



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 1710th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 6 June 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Zermatten

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Greece (CRC/C/GRE/2-3; CRC/C/GRE/Q/2-3 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Greece took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Georgakopoulos** (Greece), presenting his country's combined second and third periodic reports, said that the challenges his country was facing as a result of the financial crisis, increased migration and other external factors would not in any way undermine its commitment to upholding children's rights or impede its efforts to prevent and eliminate practices that placed children at a disadvantage, punish violations of rights guaranteed under the Convention, enact legislative reforms and improve child welfare and protection mechanisms.
3. The education policy adopted by the Greek Government had three overarching aims — to ensure high-quality, universally accessible educational services, to cater for the specific individual needs of every child and to eliminate exclusion — and the rights embodied in that policy were guaranteed to every child living in Greece irrespective of their nationality and legal status and even if they lacked full documentation. In addition, targeted educational inclusion programmes had been developed for specific vulnerable and minority groups. Immigrant and repatriate students, for example, benefited from a nationwide primary and secondary school support programme designed to reduce dropout rates, improve performance, combat social exclusion and, insofar as possible, eliminate segregation. A similar programme for Roma children placed a particular emphasis on fighting prejudice and encouraging preschool education, early enrolment and regular attendance. The programme for children belonging to the Muslim minority adhered to the guidelines developed by the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe and sought to maintain and improve the State-supported minority schools operating in Thrace, on the one hand, and accommodate the Muslim minority's growing preference for inclusive education, on the other, while at the same time safeguarding linguistic and cultural differences.
4. Other Government initiatives to combat segregation and its effects included the 2010 adoption of a policy on educational priority zones, under which alternative and flexible educational approaches would be developed and tested in areas identified as priorities on the basis of their low education and socioeconomic indicators, with a view to ensuring the equitable educational inclusion of pupils living in those areas and removing the barriers to their advancement. Additionally, a 2008 law on the education of persons with disabilities and special needs stipulated that special learning programmes encompassing gifted and talented pupils as well as those with learning difficulties and disabilities should be made an integral part of compulsory, free State schooling and that inclusive education should at all times be the favoured approach.
5. Bullying was recognized to be a major problem in many schools and a national network for combating violence in schools had been established by the Greek Association for the Psychosocial Health of Children and Adolescents in 2010 to develop and implement appropriate prevention and intervention measures. The Ministry of Education was a founding member of that network, and also of the national network for the prevention and elimination of corporal punishment. Greek law imposed an absolute ban on corporal punishment in schools and prohibited its use in the education and upbringing of children in general.

6. Ministerial efforts to prevent and eliminate the sale of children were coordinated by a special committee established in 2004 while oversight in respect of anti-trafficking legislation and the 2006 National Action Plan to Combat Trafficking in Human Beings was the responsibility of an interministerial working group established in 2008. A Central Scientific Council had subsequently been established to assume overall responsibility for preventing and combating child victimization and criminality, as well as for specific tasks such as the creation and oversight of a national network of child protection units, the coordination of detection mechanisms, the operation of a child protection helpline and the management of statistical data. Special protection measures that encompassed legal aid, psychological support and assistance with food and accommodation were in place for child victims and witnesses in criminal proceedings, especially those exposed to the risk of intimidation, reprisal or violence.

7. Legislation governing the administration of juvenile justice had recently been amended to update and enhance the system's child-sensitive features. Under the revised provisions, all minors were entitled to legal assistance, children under 15 years of age could not be held in pretrial custody, the maximum custodial term in correctional facilities was 10 years, except for particularly serious offences, and rehabilitative or therapeutic measures were the only permitted sanction for offenders aged under 15. Improvements had also been made to the legislative framework governing the child protection units of the Ministry of Justice, Transparency and Human Rights, which provided accommodation, food, medical treatment, teaching and psychological support for at-risk children deprived of a family environment. Training in children's rights and treaty provisions had been organized for members of the judiciary.

