14-62887 (E)



Please recycle



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

Agenda item 64: Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*)

(a) Promotion and protection of the rights of children (*continued*) (A/69/165, A/69/166, A/69/212, A/69/260, A/69/262, A/69/264 and A/69/394-S/2014/684)

(b) Follow-up to the outcome of the special session on children (*continued*) (A/69/258)

1. **Mr. Mahmoud** (Egypt) said that children should be at the core of the post-2015 development agenda, and that their fundamental right to education should be realized. It was crucial to ensure broader coordination on children's matters among Governments, regional organizations, institutions and the special procedures mandate holders. Egypt welcomed the recent conclusion of a cooperation agreement between the League of Arab States and the United Nations to strengthen the protection of children affected by armed conflict in the Arab world. It also strongly condemned the attacks on schools in Gaza. All acts of violence against children should be criminalized and the perpetrators punished.

2. Thanks in part to its long partnership with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), Egypt was on track to meet the Millennium Development Goals. Egyptian legislation prohibited all forms of violence against children and many programmes were in place to end such violence, including programmes to counter child marriage and trafficking in children. Commending the work of the United Nations Population Fund-UNICEF Joint Programme on Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting, he said that Egypt would be scaling up its own programme. It was also working with the private sector and civil society to address the underlying causes of child homelessness.

3. **Mr. Tafrov** (Bulgaria) said that his Government was investing in quality education and health care for all children, early childhood development, support for children with disabilities and ending violence against children. It was working to keep children under the age of 3 years and disabled children out of residential institutions and to reduce child institutionalization in general through legislative changes and support for at-risk families. It had also made significant progress in improving the quality of residential childcare institutions. His Government firmly believed that

children's rights should be at the heart of the post-2015 development agenda, and it would continue to work for renewed global action to promote and protect them.

4. **Ms. Louali** (Niger) said that her country was very serious about the commitments made in General Assembly resolution 68/146 on the girl child and resolution 68/148 on child, early and forced marriage. To increase girls' enrolment in school, Niger had made their education free and compulsory. Unfortunately, many were still not enrolled because of safety concerns and financial, institutional or cultural barriers, while those enrolled were often unmotivated or kept at home to do household chores. To discourage child, early and forced marriages, Niger was conducting outreach activities with the support of the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and the media. Its targeted approach to violence against children included programmes to combat forced marriage, violence in schools and female genital mutilation. It had adopted national goals and practical strategies for assisting vulnerable children, thereby increasing birth registration, combatting child labour and preventing juvenile delinquency, violence against minors and the exploitation of children.

5. **Mr. Do Hung Viet** (Viet Nam) said that much remained to be done to guarantee the rights enshrined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Viet Nam had incorporated the Convention into its national legal system and was implementing a 2012-2020 national action plan to close the gap in living conditions among children in different regions and enhance children's quality of life. It had achieved universal access and gender parity in primary education and was moving towards universal lower secondary education. While Viet Nam had also made progress in upholding children's rights to receive care and protection, as well as their rights to express their views, participate in social activities and be consulted in decision-making processes, further efforts were needed to end child abuse and violence against children, eradicate poverty and reduce undernutrition. For developing States to realize fully the rights of children, an increase in official development assistance was essential. In that connection, he expressed appreciation to UNICEF and many other international partners for their long-standing support.

6. **Mr. Waheed** (Maldives) said that the greatest single threat to children in his country was global climate change. As one of the first signatories of the Convention and a lead negotiator on the third optional protocol, the Maldives was deeply committed to ensuring the highest international standards for children's rights. At the national level, it was working to harmonize its legislation with the provisions of the Convention and its protocols, improve existing laws and fill any emerging legal gaps. To supplement its child protection provisions, it had passed legislation imposing stricter punitive measures for child abuse and an anti-trafficking law with specific provisions for child victims. Many children lived in single-parent households and, especially in the capital, in overcrowded housing where they were exposed to physical abuse, exploitation, substance abuse, gang violence and criminal activity. To counter those problems, it emphasized youth-targeted policies and education. All children were enrolled in primary school and guaranteed a free education until the end of the secondary level, while proper access was ensured for children with special needs. In 2012 the Maldives had established its first university. In closing, he called on the international community to come together to safeguard children's rights, especially their right to freedom from violence.

