



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 1479th (Chamber A) meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 21 January 2010, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Aidoo (Vice-Chairperson)

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Third and fourth periodic reports of El Salvador (CRC/C/SLV/3-4, CRC/C/SLV/Q/3-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of El Salvador took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Urquilla** (El Salvador) said he wished to express his delegation's deep sympathies for the Haitian people, and especially Haitian children and adolescents, in the aftermath of the recent earthquake in that country.

3. The current Administration had been in place for eight months and had employed that time to evaluate past successes and mistakes and to consider what programmes and policies might best ensure the observance of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The new Administration's emphasis on human dignity as the basis for fundamental human rights was attested to by the Salvadoran President's public recognition of the fact that agents of the State and paramilitary groups had committed grave human rights violations during the armed conflict that had concluded in 1992, in which many children had disappeared. He had apologized to the victims of those violations and had announced the creation of a commission charged with preparing a presidential programme of reparations for those victims. At the same time, he had created a commission to determine the whereabouts of the children who had disappeared during the armed conflict and to arrange for them to meet their birth families. In addition, the Government had recently invited the Office for the Defence of Human Rights to send representatives to sit on those two commissions.

4. The Government of El Salvador was aware that, without reliable information about the population, it was impossible to design effective public policies. The existing official system did not permit information on age groups to be cross-referenced with such variables as ethnicity or disability. The Secretariat for Social Inclusion had begun a dialogue with the United Nations with a view to developing a reliable database for use in designing policies for indigenous and disabled children. In addition, the Technical Secretariat of the Office of the President had been instructed to create a new national statistical system which would address those shortcomings.

5. Under the new Administration, the formulation of policies would be based on broad consultation and on participation by stakeholders. The National Institute for the Comprehensive Development of Children and Adolescents (ISNA) had recently begun work on the design of a national policy for the integral protection of children and adolescents. The first step in that process would be to identify the obstacles to the implementation of their rights, in consultation with a wide range of institutions. In addition, a national consultative process would soon be launched on the creation of a youth policy, and young people were to play a central role in that initiative.

6. Some measures had been taken in recent months, that the Government had not included in its replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SLV/Q/3-4 and Add.1). The first was the establishment of a programme to provide uniforms, shoes and school supplies to children in nursery and primary schools. In addition, an inter-agency dialogue had begun regarding the creation of an education policy for children aged from 0 to 6. Steps were being taken to enhance school curricula through the addition of such subjects as human rights (including tolerance for human diversity and recognition of the multi-ethnic and multicultural nature of Salvadoran society) and safe and responsible sexuality. The goal was to formulate an educational policy that would focus on the elimination of obstacles of all kinds, especially for children with disabilities.

7. The Government had worked hard to eliminate barriers to access to health services and had done away with all fees in public clinics. Progress had been made in the treatment of dengue fever and the AH1N1 virus. During the swine flu crisis, timely action had been taken to prevent its spread. In the aftermath of Hurricane Ida, the Government, with the help of NGOs and international organizations, had given priority care to children, offering them shelter, emotional support and play therapy. Currently, a reform of the health sector to reduce inequality and broaden coverage was being discussed.

8. The President had also recently created the National Council for Food Security and Nutrition, which would work with United Nations agencies to reduce child malnutrition in extremely poor areas, with emphasis on indigenous communities, in line with the Millennium Development Goals. The Council had identified breastfeeding as a priority. With the assistance of the World Food Programme (WFP) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), a school nutrition programme was being conducted to provide meals to children in public schools.

9. Moreover, El Salvador's second Millennium Development Goals report had indicated that the country was on track to meet the goal for reducing the mortality rate for children under 5, that the percentage of persons living in extreme poverty had been halved and that gender inequality in education had been eliminated.

