



**Convention on the
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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Fiftieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1389th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 23 January 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. LEE

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Consolidated third and fourth periodic reports of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea (CRC/C/PRK/4, CRC/C/PRK/Q/4 and CRC/C/PRK/Q/4/Add.1) (continued)

1. The members of the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea resumed places at the Committee table.
2. The CHAIRPERSON said that members of the Committee still had a number of questions.
3. Mr. PARFITT expressed concern that so many children were in institutions and asked whether the State party had considered other forms of care. If parents were having difficulties with a child, was the extended family - grandparents, uncles and aunts - regarded as an option for alternative care? He also wondered how often children were placed in foster care; in the view of the Committee, institutionalization should be contemplated only as a last resort.
4. He would also like to know whether military training was provided in the school system, and if so, what it entailed. Were there exercises and drills? The Committee did not regard grooming children for future military duty at such an early age to be in their best interests.
5. It seemed that the State's first response to domestic child abuse was penal in nature. Indeed, a parent who had neglected a child could be sentenced to two years' hard labour. Rather than put parents in prison, he wondered whether any attempt was made to assist the family, through parenting classes or other social welfare measures, so that the child could stay in the family, provided of course that the child's safety could be assured.
6. Mr. PURAS asked whether the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had introduced minimum standards of services for disabled children and their families and promoted alternatives to institutional care. Many countries had shifted from institutional to community or home care not only to improve protection of the rights of children, but also because it was more effective and less costly to rely on the family rather than the staff at institutions. Paragraph 138 of the report of the State party referred to the case of an official from the Ministry of Public Health who had helped a child with a disability. That was most laudable, but it suggested that such instances were accidental and were exceptions to the rule. Assistance to such children must be made part of the set of services offered.
7. The State party had good primary care and a successful immunization programme, but drawing on his own experience in the Soviet Union, he said that when health care was free and accessible, abuses sometimes occurred, for example the bribing of physicians or influence-peddling to obtain better service. He wondered whether an assessment had been made of such problems and whether any measures were planned to address them.
8. Data on breastfeeding would be welcome, since the Committee had reports that breastfeeding rates were on the decline. Information on water quality and on sanitary and hygienic conditions would also be useful, given their importance in promoting children's health.

9. In paragraph 52 of its concluding observations on the State party's second periodic report (CRC/C/15/Add.239), the Committee had expressed concern that insufficient attention had been given to adolescent health issues, but as the current report did not respond to that comment, he enquired what had been done to develop mental health services for children and adolescents.

10. Ms. HERCZOG asked whether any effort had been made to familiarize parents, teachers and care providers in institutions and other settings with alternatives to corporal punishment and whether children were taught to communicate and behave in a non-violent manner.

11. Mr. ZERMATTEN wondered whether the State party had juvenile courts and, if so, whether they were decentralized. It would also be useful if the delegation could elaborate on the form of punishment referred to in the report as "public education".

12. Having received reports about street children in the State party, the Committee would like to know how the Government was caring for them and whether there were alternatives to placing them in an institution or charging them with an offence.

13. Mr. KOTRANE sought further clarification on the Family Law, and on the Criminal Law and the Criminal Procedure Law of 2005. In its concluding observations of 2004, the Committee had expressed concern about the excessive degree of State involvement in childcare, to the detriment of parental involvement. Children were sometimes placed in nurseries for up to five days; that was too long. He would like to know what had changed since then. He also asked whether twins and triplets were still taken away from their parents and placed in State institutions. The Committee had expressed concern that children whose parents had committed an offence could be separated from them and lose all contact with them. Had the State party modified that practice? It would also be useful for the delegation to comment on reports that imprisoned mothers were sometimes driven to commit infanticide.

14. The report said little about the system of juvenile justice. Did prosecution and trial take place in the presence of an independent, impartial judge? He was surprised to read, in paragraph 238 of the report, that children who committed offences were never put in prison, and he wondered whether the new form of punishment referred to in paragraph 239 as "reform through labour for an indefinite period" was an alternative to imprisonment. He asked for an explanation of what the difference was between such punishment and forced labour, which, he reminded the delegation, was prohibited, even for children who had committed an offence.