7. **Ms. Kupradze** (Georgia) said that her country had recently ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and adopted a national plan to realize the rights of disabled persons, including children. Amendments to Georgia's 2012 law on domestic violence had made violence against a child or a child's family member in the child's presence an aggravating circumstance. The national strategy on human rights for 2014-2016 included provisions for improving the education system, developing health care and social services, reducing poverty and child mortality and ensuring the protection of children from violence. Georgia had a national action plan for child welfare and protection and had launched special programmes to provide additional, more affordable and more accessible health care for children, including a new solidarity fund, which would initially focus on expensive treatments for cancer patients, primarily children.

8. While Georgia spared no effort to assist internally displaced children, the only durable solution was for all internally displaced persons to return to their homes

in safety and dignity. Unfortunately, the situation in the occupied regions of Georgia had deteriorated since the so-called presidential elections. Children in Abkhazia and Tskhinvali continued to be deprived of their right to freedom of movement and to education in their native language. Russian soldiers stationed along the occupation line prevented schoolchildren of Georgian ethnicity from entering Georgian-controlled territory for school or even for medical care, which in some cases had been fatal. In the Russian-controlled territory, some children with Georgian birth certificates had been expelled from preschool. Georgia stood ready to contribute to international efforts to ensure more effective protection of children, particularly in armed conflict and post-conflict situations.

9. **Ms. Kamara** (Liberia) said that, over ten years of peace and development, Liberia had made protecting children's rights a priority. Working with all stakeholders, it had focused on building child protection systems, ensuring access to quality education and health care for all children and alleviating poverty. In September 2011, it had passed the National Children's Act, which set out the rights of children, and more recently it had adopted the Act to Ban Trafficking in Persons and the New Education Reform Act.

10. In Liberia, many girls had been victims of gender-based violence. With the help of development partners, safe homes were being made available, and the Government had established a juvenile court and rehabilitation centre, as well as a woman and child protection unit within the Liberia National Police. The Child Protection Network was endeavouring to implement the priority recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, and in 2013 the Government had signed an agreement with UNICEF funding a joint child protection programme for the period up to 2017. National programmes and policies were optimized for women and girls, and specific programmes targeted harmful practices such as child and early marriage and female genital mutilation. With support from the European Union and UNICEF, Liberia had instituted cash transfer programmes for households in extreme poverty, which accounted for almost 50 per cent of the population.

11. The onslaught of the Ebola epidemic had devastated the social fabric and peeled away hard-won gains, eroding the already fragile health system, undermining educational progress and threatening food

security and economic viability. Liberia was grateful to UNICEF and all other entities that had begun to address the plight of orphan survivors.

12. **Mr. Elbahi** (Sudan) said that his country was a party to all of the international instruments on children's rights. It had participated in the launch of the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign in March 2014 and had hosted the African Union Regional Conference on Human Trafficking and Smuggling in the Horn of Africa on 13-16 October 2014. At the national level, it had adopted many measures to protect the rights of children, including most recently a national plan for the protection and promotion of human rights (2013-2023), and it would continue to work alongside UNICEF and the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to promote and protect the rights of children.

13. With respect to children in armed conflict, the first imperative was to end the conflict by helping States convince rebels to lay down their arms and return to dialogue. The signing of agreements to end child recruitment was not enough. It was also essential to address the root causes of child recruitment by attacking poverty and climate change, ending unilateral economic sanctions, increasing debt forgiveness, strengthening technical assistance, improving education and health care and helping countries emerging from conflict to rebuild. Governments should be involved in all efforts to assist children in situations of conflict, and such action should be conducted in a transparent manner with due respect for national sovereignty. Lastly, the reports of the Secretary-General should avoid equivocal statements such as references to aggressors wearing military uniforms, since rebel troops often wore military garb that closely resembled national uniforms. They should present only accurate, verified information, which should be shared with Governments before being included.

14. **Ms. Haile** (Eritrea) said that her country had met the health-related Millennium Development Goals and, with regard to education, it was building schools in disadvantaged areas and deploying mobile schools to serve nomadic communities. It was working to assist street children and to place orphans with their extended families or in group homes rather than large institutions. Eritrean laws prohibited and punished all crimes against children, including trafficking in children, female genital mutilation, early marriage and child recruitment into armed forces, which was

culturally repugnant. It would continue its holistic and multisectoral approach to development in partnership with the United Nations system.