8. The treatment of unaccompanied minors who were foreign nationals or victims of trafficking was closely monitored and the unaccompanied children of irregular migrants held in detention facilities were routinely held separately from adults until age and origin checks had been completed. In certain cases, Greek law expressly prohibited the deportation of minors and when, despite thorough investigations, it proved impossible to locate a child's family, the domestic authorities assumed a temporary guardianship role. Specific programmes and procedures had been adopted for the return of unaccompanied minors who were not seeking asylum, including, for Albanian nationals, a bilateral agreement for the repatriation and rehabilitation of child victims of trafficking in Greece. Where repatriation was not feasible or would expose the child to danger, accommodation was provided in special centres. In cases where unaccompanied minors were seeking asylum, the provisions of the Dublin II Regulation were strictly respected and, working in close cooperation with the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees, relevant NGOs and the authorities of neighbouring countries, the immigration service made every effort to reunite children with family members residing in other European Union States.

9. The Greek Armed Forces did not enlist persons under the age of 18 and, following a 2011 legislative amendment to align domestic criminal law with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, any person who, in an international or national armed conflict, enlisted or forcibly recruited children under the age of 15 or forced them to take part in hostilities faced a prison sentence of at least 10 years.

10. **Ms. Varmah** (Country Rapporteur) said that the State party's unstinting commitment to children's rights in spite of the adverse situation created by the financial crisis was commendable. She had concerns and queries in a number of areas, beginning with the fact that the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child appeared to have been inactive since its creation in 2001 to have done little if anything to promote implementation of the Convention. In view of that situation, she wished to know whether the State party intended to establish an independent coordinating body to assume the

monitoring role that the Observatory appeared unable to fulfil. She would also appreciate an update on the status of the National Action Plan for Children's Rights, the repercussions of the financial crisis and associated budget cuts for children and poor families, and the impact of measures to mitigate their impact.

11. Noting the absence of a centralized data collection and analysis system, she asked whether the State party envisaged developing a central information system capable of providing the comprehensive and disaggregated data needed to properly understand and monitor the situation of child victims of abuse and neglect, children with disabilities, children belonging to minority groups, child migrants, asylum seekers and unaccompanied minors. It would also be useful to know whether the Government intended to raise the age of majority from 17 to 18 years in legal provisions, including articles of the Criminal Code and Code of Criminal Procedure, that did not conform to the Convention and to repeal provisions that, subject to parental consent, allowed girls and boys to be married from the age of 9 and 12 respectively.

12. Despite commendable efforts at the interministerial level to improve the living standards of the Roma, problems persisted at the local implementation level, including continuing segregation in some State schools. Information was therefore needed on measures to address the continuing exclusion and discrimination to which Roma children and likewise children from the Turkish and Macedonian Muslim minorities, children with disabilities and other children in need of special protection were exposed in the areas of housing, health, education and employment. With regard to the Roma in particular, she wondered whether the simplified registration procedures recommended in the Greek Ombudsman's 2009 special report had succeeded in achieving the regularization of Roma children who had not been registered at birth and the thousands of other Roma who were effectively stateless. She would also appreciate an explanation as to why immigrant women could not obtain birth certificates for their children and persons of Turkish origin were not permitted to use their full, original names on official documents and were instead forced to accept arbitrary transliterations.

13. Lastly, she sought information about measures to ensure that children were heard in all settings, including at home, at school, in childcare institutions and in judicial and administrative proceedings such as divorce-related custody cases, and that legislative reforms prohibiting the use of violence against children were effectively enforced, noting with regret that corporal punishment continued to be practised in both home and non-home environments in spite of the reforms.

14. **Mr. Pollar** (Country Rapporteur) asked if civil society, and children in particular, had been involved in the preparation of the report, and to what extent the Government had taken into account and disseminated the Committee's previous concluding observations. He asked how many children had died during the reporting period as a result of illness, traffic or other accidents, violence and suicide. He said the Committee would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on the high mortality rate among Roma children.