10. In 2009, a programme known as Rural and Urban Solidarity Communities had been launched to improve the quality of life for poor and excluded groups. Under that programme, grants for poor families were conditional on regular school attendance through the sixth grade, health check-ups and complete vaccinations for children under 5, and prenatal and post-natal check-ups for women. With the adoption of the Comprehensive Act for the Protection of Children and Young Persons, El Salvador had taken an important step towards implementing the rights protected by the Convention, even though the Government had not yet succeeded in fully rectifying the flaws in the structures and mechanisms of ISNA which the Committee had identified in its concluding observations on the second periodic report of El Salvador (CRC/C/15/Add.232).

11. Lastly, he said that the problems associated with childhood and adolescence were not distinct from the structural issues facing Salvadoran society, which included historical inequities, low tax revenues and the use of violence as a means of conflict resolution. He assured the Committee that its comments and observations would greatly assist the Government of El Salvador in creating a strategy for upholding the rights of Salvadoran children.

12. **Ms. Villarón de la Puente** (Country Rapporteur) said that the armed conflict that had taken place in El Salvador between 1980 and 1992 had left a traumatized and armed society in its wake. Full compliance with the Peace Agreements of 1992 remained a matter of concern, as did the causes of what had formerly been political and had since become criminal violence. The cases of the children who had disappeared during those conflict years had not yet been resolved. The new Administration had proposed a great transformation, which would include governance on the basis of human rights and policies of social inclusion. The Committee hoped that girls and boys would be the first to benefit from that initiative, and it stood ready to help El Salvador to devise a road map for that purpose.

13. Some of the recommendations contained in the Committee's concluding observations on the second periodic report of El Salvador had been fulfilled; others — dealing with such matters as the high level of crime and violence against children, sexual exploitation and trafficking, the administration of juvenile justice and investments in health, education and protection — had not. The Committee hoped to receive information on the

implementation of those recommendations, as well as the recommendations that would arise from the current discussion.

14. The new Act for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Young Persons, which was intended to create an integral national protection system, had not yet been implemented. The Committee was eager to learn what progress had been made in that regard and how that law's shortcomings would be addressed in the course of its implementation. The Committee would like to know what form of executive body would oversee the application of the relevant policies and what role would be played by ISNA.

15. The Committee would also like to know if the Government had developed a new, holistic national plan of action for youth which addressed such problems as the traffic in persons and the worst forms of child labour.

16. The Committee had noted that allocations for education and health were distressingly low and that there were significant disparities between regions and between males and females. It would be interesting to know whether consideration was being given to drawing up a protected budget for children in key areas and strategic budgets for the implementation of affirmative action policies for marginalized children. It would also be useful to know whether El Salvador was developing a results-based budget model and whether measures were in place to ensure transparency and access to information for monitoring investments and preventing and punishing corruption.

17. The high crime rate was particularly worrisome. One child was murdered every day in El Salvador; adolescents were dropping out of school and joining the *maras*; the deaths of adolescent girls from clandestine abortions were also a matter of concern. The Committee would like to know whether the Government was developing a comprehensive policy for the prevention and control of violence based on the rights of children and adolescents.

18. **Ms. Ortiz** (Country Rapporteur), emphasizing the importance of data collection for ensuring the effective implementation of the Convention, since a lack of accurate and up-to-date information could hamper efforts to uphold all the rights of all children, said that the Committee would welcome information on the rights-related content of the new programme for collecting census information and statistics. Since the system of fines that had been introduced for parents who did not register the births of their children had not been effective, she wished to know whether legislation and administrative measures designed to promote the registration of births would be amended and whether measures were being taken to ensure the registration of indigenous children.