15. **Ms. Karabaeva** (Kyrgyzstan) said that children's rights were protected under her country's Constitution and the 2012 Children's Code. Kyrgyzstan's social protection strategy for 2012-2014 took into account the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the provisions of major international human rights instruments, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The national reproductive health strategy protected the rights of children. Kyrgyzstan had been one of the first countries in the former Soviet bloc to adopt the live birth and stillbirth criteria recommended by the World Health Organization, and it had reduced its under-5 mortality rate from 35.3 per 100,000 live births in 2007 to 23.5 per 100,000 in 2013. Ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities would soon be completed. Persons with disabilities made up 2.6 per cent of the population of Kyrgyzstan and included 26,000 children.

16. Kyrgyzstan had a young population and therefore attached particular importance to supporting the family. It had established more than 40 rehabilitation and crisis centres, as well as a rehabilitation centre for street children and centres for child victims of violence. In addition to implementing a special programme to combat human trafficking, in 2012 it had ratified the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which established safeguards to prevent the kidnapping or sale of children.

17. **Ms. Mogobe** (Botswana) said that since the passage of the Children's Act in 2009, his country had invested substantially in education, the general health infrastructure and access to health services. It had exponentially increased maternal and child health interventions, such as immunizations, antenatal and postnatal care, supplementary feedings and prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV. However, despite relatively easy access to anti-retroviral drugs, communities in remote areas still had unacceptably high child mortality rates. Botswana also continued to grapple with child labour, a lack of facilities for disabled children and a lack of children's courts and lawyers trained to deal with legal matters affecting children. In the face of insufficient human and

financial resources, Botswana looked to the United Nations system and its development partners for continued support.

18. **Ms. Mohammed** (Bahrain) said that in 2012 her country had enacted its first law that specifically and comprehensively addressed the rights and responsibilities of the child. With the adoption of that law, Bahrain had reached the level of the developed States with regard to the protection of children. Under that law, the protection of children and their interests should be the top priority in any decision or action on children's issues.

19. The Child Protection Centre reported to the Ministry of Social Development and worked to protect children from all forms of abuse and neglect, including sexual and psychological abuse. The Centre provided psychological, social and legal services and worked to keep children in their families as much as possible. It raised awareness regarding children's rights and followed up on the implementation of laws and conventions concerning the protection of children. The Centre received calls made on the "child rescue" line, in addition to calls transferred by officials in various ministries, security centres and the Office of the Public Prosecutor.

20. The National Commission for Children formulated a national strategy that helped Government agencies to develop and strengthen programmes related to children's rights. The Commission also ensured that children were protected by the law. It promoted coordination among various Government agencies and private institutions working with children and engaged in cooperation with Arab and international organizations. It was also creating a detailed database on children's issues.

21. The Commission had established an integrated system to meet children's needs, with four main elements: the right to health and life; the right to education and development; the right to protection; and the right to participation and non-discrimination. The national strategy for the child (2012-2016) served as the overall framework and was based on respect for human rights, equality of the sexes and the integration of persons with disabilities. The strategy had benefited from cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and UNICEF and was based on the relevant domestic legislation and a number of international instruments, including the

Convention on the Rights of the Child. In that connection, Ms. Amal Salman Aldoseri of Bahrain had been appointed a member of the Committee on the Rights of the Child for the period 2013-2017.

22. **Mr. Nina** (Albania) said that in 2013 the Albanian Parliament had adopted a milestone resolution on the rights of children that provided, inter alia, for increased parliamentary control over the public institutions charged with the protection of children's rights. In accordance with a new strategy to address the challenge of enrolling Roma children in school, birth and vaccination certificates would no longer be a prerequisite for enrolment, and teachers and educators would reach out to Roma parents to emphasize the value of education.

23. In a joint effort with other Permanent Missions, his delegation had organized a side event on 14 April 2014 to celebrate the entry into force of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. The optional Protocol recognized children's legal standing to seek redress for the violation of their rights, consolidated the international system of accountability for children's rights and required States parties to establish domestic remedies.

24. **Ms. Shvydchenko** (Ukraine) said that her Government was committed to promoting and protecting the rights of children, even in increasingly difficult circumstances. According to the Human Rights Monitoring Mission in Ukraine, more than 30 children had been killed and 80 wounded in eastern Ukraine since the pro-Russian takeover in April 2014. More than half of the children in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions had no access to education. The Ministry of Education had postponed the commencement of the school year and distance-learning courses had been offered for children in grades 5-11. Only a little over half of candidates for university admission had been successful. One third of the 275,000 internally displaced persons were children, and Ukraine was making every effort to facilitate their enrolment in school and provide psychological assistance.