15. He wished to know how children's privacy was protected within the family, in alternative care, and in institutions, facilities and services. He also wondered how children's families and homes were protected from arbitrary or unlawful interference, how the privacy of their communications was ensured, whether they had the right to confidential advice and counselling, and what controls were in place to protect personal information stored in records or files.

16. He asked how the Government ensured children's access to a variety of national and international sources of information, especially those aimed at promoting their health and well-being. It would be useful to know what measures were being taken to encourage the mass media to disseminate information that was beneficial to children and in line with

article 29 of the Convention. He wished to know about any Government efforts to promote the production and dissemination of children's books, encourage the mass media to consider the linguistic needs of children belonging to minority groups, and develop appropriate guidelines on protecting children from harmful information and materials.

17. **Ms. Nores de García** said that the Committee was concerned that the current economic crisis would have a negative impact on the resources available for the protection of children's rights. She wondered to what extent the population in general, and vulnerable groups in particular, were aware of the Convention, and whether it had been disseminated in the languages spoken by migrants from other countries in the region. She asked what measures were being taken to change harmful cultural patterns by providing training for professionals working with children at all levels.

18. **Mr. Guráñ**, noting that a lack of coordination in the field of children's rights had been a long-standing problem in the country and that the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child had never functioned properly as a coordinating body, asked whether there were plans to replace that body. Given that, as a member of the European Union, Greece was obligated to establish an independent body to monitor the implementation of anti-discrimination legislation, he said he would like to know if such a body existed, and if so how it functioned. He asked what resources were available to support the important work of the Ombudsman's Office in the light of the current economic crisis.

19. He wished to know why the Roma had not yet been recognized as a minority in Greece, exactly how many Roma were living in the country, and whether Roma were given the option of identifying themselves as such in census survey. Coordination and a clear strategy were required to address the issues surrounding the Roma. He therefore asked if any coordinating body on Roma issues had been set up, and whether Greece intended to emulate strategies used successfully in other European countries.

20. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** expressed concern about the negative impact of the current economic and social crisis on children, and about the lack of related statistical data. The data that were available indicated that the youth unemployment rate currently stood at 40 per cent and continued to rise, and that the risk of falling into poverty was also increasing. She wondered if that situation had led to the internal displacement of young people seeking work.

21. The Committee had received reports that increasing numbers of children were being abandoned and that the country's social services were overwhelmed. It seemed that the institutionalization of children was still preferred over family-based alternatives. Large numbers of young people were neither enrolled in school nor gainfully employed. She wished to know what specific countercyclical policies, in the form of increased social expenditures, were being implemented to stimulate job growth. She asked what percentage of the national budget was allocated to health and education. She wondered if any programmes were in place to provide cash transfers to members of the most vulnerable population groups. Additional information on the Social Economy Fund would also be welcome. Lastly, she asked if mental health services for children and young people continued to receive adequate funding.

22. **Mr. Kotrane** asked if the State party was considering ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

23. The Committee was of the view that the provisions of the Criminal Code and the Code of Criminal Procedure cited in paragraph 6 of the list of issues (CRC/C/GRC/Q/2-3) should not be interpreted to mean that children should be treated as adults in criminal

proceedings. He hoped that those provisions would be revised to ensure that did not happen.

24. Noting that the State party had indicated it would consider the wishes of the Muslim minority in Thrace regarding the application of sharia, he asked if the wishes of Muslim children would also be taken into account. Children were required to state their religious affiliation upon enrolment in school, which violated the right to freedom of religion according to the Hellenic Data Protection Authority and the Ombudsman. He therefore wished to know what measures were in place to ensure respect for religious freedom in schools.

25. **Mr. Koompraphant** asked what measures had been taken to support teachers in identifying cases of domestic violence and reporting them to the public prosecutor's office. He also asked by what means public prosecutors could then intervene, what resources were available to them, and how many of them were assigned to cases of domestic violence. Lastly, he asked what measures were being taken to eliminate hostility towards Roma children and their families.