15. Ms. ORTIZ enquired whether any progress had been made in implementing the Committee's recommendation that the State party should introduce legislation on adoption. She also sought clarification on how adoptions were carried out in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea and asked whether it intended to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, as recommended by the Committee.

16. The CHAIRPERSON noted that paragraph 40 of the written replies stated that, according to article 207 of the Criminal Law, "an official at a kindergarten or nursery who causes loss of life by violating the regulations related to taking care of children shall be committed to less than 2 years of disciplining through labour", whereas in paragraph 127 of the country report, the same

Criminal Law stipulated that “a person who has sexual intercourse with a minor under the age of 15 shall be committed to less than 5 years of reform”. It was surprising that a person who caused a death was punished by up to two years, whereas sexual intercourse with a minor was punished by up to five years. Moreover, paragraph 52 of the report stated that the punishment for sexual intercourse with a minor was up to 10 years. She asked the delegation to clarify that discrepancy.

17. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) said he was afraid that the Committee would not be able to have a full picture of the child protection system in his country in just one day; if necessary, his delegation would provide additional information at a later date.

18. Many questions had been raised regarding the system of juvenile justice. Pursuant to the Criminal Code, the age of criminal responsibility was 14 years; thus, the age group concerned comprised minors older than 14 and younger than 17, since the age of majority was 17 years. In accordance with article 62 of the Criminal Procedure Law, public education measures were applied in respect of offences committed by minors who were in that age category. Public education measures, which were unique to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea, were imposed even for serious offences.

19. Mr. ZERMATTEN said that the notion of public education measures continued to be very abstract. It was not clear whether it entailed taking classes, performing work of an educational nature, spending time in an institution where education was administered or something else. Specific examples were needed if the Committee was to understand the content and form of those “educational” measures.

20. Mr. KOTRANE said that, although the report asserted in paragraph 238 that children were not put in prison, he assumed that children subject to public education measures were placed in a custodial centre which they were not allowed to leave. That was clearly a deprivation of liberty. He also asked what was meant by the statement in paragraph 239 that children were kept in such centres “for an indefinite period”. How long could such a period last?

21. Mr. CITARELLA asked where a 15-year-old child who had committed a homicide was detained between arrest and trial.

22. The CHAIRPERSON wondered whether public education measures were subject to independent monitoring.

23. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People’s Republic of Korea) explained that even minors who committed a serious offence were not imprisoned, because they were not old enough to be held responsible for their conduct and thus were not regarded as having committed a crime. That was when public education measures came into play.

24. Under article 67 of the Criminal Procedure Law, responsibility for the education of a person committed to public education was assumed by the institution, enterprise or organization to which he or she belonged. The school or the parents kept a close watch on such children and did not deprive them of their liberty; during the investigation, they were usually placed under house arrest and not in detention centres. The maximum period of house arrest was one month.

Until the 1960s, juveniles had been placed in reformatories, but as society had evolved and conditions had improved, the number of cases of juvenile delinquency had declined considerably, and in view of the psychological and emotional needs of children, it had been decided not to send them to prison, but to apply public education measures instead.

25. Pregnant women sentenced to capital punishment could not be executed during the period beginning three months prior to the expected date of childbirth and ending seven months thereafter. Allegations that some imprisoned mothers had been driven to commit infanticide were baseless.

26. The CHAIRPERSON sought clarification on the notion of placing a child under house arrest.

27. Mr. FILALI said he still did not understand where such public education measures took place, what they consisted in, how long they lasted, what programmes were involved, how such children were reintegrated in society and how reintegration was monitored.

28. Mr. KRAPPMANN (Country Rapporteur) asked whether children sentenced to public education measures continued their schooling.

29. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) confirmed that they did.

30. Mr. KOTRANE wondered whether a public education measure entailed forced labour.

31. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that minors were never sentenced to reform through labour.

32. Mr. ZERMATTEN, noting that the age of criminal responsibility was 17 years but that the death penalty could not be imposed on children up to the age of 18 years, asked whether a child who was 17 and a half years old could be sentenced to life imprisonment.

33. Ms. SMITH (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the delegation could confirm that long-term labour prison camps for juvenile offenders no longer existed.

34. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said he could assure Ms. Smith that reformatory centres for juvenile delinquents no longer existed.