25. Her Government strongly objected to a programme launched in occupied Crimea by the Russian Federation to facilitate adoptions of Ukrainian orphans in Crimea by Russian citizens. That programme was a blatant violation of the norms of

international law, including article 21 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and such adoptions were null and void.

26. **Mr. Amoudokpo** (Togo) said that his Government invested generously in education, which was the foundation of future development. Major initiatives included the recruitment and training of teachers, the construction of teacher training schools, experimentation with inclusive education and measures to increase the supply of technical and vocational training. Togo also had taken steps to boost the demand for education, by eliminating school fees at the preschool and primary levels, halving secondary school fees for girls, operating school canteens in poor rural areas and providing stipends, financial assistance and school supply kits for poor children, especially girls. It regularly organized awareness-raising talks to change behaviours and attitudes towards education among vulnerable groups such as girls and disabled children. It had set up a child abuse hotline, conducted awareness-raising campaigns to combat sexual violence, early pregnancies and early marriage and funded schools for children with physical and mental disabilities. Despite much progress, many fewer girls completed secondary school than boys, and rural school enrolment and completion rates were a third of those of urban areas. Reaffirming his Government's gratitude to its bilateral and multilateral partners for their ongoing support, he noted that Ms. Suzanne Aho Assouma of Togo had been elected to the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

27. **Mr. Aliyev** (Azerbaijan) said that his Government had established a monitoring mechanism to strengthen the enforcement of children's rights. In addition, the State Committee for Family, Women and Children's Affairs had begun work on a national programme to place children living in State institutions in families, and had established an electronic databank of information on the implementation of children's rights. Child mortality had declined, thanks to the elimination of polio, progress in eliminating malaria and the repair, renovation and construction of medical facilities for children. All citizens were guaranteed a free education through secondary school, and many preschools and kindergartens had recently been built or repaired.

28. As a country that had suffered the grave consequences of aggression, Azerbaijan strongly condemned all violations of humanitarian law affecting children in situations of armed conflict. In that

connection, he reiterated the request made in General Assembly resolution 67/177 on missing persons, of which Azerbaijan had been a main sponsor, that States should pay the utmost attention to cases of children reported missing in connection with armed conflicts and take appropriate measures to search for and identify those children and reunite them with their families.

29. **Mr. Madut** (South Sudan) said that his Government was committed to the well-being of children, who represented more than half of the country's population. The Child Act of 2008 protected them from harmful practices such as labour exploitation, early marriage and forced circumcision. It also made primary schooling compulsory and gave parents a choice between public and private schools. Between 2006 and 2009, the literacy rate for young people had risen from 28 to 40 per cent, and, thanks to the political will to promote gender equality and empower women, girls had accounted for around 60 per cent of primary school enrolment. However, much remained to be done to improve coverage, effectiveness, equity, quality and relevance. Years of conflict had interfered with teacher training, and many teachers had fled or been internally displaced. A large number of children had never attended school or been forced to leave by the civil war. When re-enrolled, many overaged pupils, especially girls, had dropped out. With the recent resumption of conflict, children were once again being displaced to areas where access to schooling was not assured.

30. In June 2014 his Government had reaffirmed its commitment to the action plan to end the recruitment and use of children in Government armed forces. As a matter of fact, the process of demobilizing and reintegrating child soldiers had begun even before the 2005 comprehensive peace agreement, and child recruitment had been prohibited under the Child Act. His Government urged the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict to condemn the blatant recruitment and use of children by the rebel forces.

31. **Ms. Ndayishimiye** (Burundi) said that the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been thoroughly domesticated in her country, which provided free schooling for all children and free health care to pregnant women and children under the age of 5 years. Additional measures to promote the well-being of children included a national child

protection policy, a national strategy on street children, minimum standards for residential childcare institutions, amendments to the Labour Code and a gender-based violence law. Burundi had also established a national juvenile justice system, a national coordinating committee on child protection, working groups on various child welfare issues, a national children's forum and child protection committees in most of the provinces. Many of the challenges facing Burundi, such as street children, child-headed households, war orphans, poverty and the HIV/AIDS pandemic, had been exacerbated, if not created, by the civil war. With the support of UNICEF, it was working to demobilize and reintegrate child soldiers in the context of its overall disarmament, demobilization and reintegration programme.