26. **Ms. Al-Asmar** asked about the relationship between the Government and NGOs, noting that some NGOs, particularly those working in the field of human trafficking, had reported facing difficulties in their dealings with Government bodies.

27. **Ms. Al-Shehail** expressed concern about the continued ill-treatment by police officers of members of vulnerable groups, particularly the Roma, and asked if any measures were in place to combat abuse of authority and to integrate minorities into the police force. She requested further statistical data on street children and the formal employment of minors. She asked what measures were being taken to reduce the number of young people engaged in inappropriate employment such as drug dealing. There seemed to be no State structural support for unaccompanied children or families with no legal documents. Lastly, she asked if there was a code of conduct to regulate the television industry or any training programme for the media on respecting children's privacy.

28. **Ms. Wijemanne** asked what criteria the Government used to set priorities for the implementation of children's rights. She also asked if the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child would play a coordinating role in the future, given that a multisectoral action plan was needed to protect children's rights. It would be interesting to have an account of any efforts to strengthen the database on children's rights issues in various areas such as health, education, sexual abuse and minority groups.

29. She asked what was being done to protect children without birth certificates and ensure that they were not treated as adults by law enforcement officials. Lastly, she asked how the Government planned to address discrimination against the Roma, particular with regard to access to school and legal documentation.

30. **Mr. Gastaud** said that he would like to know what mechanisms were in place to compile and compare the data collected throughout the country, in order to provide an overall view of the situation of the rights of the child. He wished to know what measures were taken to ensure that children's voices were heard in court proceedings, and whether any remedy was available to annul a court decision in cases where they had not been heard.

31. He wished to know more about the Youth Parliament, including the length of term its members served, its competencies, whether it drafted opinions and proposals, and, if so, what follow-up was given to them.

32. **Ms. Lee** said that the independent expert on minority issues, Gay McDougall, had indicated in her report on her 2008 mission to Greece that the Roma in the settlements she visited were living in substandard housing with no electricity, water or sanitation services, and that none of the children in the Spata settlement were enrolled in school. The European

Court of Human Rights had ruled that the discriminatory practice of refusing to enrol Roma children in school or requiring them to attend special preparatory classes violated the European Convention on Human Rights; what had the Government done to rectify the situation?

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.40 a.m.

33. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that the report had been prepared by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in close collaboration with more than 10 other ministries involved in protecting children's rights. It had then been transmitted to the National Commission for Human Rights, the Office of the Ombudsman and six NGOs whose comments and suggestions had been taken on board where applicable. Concluding observations issued by human rights treaty bodies were widely circulated to all relevant departments and were posted on various Government websites. Greece was still considering ratification of a number of international human rights instruments, including the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the new Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, but was hampered by the economic crisis.

34. Referring to an earlier comment, he stressed that Greece did not recognize any distinct national, ethnic or linguistic group as "Macedonian" on its territory. The term "Macedonian" was used in a cultural and regional sense by the more than 2.5 million Greek Macedonians living in the north of the country. Attaching another meaning to the word would only be confusing. A small number of people living in the region of Greece known as Macedonia did speak both Greek and a Slavic dialect, but their human rights were fully protected under the Constitution, they did not suffer discrimination on the basis of their origin and they were free to uphold their traditions and culture.

35. Regarding the transliteration of names, he said that all official documents were drafted in Greek and that foreign names were entered on civil status certificates in both the Greek and Latin alphabets. The spelling of foreign names and their proper intonation in Greek were based on a formal statement by the person concerned, while a linguistic model developed by the Hellenic Organization for Standardization guided transliteration of Greek into Latin, and vice versa. Any divergence in the spelling of foreign names was the result of applying that model and did not concern only the Muslim minority.