35. Replying to a question asked by Mr. Zermatten, he said that a person older than 17 years of age was regarded as having reached the age of criminal responsibility, but as the Convention set the age of majority at 18 years, the fact that a person who committed a crime was a minor between the ages of 17 and 18 years was considered to be an extenuating circumstance.

36. Mr. FILALI asked what assistance was provided to minors or adults who had been victims of an offence committed by a minor. Who paid them compensation?

37. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that when crimes were perpetrated by minors, their parents or guardians were responsible for paying compensation.

38. Mr. KIM Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that births were registered at public security offices within 15 days, and that registration was required in order to establish entitlement to social services. There was a very high compliance rate for registration. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea applied both *jus sanguinis* and *jus solis*. The Government received about five immigration applications per year, mainly from Chinese people living in the country. It was possible to change a child's name, but the date of birth and officially registered parents could not be changed.

39. Mr. KOTRANE asked whether children born to nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea outside the country were treated differently if the father, the mother, or both were citizens, and whether all children born in the country automatically received the country's nationality.

40. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the Chinese living in the country had access to education and health services, and whether they were treated as an ethnic minority.

41. Mr. JANG Il Hung said that children born to nationals of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea outside the country were registered as citizens with consular offices abroad.

42. Ms. ORTIZ asked what happened if a child was born outside the country in a mixed family, where just one parent had the country's nationality.

43. Mr. KIM Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that citizenship was granted to children born in families in which one of the parents was a citizen, regardless of whether they lived in the country. Provided that at least one parent residing in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was a citizen, a child automatically received citizenship. The country's citizenship was also granted to the children of resident stateless people and to children whose parents' identities could not be established.

44. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that international assistance reached its intended beneficiaries, and that the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the World Health Organization (WHO), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and the World Food Programme were involved in and monitored the provision of assistance to children. All such assistance was given first to vulnerable groups such as women, children and the elderly.

45. The question of accession to the Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child had given rise to a serious internal discussion. According to some, it was desirable to accede, as it would be quite easy for the country to meet the requirements contained in those instruments. However, others considered that accession would expose the country's children to phenomena that were not problems in the country. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had no children in situations of armed conflict, and pornography and prostitution were legally forbidden. Furthermore, in an international human rights context where the Government had come in for much unjust criticism on the part of western powers, it was difficult for many to see any benefit in accession, which would be considered merely as bowing to western pressure.

46. People who left the country to work in neighbouring countries were not refugees, by any definition; they were economic migrants. There had been an increasing flow of such migrants since the natural disasters of the mid-1990s. He further noted that there were some organizations that tried to induce citizens to leave the country so as to use them in propaganda campaigns. The returnees themselves, whether children or adults, were not treated as criminals, but were merely returned to their families. On the other hand, those who engaged in trafficking activities faced criminal prosecution.

47. Mr. POLLAR, while welcoming the fact that the country had accepted international assistance from the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), the European Union and United Nations agencies asked whether the beneficiaries of such assistance were designated with the best interests of the child in mind.

48. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that in the programming of activities aimed at providing medicines, water and sanitation services, the best interests of children were among the foremost concerns.

49. Ms. SMITH (Country Rapporteur) asked whether such aid was distributed evenly throughout the country.

50. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that when the assistance was distributed it was monitored by the agencies concerned. The capital area was in the majority of cases excluded from distribution programmes so that the bulk of the assistance would reach the areas that needed it most.

51. Ms. AIDOO said that it was of particular interest that the Government had adopted a number of criminal laws for offences that, according to the delegation, did not exist. For example, according to the State party, there was no early pregnancy. Yet there was a law according to which a man who had sex with a girl of 15 would face 10 years of hard labour. What had given rise to such laws?

52. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the purpose of the legislation was preventive, but that since the law in question had been on the books, no such cases had been reported.

53. Ms. ORTIZ said that the ratification of the Optional Protocols too could be seen as a preventive measure.

54. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) pointed out that discussions regarding the possibility of accession to the Optional Protocols were still under way, and that there was a possibility that the State party would accede to them in due course.

55. The CHAIRPERSON, expressing concern inter alia about the possibility of child labour being used at the Kaesong industrial park set up in cooperation with the Republic of Korea, asked whether the Government would also consider ratifying the relevant Conventions of the International Labour Organization (ILO), including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), and whether it would consider acceding to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

56. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that while the ILO Conventions were good instruments, they addressed problems such as forced labour and the worst forms of child labour that did not exist in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. The Kaesong industrial park had no problems of child labour or forced labour.