32. **Ms. Bardaoui** (Tunisia) said that her Government was working to promote the rights of children and break down the cultural and socioeconomic barriers to their realization. Although children's rights had been protected by the Child Protection Code since 1995, they had gained constitutional status under the new Constitution, which, *inter alia*, made education free and mandatory until the age of 16 years. With 97 per cent of school-age children enrolled in school, Tunisia had been invited to serve as a champion country in the Secretary-General's Global Education First Initiative. It would nevertheless increase its efforts to promote the well-being of children, particularly in view of the persistent differences between rural and urban environments.

33. **Ms. Picco** (Monaco) said that, having ratified the third optional protocol to the Convention in September 2013, Monaco was proud to be a party to all of the international children's rights instruments. A contributor to UNICEF, it was also home to many NGOs working on behalf of children, including the World Association of Children's Friends, which had been established at the instigation of Princess Grace.

34. She called on Member States to renew their efforts to protect and promote the rights of all children in accordance with the letter and spirit of the Convention. Expressing particular concern about the rights of children in situations of armed conflict, she condemned the targeting of schools and hospitals and the use of children as human shields, and she also underscored the need to assist the social reintegration of former child soldiers through education and

vocational training. In defining a development agenda beyond 2015, it was essential to draw on lessons learned, including in particular the Machel report on the impact of armed conflict on children (A/51/306) and the Pinheiro report on violence against children (A/61/299).

35. **Mr. Šćepanović** (Montenegro) said that his country welcomed the entry into force of the third optional protocol to the Convention, which it had ratified in 2013, and strongly supported the "Children, Not Soldiers" campaign. In 2013, with technical assistance from UNICEF and UNDP and financial support from the European Union, Montenegro had launched a foster parent recruitment campaign that had increased the number of children in non-kinship foster homes by 40 per cent, thereby reducing institutionalization. Thanks to another UNICEF-supported campaign, the number of children with disabilities attending primary school had increased from just under 70 to 3,600. In the area of juvenile justice, Montenegro had been recognized as a leader in the region for its use of victim-offender mediation for juveniles.

36. **Mr. da Cruz** (Angola) said that his Government was working to implement the rights enshrined in the Convention and his country's Constitution. To encourage birth registration, it had eliminated the registration fee and set up registration centres in maternity hospitals and municipal government offices. It had achieved dramatic reductions in infant, child and maternal mortality as well as in child deaths due to malaria. However, greater efforts were needed to reduce the very high number of deliveries that were not assisted by qualified personnel, as well as to combat tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, trypanosomiasis and the proliferation of counterfeit medicines. With a view to improving access to social services, particularly in rural areas, it had adopted formal strategies for combating poverty and addressing violence against children and had set up a national child protection network. Following its recent ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its optional protocol, it had adopted a national strategy for the social inclusion of disabled children.

37. **Mr. Zulu** (Zambia) said that his Government called on all Member States that had not yet done so to domesticate the Convention on the Rights of the Child in its entirety. His Government was working on a Children's Code for that purpose. Zambia had also

enacted and amended legislation to enhance the implementation of child survival, development and protection programmes, and it was working with NGOs to strengthen systems to promote and protect the rights of children.

38. In the area of education, Zambia was building new schools, abolishing school fees for primary education, allowing girls who had dropped out because of pregnancy to return to school and including human rights courses in the curriculum. Those efforts had led to steady progress in enrolment, completion and gender parity at the primary school level. To provide access to quality higher education as well, it had embarked on the construction of public universities in each of the 10 provinces. It had eradicated polio and significantly reduced measles morbidity and mortality, but despite success in combatting many of the other major causes of infant and child mortality, many young children continued to die of malaria and, increasingly, HIV/AIDS. Ultimately, to ensure the well-being of children, it was necessary to eradicate poverty. Therefore, with 60 per cent of households below the poverty line, Zambia was implementing measures such as a welfare assistance scheme, a cash transfer scheme, women's economic empowerment programmes, a bursaries scheme and school meal programmes.

39. **Mr. Tupouniua** (Tonga) said that it had ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child in 1995 and had established a national coordinating committee for children in 1997. Its most recent strategic development framework placed strong emphasis on children's health and nutrition. Tonga generally budgeted more for education than any other sector, and child literacy rates were high, with almost all children completing primary school and the overwhelming majority going on to secondary school. With regard to cyberbullying, Tonga had organized a workshop on the subject in August as well as an outreach programme and consultations with key stakeholders.