36. He said that Greek law did provide for the application of sharia law, but only in family and inheritance matters, and Muslim individuals were free to choose between the muftis or the civil courts. Sharia law applied only insofar as its provisions did not conflict with fundamental Greek values and legislation. Recent court decisions had stated that provisions establishing the judicial competence of muftis were exceptional and were not subject to extensive interpretation. Matters related to custody, guardianship and parental behaviour came under the exclusive competence of civil courts. Problems nonetheless arose from that duality and the Government was aware of the need to strengthen the judicial review of decisions rendered by muftis with a view to ensuring their compliance with the Constitution and international treaties. It was also open to discussing adjustments to legislation and the court system to take account of local situations and the best interests of the child. He emphasized that there was no parallel legal order in Greece and that Muslim women and children were fully included in all policies and programmes.

37. **Ms. Nores de García** asked how the State party reconciled the fact that early marriage was prohibited under the Convention but was common practice in certain minority groups.

38. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) confirmed that early marriage did take place among the Roma, but marriages under the age of 14 had to be approved by the courts.

39. **The Chairperson** said that there obviously was a parallel legal order regarding marriage if children were permitted to follow different laws from others. He asked how many sharia court decisions had been overturned by the civil courts.
40. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that derogations to the minimum marriage age applied to minors of all ethnic backgrounds and religions alike. The courts rarely overturned decisions rendered by muftis, which explained the Government's openness to legislative change in order to enhance the judicial review mandate of the civil courts.
41. **The Chairperson** said that the minimum marriage age was far too low, and that issues relating to the Roma and Muslims were two distinct problems.
42. **Ms. Varmah** pointed out that court authorization of early marriage would not prevent problems from arising between the couple.
43. **Mr. Kastanas** (Greece) said that the question of early marriage might require re-examination, but such marriages were not a widespread phenomenon in Greece.
44. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that the General Secretariat for Youth of the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs was seeking applicants to fill the posts of children's rights experts and to form an advisory committee composed of representatives of NGOs. The deadline for applications was mid-June 2012. The objective was to establish the National Observatory for the Rights of the Child as the key institution monitoring children's rights and the implementation of the Convention.
45. **Ms. Nores de García** asked whether the National Observatory's previous functions would be preserved or modified. She also asked for information on the nature of its oversight mandate, the steps it would take to guarantee compliance with the Convention, and the budget allocated to it.
46. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that the National Observatory would maintain all its original functions, and any additional responsibilities would be determined by the current situation in the country.
47. **The Chairperson** expressed doubt as to the effectiveness of the National Observatory. He said that its composition indicated more of a think tank than a coordinating body, whereas what the State party lacked was an implementation mechanism and both horizontal coordination between the various ministries, departments and civil society and vertical coordination between the Government, the regions and the municipalities. He wished to know the exact nature of the National Observatory's remit and how the State party planned to coordinate the implementation of the Convention.
48. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said the hope was that all entities and actions related to the protection of children would be concentrated within the National Observatory once it was re-established.
49. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the Central Scientific Council coordinated all the programmes that addressed children in conflict with the law, with a view to creating a national child protection network. A new budget line had been added for data collection.
50. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that the Central Scientific Council comprised five members representing the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity and the National Centre for Social Solidarity. The mandate of the National Centre was to coordinate efforts for the protection of children in conflict with the law, design training courses for municipal social workers, set standards for alternative care, provide assistance when a child was in imminent danger and liaise with the prosecution service. The National Centre also operated two shelters for women and child victims and another six were planned for the near future. Services of the national helpline ranged from meeting basic needs to providing psychosocial support. Despite the economic crisis, the Government was

striving to maintain social services and had allocated funds to many health-care centres, facilities for persons with disabilities, homes for the elderly, summer camps and allowances for large families.

51. **The Chairperson** asked whether the Government had been able to provide adequate resources for health, education and social protection, and whether it had taken any structural measures to address the extremely high youth unemployment rate.

52. **Ms. Nores de García** wished to know what percentage of the national budget was allocated to the health and education sectors under normal circumstances, as compared to the percentage allocated to those sectors during the economic crisis.

53. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that guaranteeing access to education in the present could allow more young people to find employment in the future. Despite the negative impact of the economic crisis on the education sector, Greece had persisted in its efforts to guarantee access to education for children from vulnerable social groups. The Ministry of Education had taken a series of measures aimed at maintaining the quality of education within the constraints of the resources available. Those measures had included merging schools with only a small number of students or schools that were in close proximity to one another and building new schools that were larger, better equipped and offered a wider range of courses.

54. The introduction of educational priority zones was an attempt to combat segregation in schools and to remove social and economic barriers to students' progress by devising alternative approaches to education. The schools located in those zones would also employ specialized staff, such as psychologists and social workers.

55. In addition, the Ministry of Education was considering the possibility of providing light lunches to all students in designated schools. It had issued a circular in March 2012 calling on the population to support students facing food shortages. Furthermore, low-income families could benefit from an annual allowance for every child enrolled in a public school and receiving compulsory education.

56. **Ms. Varmah** noted with interest the total absence of private adoption agencies in Greece. She said that private adoptions were often conducted through a lawyer or gynaecologist who acted as a facilitator and were often quicker than public adoptions. However, in the case of private adoptions, a court ruling was required. It was reported that approximately 500 illegal adoptions had taken place in Greece in 2005, the majority of them under the guise of private adoptions. It seemed that children in alternative care and the children of migrants and asylum seekers ran the greatest risk of illegal adoption. In that connection, the Committee had received reports that a number of Bulgarian and Albanian mothers sold their babies to Greek parents and, in that way, obviated the relevant legal procedures. It was assumed that those babies were then trafficked for illegal adoption. She asked what legal measures the Government had taken to combat the practice of illegal adoption in all its forms.

57. She expressed concern that the majority of children with disabilities still did not attend school, despite the fact that education was compulsory for all children from kindergarten to secondary school. That low attendance rate could be attributed to the fact that most schools were inadequately equipped and lacked trained teachers. She wished to know of the measures the Government had taken to remedy that situation and to guarantee access to a quality education for the Turkish-speaking community in Western Thrace, as well as other minorities and vulnerable groups. She asked whether teachers belonging to those groups had been adequately trained and whether they were sufficient in number to teach students in their own language at the preschool, primary and secondary levels. She would also be interested to know of the measures taken to eradicate discrimination against Roma children, who often encountered difficulties in accessing education. She would appreciate information on what was being done to prevent Roma children, if and when they

were admitted to a school, from being segregated from other children, and to prevent them from dropping out.

58. Furthermore, she enquired as to the measures taken to combat the prevalence of alcohol consumption among young people and as to the number of those young people who had gone through detoxification treatment.

59. Lastly, she asked whether the Government planned to set up a 24-hour, cost-free national helpline for children in distress.

60. **Mr. Pollar** said that the State party report did not contain information on the illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad. He asked how the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction had assisted the State party in combating that phenomenon and whether there were any data on the number of children recovered by and returned to Greece and the number of children recovered by Greece and repatriated.

61. Noting with satisfaction the absence of armed conflict in Greece, he enquired as to whether there was any means of identifying children who had been involved in armed conflict in another country and as to the measures in place to rehabilitate them.

62. Referring to article 31 of the Convention, concerning the right of the child to leisure and to engage in recreational activities, he asked what facilities the State party had provided to allow children to exercise those rights and whether children enjoyed sufficient time away from their studies to do so.

63. **Ms. Nores de García** said it stood to reason that if students were unaware of their rights, they would not be in a position to exercise them: how had the principles of the Convention been disseminated among students in Greece?

64. The Committee had received reports that, in spite of the Government's efforts to integrate minority groups into the education system, many Roma children still encountered difficulties in accessing education. She expressed concern at the alleged existence of schools that were only attended by Roma children, which was indicative of their total exclusion from society. She wished to know what measures the Government planned to take to address that situation. Furthermore, she noted that many Roma communities were unable to access schools owing to a lack of transport.