57. Ms. HAN Chae Sun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Government paid special attention to the specific concerns of adolescents, with a special focus on maternal and child health. The Government had developed a reproductive health strategy and an HIV/AIDS strategy with the cooperation of the Korean Family Planning and Maternal Child Health Association of DPRK, a member of the International Planned Parenthood Federation, which also carried out its own activities to provide information to adolescents. A primary health-care cooperation centre had been established in cooperation with WHO, and was drawing up a new curriculum for the training of medical staff, with improved focus on adolescent health care.

58. As stated in the report, there was not a single documented case of HIV/AIDS in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, a fact of which the Government was very proud. Since the prevalence of HIV/AIDS in neighbouring countries was increasing, the Government imposed a quarantine on travellers, who had to attend a compulsory health check-up prior to departure and on their return. Foreigners entering the country were provided with a systematic check-up. If anything unusual was noticed, immediate measures were taken. An HIV/AIDS prevention strategy had been developed and a variety of activities were undertaken, such as circulating publications on the spread of HIV/AIDS among the public.

59. Ms. AIDOO asked whether, given the incubation period of HIV, people were retested at a later date. She asked whether voluntary counselling and testing were provided, in line with the internationally recommended procedure. With regard to adolescent health, she noted the work done by the Korean Association of Family Planning and Maternal and Child Health, which had been commended by UNFPA, and asked whether adolescents had confidential access to reproductive health services and whether they could see a doctor without being accompanied. If they did not have that possibility, they might not be able to obtain the information they required, including on abortion.

60. Ms. HAN Chae Sun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Government, in cooperation with UNICEF, had conducted a survey of the problems faced by adolescents. In the light of interviews conducted, the Government decided that adolescents should be provided with information specifically concerning adolescent health and the physical changes that occurred during adolescence. Since adolescents could be shy or sensitive, health workers were provided with training to ensure that they had the skills to deal with them and doctors were given in-service training on adolescent health care. In accordance with domestic legislation, medical personnel were duty-bound to observe confidentiality.

61. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was the only country in which there were no cases of HIV/AIDS and that other countries could learn from its best practice. Infant and maternal mortality rates, however, were still alarming and she expressed concern about malnutrition, which could lead to stunted growth, social problems, and

reproductive difficulties. Despite the country's excellent medical services, the indicators were not satisfactory. She asked whether the Government had a comprehensive strategy to address the problem and recalled that the same question had been asked when the previous periodic report was under examination.

62. Ms. HAN Chae Sun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Committee had previously recommended that measures should be taken to address malnutrition, which had only become a problem in the 1990s. Since then the Government had strengthened its efforts to improve the situation. It had developed programmes to make solving the food shortages a priority, to encourage breastfeeding, and to provide sufficient nutritious food. A periodic nutritional survey was conducted, on the basis of which remedial measures were taken. The national strategy to lower the rate of malnutrition was to increase food production and every effort was being made to do so, partly by concentrating on the production of soya bean, which had important nutritional values.

63. Mr. PARFITT said that there was a lack of access to safe drinking water and sanitation, especially in rural areas, and asked whether there were any plans to address the problem.

64. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that clean water and sanitation projects had been undertaken in rural areas in cooperation with UNICEF and ICRC. National efforts were also being made to provide people with clean water throughout the country, although it would take time until everyone had access.

65. Mr. KIM Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that citizens had the right to adopt, unless, for example, they had been disenfranchised or had a disease that could adversely affect the child. Citizens wishing to adopt a child needed to obtain consent from the biological parents or the guardian and, if the child was over six years old, his or her consent also had to be sought. An adoption was granted upon application by the person wishing to adopt at a population administration institution. The legal procedures relating to adoption were simple and convenient.

66. Ms. ORTIZ, referring to the figure provided, which she presumed was for the overall number of children adopted and not the number adopted per year, asked which authority was responsible for keeping a record of adoptions and requested further information about the proposed change in the adoption law.

67. Mr. KIM Myong Chol (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that there had been no change in the law; rather the terms for adoption had been specified. Domestic legislation did not prohibit intercountry adoption, and it was the decision of the child's guardian or the child concerned whether or not to accept; however, in reality, no applications had been made.