19. She welcomed the establishment of an inter-institutional commission to search for children who had disappeared during the armed conflict in El Salvador and asked what progress the commission had made. She wondered whether the Government intended to ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance. She wished to know to what extent the Secretariat for Culture promoted children's rights to freedom of expression, conscience, speech, thought, privacy and access to information. Did the Secretariat operate at the local, as well as national, level? She asked what measures were being taken to include human rights in school curricula in order to stimulate the change in the public mindset needed to establish a culture of human rights. She expressed concern that there was a disturbing level of impunity among the police with respect to the torture of children and adolescents in detention, in particular street children and child gang members. The Committee against Torture had expressed concern that El Salvador did not have a legal definition of acts of torture as required under articles 1 and 4 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. She asked whether any steps were being taken to rectify that situation.

20. **Mr. Kotrane** welcomed the efforts made by the State party to adapt its legislation in line with the Committee's recommendations. While recognizing that El Salvador was party to many key international human rights instruments, he was concerned that it had not ratified the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Relating to Maintenance Obligations, the Convention on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations or the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Cooperation in Respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children. He asked whether the Government was considering acceding to those conventions, since they were particularly important for guaranteeing the rights of children who had been separated from their parents, including, in particular, the right to food security.

21. He commended the holistic approach to child protection taken in the new Act for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Young Persons, and emphasized the importance of bringing all domestic legislation into line with the Convention. He wished to know whether judges in El Salvador were familiar with the Convention, whether the Convention took precedence over domestic legislation if one was at variance with the other and, if so, whether the delegation could provide some recent examples of cases in which the Convention had been invoked directly by the courts.

22. **Mr. Citarella** said that, while he welcomed the holistic approach to child protection taken in the new law, he was concerned that the definition of the child contained in the Act was not in line with the one set out in the Convention. The law in question differentiated between "children" aged up to 12 years, and "adolescents" aged from 12 to 18 years, whereas the Convention defined children as being below the age of 18 years. He wondered whether the Act would be amended to include a general definition of the child and the age of majority.

23. **Mr. Puras** asked what the Government's position was with respect to NGOs that were involved in political processes and advocacy work, particularly in the event that those NGOs did not agree with Government policy. He wondered whether such NGOs received assistance from the Government or whether they relied mainly on international funding. He asked whether there were any NGOs working at the grass-roots level with children.

24. Turning to children's right to be heard, he asked what specific measures were being taken to involve children in decision-making on issues that affected them at the national and local levels. He particularly wished to know whether children had been involved in the drafting of the new Act and, if so, at what level. He wondered whether the Government intended to take measures to increase children's participation in decision-making.

25. On the right to life, survival and development, he said that the Committee had received alarming information on the threats to children's emotional, social and cultural development and to their right to life which existed in El Salvador. During the reporting period, 1,755 children had been killed; he asked what measures had been taken in the past and what steps were being taken by the new Administration to break that cycle of violence. While he recognized the importance of bringing the perpetrators of violence to justice, efforts should be made to address the root causes of violence. The World Health Organization (WHO) considered that violence should be treated as a public health issue. He asked whether the Government had considered adopting any strategies or plans to address the situation of violence from a public health perspective.

26. **Ms. Al-Asmar** asked the delegation from El Salvador to explain how the best interests of children, particularly girls, were taken into account in the country's laws and in judicial and administrative decisions.

27. **The Chairperson** requested further information on the efforts that would be made to disseminate the text of the Convention and ensure that its principles were well known

and were reflected in the values that the Government wished to inculcate in Salvadoran society. She also asked what measures were being taken to teach all professionals who came into contact with children to apply the principles of the Convention. While the Committee welcomed the fact that much of El Salvador's domestic legislation clearly established the equality of persons, disparities remained, and there was often discrimination against girls, indigenous children, children with disabilities and children from rural and remote areas. She asked what steps, aside from legislative measures would be taken to ensure the reduction and ultimate elimination of such discrimination and to guarantee all rights for all children.