65. Stressing the importance of early childhood education, she expressed concern at the conspicuous lack of early childhood education facilities in Roma communities. She wished to know of the measures envisaged to ensure that Roma children from the earliest age benefited from an education. In addition, she enquired as to the care received by unaccompanied minors, whether the centres in which they were held were equipped to meet their health-care and educational needs and what measures were in place to reintegrate them. The Government's recent experience had served to underscore the need for policies on street children that were well designed and subject to adequate oversight. She would be interested to know of any changes made to such policies.

66. **Mr. Koompraphant** requested information on the services that assisted families with issues related to parental responsibility and safeguarding the welfare of their children.

67. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** noted with concern the lack of data on the number of children with disabilities disaggregated by age and type of disability. He wished to know what steps had been taken to collect such data. Turning to the question of health care, he said that the Committee had received reports that private insurance companies denied treatment to children with disabilities on the grounds that it was the responsibility of the State. It was not clear how many children with disabilities had been placed in institutional care, but the Committee had received reports that family courts failed to review the situation of certain children with disabilities once they had been placed in an institution.

Furthermore, the programme aimed at removing children from institutional care devised by the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity reportedly made no specific reference to children with disabilities.

68. Recalling the importance of the early detection of disabilities, he would like to know whether centres for the early detection of disabilities existed and, if so, how many of them there were and how they operated.

69. **Mr. Gastaud**, noting the improvements carried out by the Government in the area of juvenile justice — in particular, the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to 18 years — said that certain ambiguities persisted. He requested clarification on whether children under 15 years of age could be imprisoned and whether that was also the case for children aged between 15 and 18, given that they were still minors. Noting that the type of penalty handed down to juvenile delinquents appeared to vary depending on their age, he enquired as to the penalties handed down to minors aged under 15 who had committed a serious crime. Recalling that minors should only be imprisoned as a last resort, he wished to know of the alternative measures in place to address juvenile delinquency in the State party.

70. Furthermore, the Committee had received reports that, in certain detention centres, minors were routinely held with adults. He asked what steps the Government planned to take in order to remedy that situation.

71. **Ms. Lee** said that the Committee had received reports concerning the use of caged beds in a care centre for children with disabilities. She wished to know what the Government was doing to address that situation, whether there were other centres that routinely sedated and restrained patients and whether the State party had any intention of ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

72. Noting that there were currently three Government ministries responsible for asylum issues, she wondered whether there was sufficient coordination among them. Moreover, she expressed concern at the conditions in which minors, particularly unaccompanied minors, were held in detention centres. She would like to know whether child-friendly techniques were used to interview those minors and how the Government took the best interests of the child into account during the asylum process and repatriation.

73. **Mr. Gurán** said that the number of children in institutional care in Greece was a major cause for concern. He wished to know whether the Government had devised a strategy to reduce the number of children placed in institutional care, whether it would consider closing its larger institutions and what measures it had taken to promote alternative family care and, in particular, foster care.

74. **The Chairperson** said that, according to the State party's report, the minimum age of criminal responsibility had been set at 8 years and minors aged between 8 and 13 years could not be imprisoned. However, according to the delegation, that was also the case for minors under 15. He requested the delegation to confirm those ages. Noting that only educational and therapeutic measures could be imposed in those cases, he asked whether those measures precluded placing minors in a detention centre.

75. Turning to the question of pretrial detention, he noted that the children who came into conflict with the law tended to be migrants or Roma and were often held in custody for an extended period of time owing to the lengthy investigations that had to be conducted. He asked where those children were detained and whether they were detained alongside adults.

76. He also expressed concern at the shortage of adequately trained professionals in relevant fields and asked what measures the Government had taken to remedy that shortage. Furthermore, he enquired as to why so few judges had received specialized training in children's rights in spite of the existence of numerous training facilities.

77. Noting with concern that there was a growing tendency for vulnerable children to be placed in institutional care, he asked what measures the Government had taken to find an alternative course of action.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.