68. The CHAIRPERSON asked for information regarding weekly and day nurseries, while emphasizing that institutionalization should be a last resort.

69. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that children might be separated from their parents for various reasons, for example, if the parents died or were serving a sentence. In those cases, under domestic legislation, children could be entrusted to the care of

adoptive or foster families. Domestic legislation provided that if a child lost both parents, he or she would be entrusted to the care of grandparents or older siblings. If that were impossible, then the child would be placed in the care of the State. There was a variety of State institutions for orphans, including nurseries, primary and secondary schools. He noted the Committee's concern that it would be better to provide children with a family environment.

70. Gender equality had been recognized in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea since 1946. Working mothers could leave their children at local day-care centres and the Government had also set up weekly nurseries to look after children if both parents were away from home. The Government invested heavily in weekly nurseries to ensure the best possible conditions. In addition, working mothers were granted breastfeeding times during working hours.

71. Ms. SMITH (Country Rapporteur) said that the provision of such childcare facilities was a good thing for working mothers and fathers. She noted that children were seldom placed in institutions by their parents and, even if they had lost both parents, they were usually placed with other family members, which was a change from past practice. While it was sometimes necessary to place children in institutions, she noted that there was a high rate of malnutrition there. Given the food shortages and the floods in 2007, she asked whether those institutions were provided with enough food and whether each had a staff nurse. She asked whether the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was on track to achieve the Millennium Development Goal with respect to the under-five mortality rate.

72. Mr. PARFITT asked about the role played by foster care in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea, whether it was supported by the State and whether children had the opportunity to opt for foster care instead of being placed in an institution.

73. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Government always tried to keep children with their families. It was not compulsory for parents to send their children to nurseries; they could leave them with their grandparents if they wished. The Government always tried to provide the best for children in institutions and, during the food shortages, prioritized supplying food for them. The institutions employed in-house doctors and nurses. The Government encouraged people to foster children and recognized that the additional responsibility could be a burden. The Government therefore ensured that foster families were given priority regarding goods and food. Commercial organizations also tried to assist foster families because they were providing a service to society. Adopting or fostering children was not easy, especially given the difficult economic situation the country was facing. The Government was channelling efforts towards reinvigorating the economy and improving living standards.

74. Ms. HERCZOG said that almost all countries carried out a cost-benefit analysis of different types of care and most found that family-based care, such as foster care, was not only better for the child, but also cheaper. She asked whether the State party had carried out any such analyses to ascertain the direct and indirect costs incurred with each type of care, as well as the risks associated with institutional care, taking into account the difficult economic situation the country was experiencing.

75. The CHAIRPERSON said that, in its report, the State party had reiterated that the concept of extended family did not exist in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea. However, it did state that many children lived with their grandparents and she asked whether grandparents were not considered extended family. If children could be looked after by members of their extended family, it would be better for them than weekly care or being placed in institutions.

76. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that in many families, grandparents took care of the children. It was important for families to entertain good relationships and social awareness-raising campaigns were organized to help them deal with misunderstandings.

77. Ms. HAN Chae Sun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that there was a 100 per cent enrolment rate for the 11-year compulsory education system, a figure that had not been mentioned in previous reports to international bodies.

78. Mr. KRAPPMAN (Country Rapporteur) said he had heard the delegation say that the school enrolment rate was 100 per cent; the problem, however, was the attendance rate. Moreover, the delegation had said that there was no child labour in the country. Though the law apparently forbade child labour, reports indicated that children stayed out of school for many weeks during the planting and harvesting seasons.

79. The CHAIRPERSON noted that reports also indicated that the dropout rate in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea had been increasing.

80. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that children had the right and the duty to be educated. In 1956, the Government had made primary education compulsory; in 1958, it had made secondary education compulsory; and in 1959 it had ensured free education for all. Universal compulsory education was therefore currently in force. If the school attendance rate was not satisfactory, that was attributable to economic problems and natural disasters.

81. Ten years previously, the whole country had joined in a food self-sufficiency drive. Children, as citizens, had volunteered to contribute to solving the food problem by helping with agricultural work. Children continued to participate in such work, gaining hands-on experience and combining theory with practice.