28. **Ms. Villarán de la Puente** requested information on the role of the Office for the Defence of Human Rights, which had reported the existence of serious obstacles to its operation, including a reduction in the resources allocated to it. She was particularly concerned that the Office's specialized unit on children's rights was unable to fulfil its mandate. She asked what was being done to ensure that complaints about violations of children's rights could be filed with the Office and, in particular, how access to the Office's services was guaranteed for children from rural and remote areas.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

29. **Mr. Urquilla** (El Salvador) said that the Secretariat for Social Inclusion had been established by the Council of Ministers in June 2009. Its mandate was to protect the family and assist in the elimination of the root causes of discrimination and exclusion. The Secretariat worked closely with indigenous people, migrant populations, people living with HIV/AIDS, the elderly and people with disabilities. The Secretariat did not implement social inclusion policies but instead coordinated those implemented by various Government ministries. The Secretariat's work was therefore closely related to children's issues.

30. In the coming days, a legal framework would be proposed for appropriate follow-up to the concluding observations of United Nations treaty bodies. In the past, those concluding observations had not been shared with the different sectors of civil society. The new Administration wished to rectify that situation by holding round-table discussions to identify ways of following up on issues raised by treaty bodies. Previous recommendations and observations would be taken into account, including the observation made by the Committee against Torture concerning a lack of alignment between Salvadoran criminal legislation and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. The Government was committed to the promotion of human rights and, to that end, the President had recently signed the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights. Consideration was being given to the possibility of ratifying the Ibero-American Convention on Rights of Youth and other international and regional human rights instruments.

31. The Convention had been directly invoked by the courts and was cited, in particular, in cases of family law. Although a distinction was made between children and adolescents in Salvadoran law, those were simply two subgroups of minors, and the age of majority was 18 years. The adoption of the new Protection Act was a meaningful step towards ensuring respect for the Convention and its institutional implementation. The protection of children in conflict with the law was a particularly difficult issue, and considerable efforts would be required to do away with the existing culture of mistreatment and corporal punishment. Legislation must be revised accordingly. Establishing the necessary legislative guarantees for the rights set out in the Convention was a complex process, and it would take time to ensure that it was done thoroughly.

32. **Mr. Kotrane** said that the Committee would like to see examples, especially from the Constitutional Chamber, in which judges had directly invoked the Convention. He also asked for further information on the mechanism that would be proposed for monitoring

implementation of recommendations made by the various United Nations treaty bodies and civil society organizations. He noted with concern that funding for El Salvador's existing human rights institution, the Office for the Defence of Human Rights, had been reduced in 2009. That being the case, how would the new mechanism be established, funded and coordinated? It was important for the new body to receive adequate funding to enable it to monitor compliance with such recommendations.

33. **Mr. Urquilla** (El Salvador) said that examples of judges directly invoking the Convention in their decisions, notably in the Constitutional Chamber, would be forwarded to the Committee. The proposed follow-up mechanism would not be a new body but a clear procedure for identifying who should be responsible for implementing each recommendation. For example, round-table discussions could be held under the auspices of the Department of Human Rights of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as and when recommendations were received so that civil society, the Office for the Defence of Human Rights and the relevant Government agencies could work together actively to ensure the implementation of recommendations.

34. Coming back to the new Act for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Young Persons, he said that the entire institutional framework needed to be modified in order to make it more effective. He fully agreed with the Committee that the aim should be to enact domestic legislation to strengthen children's rights, but the process was complex and required careful consideration in order to iron out the problems that had arisen, especially with respect to the implementation of certain provisions and the establishment of a proper institutional framework.

35. **Ms. Ortíz**, emphasizing the importance of coordination in implementing the Convention and its two optional protocols, said that the National Children and Adolescents Council (CONNA) was the body in which the various ministries and authorities met to formulate and evaluate policies with the participation of civil society, children and adolescents. She asked which executive body would be assigned the task of strengthening the National Council's policymaking and implementation powers. Would it be the Secretariat for Social Inclusion, ISNA or some other body? Far from downplaying the importance of the National Council, the Committee appreciated its significance and wished to know what steps were to be taken to give it greater authority.