40. Tonga was also deeply concerned about climate change. As recognized in the outcome document of the third International Conference on Small Island Developing States, children were uniquely susceptible to the adverse effects of climate change.

41. **Ms. Urruela Arenales** (Guatemala) said that although her country was no longer at war, Guatemalans had first-hand knowledge of the suffering of children in armed conflict. Civil war had been

replaced by armed violence, often tied to transnational organized crime, illicit arms trafficking and drug trafficking. Criminal groups recruited poor children and adolescents and used arms left over from the civil war or purchased legally elsewhere and trafficked into Guatemala. Resources that might have been devoted to development, including education and health care for children, were funnelled into law enforcement. No country could grapple successfully with such complex challenges alone, much less a developing country, and Guatemala therefore particularly welcomed the adoption of the Arms Trade Treaty.

42. The new information and communications technologies could be tremendous tools for development and were increasingly used in education; it was essential to improve access to them in developing countries. It was also crucial to address climate change, which was causing the prolonged drought affecting the well-being of Guatemalans of every age. Her Government would continue to work to ensure adequate child nutrition, provide universal access to primary education and reduce infant mortality.

43. **Ms. Smaila** (Nigeria) said that her country had ratified and domesticated all of the major international children's rights instruments. Nigeria condemned the heinous crimes committed by the terrorist group Boko Haram; it was using all resources at its disposal to defeat it and to bring the kidnapped Chibok schoolgirls home alive. His Government was implementing a comprehensive programme to assist and empower local communities, which included improving the security of schools in states under emergency rule and working with States to identify other vulnerabilities. It was endeavouring to deradicalize extremists through prison interventions and vocational training and to improve educational outcomes in extremist strongholds in order to open new avenues for young people and make them less vulnerable to recruitment. It was grateful for the support of the United Nations and the international community and would work tirelessly with all stakeholders to combat the insurgency.

44. **Mr. Gaddi** (Observer for the Sovereign Military Order of Malta) said that the Order was helping to protect, educate and nurture children around the world. In Uganda, for example, it supported a highly effective nutritional centre at Maracha Hospital, and in Cambodia, working with local health authorities and partner organizations, it had been able to halve the

infant mortality rate in one province. In Israel, its Holy Family Hospital, which was open to all, regardless of origin, religion or income, provided modern birthing facilities and neonatal care for the population of Bethlehem. In Syria, it was assisting not only struggling mothers and small children, but also a border district school that served more than a thousand children, and it was providing Syrian refugee children in Turkey with schoolbags, notebooks, pencils and a warm meal every day.

45. **Ms. Tougas** (Observer for the International Committee of the Red Cross), addressing the issue of sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict, said that children in armed conflict could be exposed to sexual violence as victims, witnesses or forced participants. Boys and girls might have different experiences and therefore have different needs. Children born of rape were particularly vulnerable to abuse, rejection, infanticide and other forms of violence. All victims required unimpeded access to essential services, including medical and psychosocial support, education and livelihood opportunities. To overcome the social taboo that prevented them from seeking help, they should receive full assurance both of support and of protection from reprisal, exclusion or threats of harm. They should also have access to legal and administrative remedies. Preventing and responding to sexual violence against children required dialogue with all of the parties to the conflict.

46. At the thirty-first International Conference of the Red Cross and Red Crescent, many States had committed to an action plan of specific measures for complying with international humanitarian law on sexual violence against children in situations of armed conflict. Under international humanitarian law, all States were required to prohibit, criminalize and effectively investigate and prosecute the unlawful recruitment or use of children in hostilities, as well as any instances of sexual violence against them, regardless of which party to the conflict was responsible. To prevent and respond more effectively to sexual violence against children during armed conflict, States should enhance their competencies and capacities through awareness campaigns and training. They should also ensure that victims received appropriate medical, psychosocial and legal assistance and should protect them from future sexual violence by ending the unlawful recruitment or use of children and holding the perpetrators accountable.

47. **Mr. Rakofsky** (Russian Federation), speaking in exercise of the right of reply, expressed his shock at the cynicism displayed by the Ukrainian representative, who had attempted to misrepresent as criminal acts the Russian Federation's efforts to ensure children's security. Dozens of children had died, not because of non-existent Russian aggression, but because of Ukrainian artillery and rocket fire on civilian targets, including schools and kindergartens.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.