82. The notion that children were forced to spend the whole day at school, deprived of the right to leisure and cultural activities, was misinformation. After school, children were free to do as they wished, including visiting libraries.

83. Mr. KRAPPMAN (Country Rapporteur) said that in the Committee's experience, keeping children in school all day was unhealthy; he would be glad to learn that was not the current practice.

84. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that in the view of his Government, it was healthy for children to have experience in the field, and a change of scene from time to time.

85. The CHAIRPERSON enquired whether Chinese people living in the People's Democratic Republic of Korea had access to schooling and enjoyed the right to be educated in their native language.

86. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that there were six primary schools and four secondary schools for the approximately 1,000 Chinese children living in the country. They could, however, attend Korean schools if they wished. Under the Constitution, all children in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea must have equal access to free education and free health care.

87. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the many hours and days that were necessarily required to train children to participate in the spectacular events of the Arirang festival interfered with their right to education.

88. Mr. KRAPPMAN (Country Rapporteur) said he hoped that the inference that children received military education in the Democratic People's Republic of Korea was also misinformation.

89. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the Arirang performance had been cited in the Guinness Book of World Records. The event was a world masterpiece, combining art and sports, and took a long time to prepare. Children who participated studied in the morning and trained in the afternoons. The aim of the Arirang performance was to foster a collective spirit among children, and to promote their physical and emotional development. Both the advantages and the disadvantages of such an experience must be taken into consideration.

90. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not provide military education for children. However, although an armistice prevailed, the country continued to be under constant threat from outside forces. All citizens, including children, must be prepared for a military emergency, and therefore children were provided with some military knowledge. That was not a separate subject, however.

91. Ms. AIDOO, commending the Government for having created the National Coordinating Committee for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, asked whether there was also a department or bureau for children's affairs that could assess policies and strategies for children. She would also like to know whether there was a department or ministry of social affairs that could consider the practical implementation of such policies.

92. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that the administrative structure of the Government included a Cabinet made up of Ministries. The Ministry of Education was responsible for the education and rearing of children. There also existed social programmes such as the youth league and the children's union, and an education department within the people's committee at the national level which managed matters relating to education and teacher-training. Family issues were handled by the population administration units. A couple seeking a divorce, for example, would raise the matter with the population administration unit. It would then consult a lawyer, and if the cause was a misunderstanding or a minor issue, the lawyer would reject the case. If a case was accepted, however, it was handled by the courts.

93. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee was also interested in access to information and the right to privacy and, referring to paragraph 93 of the report, enquired what was meant by an unavoidable reason for interfering in the privacy of citizens.

94. Mr. JANG Il Hun (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that children were provided with all the information they needed, and could freely consult libraries. Although universities had direct access to the Internet, access for children was not permitted. The children of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea did not know that such matters as child pornography and child prostitution existed, but access to the Web could change that.

95. Mr. KRAPPMAN (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee welcomed the information provided by the delegation, and lamented that in some cases the answers did not allow for a full understanding of the implementation of the Convention in that country. At the morning meeting, the delegation had stated that there was much misinformation about the country. While agreeing that was so, he was uncertain that the delegation always understood the gist of the questions presented by the Committee. More contact between the Committee and the State party would help resolve that problem; it would also be useful if the country were more open to the world.

96. The Democratic People's Republic of Korea had an impressive list of new legislation; the Committee took such measures as an indication that the State party was committed to the cause of children; it was not clear whether it was also committed to upholding the rights of children. In particular, it would be helpful to understand to what extent the views and best interests of children were considered in decisions concerning them, and to what extent the development of children was a priority. Nevertheless, it was clear that progress had been made.

97. Lastly, he said that the Committee believed that children's rights must be protected even under unfavourable conditions and it therefore commended the State party for its efforts to improve their lives.

98. Mr. KANG Yun Sok (Democratic People's Republic of Korea) said that his delegation thanked the Committee for the constructive dialogue. It also took note of the Committee's concerns and apprehensions. In the near future, it would adopt a law on the protection and promotion of children's rights, and would strive to improve economic conditions in the country on their behalf.

99. The CHAIRPERSON reminded the delegation of the Democratic People's Republic of Korea that children were the future of that country, and must be given priority; she also asked the State party to ensure that assistance was available to all children without discrimination.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.