36. **Ms. Villarán de la Puente** said that the Committee understood that certain provisions would be difficult to implement and that the institutional framework needed to be reworked. The point requiring clarification, however, was whether the Act for the Comprehensive Protection of Children and Young Persons would still come into force in April, as planned, with the modifications being made during its implementation, or whether there would be a further postponement.

37. **Mr. Urquilla** (El Salvador) said that the new Administration shared the Committee's concern, as the system lacked the strong type of political mechanism which was crucial to the effective implementation of the new law. The Act had been promulgated just after the elections in 2009, and there had not been enough time to implement the necessary reforms to underpin the Government's vision of an institutional framework with respect to children. The Secretariat for Social Inclusion had not yet been established at the time that the Act was adopted, and the absence of that body had constituted a major institutional gap; the Secretariat was part of the executive branch and should be part of the mechanism for ensuring implementation. The Government considered it advisable not to delay implementation of the substantive part of the law, but it would be prudent to take the time needed to make carefully considered reforms in the administrative and institutional structure for that law's application.

38. **Ms. Ortiz** reminded the State party that the purpose of the Convention went far beyond the establishment of protection measures for children and urged the State party to bear that in mind when reforming its institutional framework. Indeed, thinking only in terms of protection programmes for children would be a step backwards. Another cause of concern was that the Act did not provide for the necessary establishment of a body at the municipal level. The Committee was concerned about the delay in implementation of the Act. The Convention had been in force for 20 years, and there was an urgent need to finalize an appropriate institutional framework for El Salvadoran children.

39. **Mr. Urquilla** (El Salvador) said that the Committee's concerns and suggestions would be conveyed to the President of El Salvador. The reason for the delay was to have time to consider the options and find a solution that would be as undistruptive as possible in terms of the legislation and the institutional framework for children's rights in El Salvador.

40. **Mr. Salazar** (El Salvador) said that ISNA had been established in 1993 and was recognized in the Family Code as the national coordinating body for the comprehensive protection of children and adolescents. That role had never been fully implemented, however. Under the new Protection Act, ISNA was to be the executive body responsible for taking certain measures to protect children. First, it would become the national centre for research and the main source of unified data on children and adolescents. Second, it was the coordinating body responsible for identifying children who had been denied full access to their rights and for taking action to guarantee their rights. It currently oversaw the needs of 3,000 children receiving care under various custodial arrangements and was working against time, as a matter of urgency, to deinstitutionalize those children and hand over responsibility for their care to the new protection agencies. Third, ISNA was to become the national centre for the dissemination of children's rights and for the training of the staff who would be directly responsible for caring for children and adolescents whose rights had been denied or violated. Fourth, ISNA was to meet the needs of young persons in conflict with the law, both those at liberty and in detention. ISNA would also develop and coordinate a new network comprising ministries, civil society and local bodies working in partnership to implement the Government's child and adolescent policy.

41. The Office for the Defence of Human Rights coordinated national round tables at which judges from the juvenile criminal justice system, civil society bodies and other bodies met to discuss and develop up-to-date measures for the rehabilitation of young persons in conflict with the law, in collaboration with the Technical Secretariat. ISNA was also developing guidelines on the care of children and adolescents which would be passed on to the Technical Secretariat for use in formulating public policies that would ensure that the needs of children and adolescents were addressed in the overall Government plan of action.

42. With respect to the prevention of torture, measures to protect young persons in conflict with the law and in pretrial detention had not been effective, but steps had been taken to bring detention centres nationwide under the authority of ISNA so that the Government could take over direct control of all youth detention centres from the police, a system that had led to frequent violations of the rights of young persons deprived of liberty in the past. Over the last two years, the numbers of young persons deprived of liberty had doubled, and the Government was committed to taking appropriate action to find an alternative to detaining young persons in conflict with the law. It was also looking into ways to deter young persons from joining gangs.

43. **Ms. Lee** said that El Salvador's previous Administration had designed an educational curriculum for young persons deprived of liberty, but it had never entered into force. Educating young persons deprived of liberty was an important way to try to stop them from joining gangs. Would ISNA consider developing a similar initiative?

44. **Mr. Salazar** (El Salvador) replied that the Government was designing a new model for dealing with young persons deprived of liberty, with the support of the Ministry of Justice and Public Security, the Secretariat for Social Inclusion and other relevant bodies. Radical changes were needed to do away with the existing disparities in education. Starting in 2010, institutional education centres were to be set up, and all the different modalities of formal education had already been introduced in the country's detention centres.

45. **Ms. de Espinoza** (El Salvador) said that she would answer questions on the right to identity, the right to participation and national plans for dealing with child labour and human trafficking.

46. Chapter 1 of the new Protection Act regulated the right to personality, identity and identification; it extended the deadline for the registration of births and promoted free registration. The Act had not eliminated the fines for late registration, but steps were being taken to do so in order to remove any obstacles to registration and thus guarantee protection of the right to a name and nationality. With particular reference to the registration of indigenous children, the Government was committed to acting upon the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. As a first step, the Committee on the Follow-up on the Identity of Children in El Salvador, with the support of UNICEF, would develop a plan in 2010 to promote the issuance of birth certificates and identity cards to indigenous children and adolescents.

47. A workshop had been held for some 200 civil servants and 240 children on the participation of children in drawing up policies; the workshop methodology had been formulated by children as well. A round table had been established on children's participation, and various municipalities were making an effort to involve children in framing local policies. The State was also seeking to bolster children's participation in policymaking. The Government recognized that child labour was an obstacle to children's development and had undertaken to eliminate the worst forms of child labour by 2015 and all child labour by 2020.

48. **Ms. Villarán de la Puente** asked the delegation to update the Committee on the situation of domestic workers.

49. **Ms. de Espinosa** (El Salvador) said that the road map adopted to address child labour included a section devoted to the problem of child domestic workers.

50. **Ms. Ortiz** asked in what ways the new national plan differed from the previous one. Had the results of the preceding plan been assessed, and did the new one have a sufficient budget?

51. **Ms. de Espinosa** (El Salvador) said that the previous plan had been evaluated and that the new one took into consideration the conclusions of that analysis.

52. **Ms. Ortiz** asked about the efforts made by the Government to support families so as to avoid the institutionalization of children. Were programmes for poor families accompanied by specific measures to ensure that the family environment was a safe haven and that children were not subjected to domestic violence? Had local networks been set up to provide support to families through, for example, assistance centres in the municipalities? Many families faced stress owing to the migration of some of their members. How did the Government provide support for migrants and for their children, whether those children accompanied their parents or were left behind? How did it respond to the specific problems they faced?

53. Referring to the Government's efforts to deinstitutionalize children, she asked whether the law provided any guidance as to the way in which children should be relocated. Were children in institutions able to make their voices heard? Were there mechanisms for

consultation or for filing complaints with the Office for the Defence of Human Rights? When children were placed in foster care, what kind of monitoring was carried out? The State party reported that foster parents were given priority for adoption, but since foster parents were not subject to the rigorous vetting applicable in adoption proceedings, that arrangement might have the unintended effect of providing a channel for adoption without appropriate verification of the qualifications of adoptive parents. Lastly, she asked whether any law had been adopted to prohibit the military recruitment of children aged 17 and under.

54. **Ms. Villarán de la Puente** expressed concern about the plight of children under the age of 5 who lived with their mothers in detention. How did the law deal with such children, and how were they raised? Despite progress in legislative and societal terms in combating domestic violence and gender discrimination, the statistics indicated that there had been a rise in the number of victims of domestic violence and abuse, including sexual abuse, but more detailed information was lacking. In addition, police statistics indicated that in 2007 and 2008 there had been 125 cases in which girl children had been killed. Noting the high rate of teenage pregnancy and problems related to early sexual contact and sexual abuse of minors, she asked whether there was a law addressing the problem of teenage pregnancy. It was not merely a question of abortion. Teenage pregnancies involved serious risks for the mother and child.

55. **Mr. Puras** asked whether there was any comprehensive policy or plan for assisting children with disabilities. The Committee had found that the early identification of children with disabilities was crucial in ensuring effective delivery of community-based services and avoiding institutionalization. Were children who were placed in institutions able to enjoy their basic rights to education, health and privacy? Were there independent mechanisms to monitor their situation?

56. The Government had recognized that the high price of medication was an obstacle to the provision of health care for children. What steps had it taken to address that problem? What was the Government doing to combat malnutrition? What levels of human and financial resources were made available for primary health care and health promotion? The Committee was aware that some 2,000 health promoters were working in the country. Information would be appreciated on their activities, including any steps taken to encourage breastfeeding and vaccination and to foster a culture of non-violence with a view to reducing domestic violence and promoting mental health? It was laudable that children received psychological assistance in the wake of natural disasters. Were there any more systematic approaches to supporting mental health among children?

57. **Mr. Kotrane** noted that a very large number of children did not live with their families. What sort of support was provided to help families assume their responsibilities? What concrete measures could be taken by judges when child support or alimony went unpaid? Some countries had established special funds to cover the needs of children.

58. El Salvador had made considerable efforts to combat child labour and exploitation through, in particular, activities carried out under the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) of the International Labour Organization (ILO) and work undertaken with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). Some of the worst forms of child labour were still being practised, however, in such areas as domestic work and agriculture. Did the Government have a sufficient number of labour inspectors to detect such situations? What information was available, and what kinds of programmes were being implemented?

59. In the field of juvenile justice, while the amendments made in the Juvenile Offenders Act in 2004 had brought about some positive changes, the general approach was still apparently repressive and based largely on the deprivation of liberty. The Committee had learned that, in 2009, five children had died in rehabilitation centres. What was the

Government doing to ensure that the juvenile justice system would operate in accordance with the Convention?

60. **Ms. Al-Asmar** asked whether the Government had designed any programmes to empower families and enable them to overcome some of the worst effects of poverty. What measures were taken, by the Government or by NGOs, to inform working children of their rights? Was the educational policy sensitive to the need for sexual and reproductive health education and the inculcation of a culture of non-violence?

61. **Mr. Citarella** asked whether there were any specific plans to shape education policy to address the disparity between rural and urban school infrastructures, the high dropout rate and the persistent practice, notwithstanding the Government's goal of ensuring free access to education, of charging fees for children to attend school. Had the Government implemented education programmes geared towards indigenous cultures and did it offer courses in indigenous languages?

62. **Ms. Ortiz**, noting that over one half of all adolescents left school early in a country with such enormous problems of gang violence, said that, at the very least, the State should ensure that young people could remain in school. What actions were being taken to lower the dropout rate? What was being done to eliminate discrepancies in education between rural and urban areas and between girls and boys? The Committee was also concerned about the size of the budget for education.

63. **The Chairperson** said that, for a medium-income country with a per capita gross domestic product (GDP) of about US\$ 4,000, the allocation of less than 3 per cent of GDP for education appeared to be insufficient. Early childhood development was in need of further support. Only about one half of all children took part in preschool programmes. Secondary school attendance was very low, at about 36 per cent. A holistic and integrated early childhood development programme was needed which would go beyond preschool programmes and effectively prepare children for later schooling. That would make it possible to reduce the repetition and dropout rates, which were surprisingly high even in the first grade. What kind of strategies would the Ministry of Education develop to keep children in school and to keep the schools safe from phenomena such as gang violence? Had the Government undertaken any studies on the root causes of early pregnancy with a view to targeting strategies as accurately as possible? Were adolescents who had children able to continue their educations?

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.