



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

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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1190th MEETING (Chamber B)

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 22 September 2006, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. ALUOCH
(Vice-Chairperson)

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Third periodic report of Jordan (continued) (CRC/C/JOR/3; CRC/C/JOR/Q/3; CRC/C/JOR/Q/3/Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.18/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Al Kabariti, Mr. Al Mhaisen, Mr. Al Tarawneh, Mr. Burayzat, Mr. Hindawi, Mr. Mazahera, Ms. Mdanat, Mr. Okour, Mr. Qaddomi, Ms. Rashid and Mr. Ratroot (Jordan) resumed places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. POLLAR said that, although the delegation had stated that the minimum age for girls to marry was lowered to 15 only in exceptional circumstances, for example if the girl concerned was pregnant, the Committee had learned from other sources that in 20 per cent of marriages the bride was under the age of 16. Such a figure suggested a high rate of underage pregnancy in Jordan. He asked what was being done to rectify that situation. On the issue of education, he had been informed that, in some areas, children remained illiterate as a result of poor teaching skills. He wondered whether efforts were being made to improve the supervision of teaching practices, and what quality assurances were in place for education.
3. Turning to mine clearance, he said that although the State party had declared that it was free of mines, the national demining action plan was scheduled to run until 2009, which suggested that demining activities remained to be completed. He asked if that was indeed the case. He wished to know what measures were being taken to provide psychological and social support for children affected by mines. He also wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure that refugee children from conflict areas did not return to conflict situations, and whether they received any counselling.
4. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan), replying to a question asked at the previous meeting, said that the courts issued decisions on maintenance payments, the amount of which was determined in accordance with the situation of the mother and child concerned.
5. The CHAIRPERSON asked what recovery measures were taken if maintenance was not paid.
6. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that in the event that maintenance payments were not made, procedures were in place to deduct those payments from the salary of the individual in question, or to confiscate that person's property. Legislation had been amended to provide for a mediation-based approach to problem solving, including in cases affecting children, and procedures could be halted if that was in the best interests of the child concerned.
7. Rehabilitation and correctional institutions ran reintegration programmes and had a system of vocational training to prepare young offenders to return to society. Under a new programme, alternatives to detention would be used in respect of young offenders. New legislation had been drafted to reclassify juveniles into three age groups: 7 to 12, 12 to 15 and 15 to 18 years old. Judges must take those age groups into account when handing down sentences in criminal cases involving minors.

8. Disabled children were granted free medical insurance, and some government departments allocated specific funds to services for children with special needs. Legal assistance was granted to children with special needs, such as the provision of information in Braille format, and free lawyers' services if required. The State had a special needs programme to promote the right of the disabled to work, and to encourage them to play an active role in society. There were no disadvantaged areas in Jordan in respect of the provision of educational or legal services, since people in small villages and communities had the same access to services as those living in the capital. Under civil law, children aged 15 to 18 were allowed to engage in commercial activity if it was considered to be in their best interests. Of Jordan's 600 judges, 35 were women. Female judges had made considerable headway in the juvenile justice system, and were considered better suited than male judges to the task of dealing with cases that involved children. A programme had been established for the development of specific regional courts for the administration of juvenile justice, which included the provision of legal advice and psychological support. Although all references to tribal judiciary had been removed from Jordanian legislation, in some cases social mediation was required. A strategy was in place to accelerate decision-making in legal procedures, provided that justice was not compromised. The number of judges had been increased, juvenile justice had been made a priority and deadlines had been set for all cases to ensure that minors were not subjected to lengthy legal procedures.

9. Efforts were being made to provide psychological support to children who were victims of domestic violence, and to ensure that they were heard in a confidential manner. Legislation had been amended to include the possibility of using technology when taking testimony from children.

10. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan) said that Jordan was the only Middle Eastern country that was party to the Ottawa Convention on the Prohibition of the Use, Stockpiling, Production and Transfer of Anti-Personnel Mines and on Their Destruction. Demining activity had begun before Jordan had acceded to that Convention, and considerable progress had been made. Agreements had been concluded with other governments which had pledged their support for the demining process. Programmes were in place to provide support for casualties of mine explosions, and awareness-raising measures were being taken, such as the broadcasting of television programmes that addressed the problems caused by landmines. Unfortunately, explosions were an everyday occurrence in the Middle East, and all Jordanian children lived in an atmosphere of violence. Efforts were made to put that into perspective and to ensure that such violence did not lead to an increase in radicalism.

11. Mr. PARFITT asked for further information concerning corroborative evidence in respect of child victims, in particular what age groups required corroborative evidence, and what the minimum age was for accepting evidence from a child.

12. Mr. LIWSKI said he wished to know what efforts were being made to educate children both in school and out of school, on issues of tolerance, human rights and respect for different nationalities and cultures.

13. Mr. BURAYZAT said that peace and tolerance were a fundamental part of Islamic culture. Following the conclusion of a peace agreement with Israel, a number of programmes and initiatives had been developed both for and by children, to raise awareness on issues of peace, and to encourage meetings between Jordanian children and children of other nationalities and cultures. Children were not, however, taught to be submissive or to renounce their rights, but rather that moderation was a basis for peace.
14. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that an office had been established to mediate between spouses in cases of separation where children were involved. Centres had been established for children in large towns, and would also be established in rural areas. On the issue of corroborative evidence, he said that in some instances, where there was no corroborative evidence, individual testimony from a child could be accepted as legal evidence.
15. Mr. OKOUR (Jordan) said that many of the principles and concepts of human rights, the rights of the child and democracy had been embodied in school curricula even before Jordan had begun to implement human rights education programmes with assistance from international bodies. Basic education for children between the ages of 6 and 16 was compulsory and free throughout the Kingdom, and textbooks were provided free of charge. The Ministry provided teachers and school materials for remote and disadvantaged areas, and encouraged students from those areas to become teachers with a view to promoting school attendance. In addition, the Ministry planned to extend the school lunch programme currently provided in disadvantaged areas to grades 1 through 6 throughout the Kingdom. An association under the patronage of the King supplied many schoolchildren with school equipment. The attendance rate at the start of the current school year had been 95 per cent; the Government hoped to raise it to 100 per cent.
16. All schools were instructed to emphasize the need to respect the views of the child and the importance of participation by children in all matters concerning them. Moreover, the Ministry of Education ensured that counselling services were available for all schoolchildren. Teams had been set up to offer protection to children against various forms of abuse, and to assist them in learning to avoid abuse. The Ministry was working with civil society in disadvantaged areas to establish children's parliaments, which existed in other areas of the country. Additional programmes sought to protect children from the use of psychotropic substances and to combat child labour practices. Plans were under way to create parent-teacher-child committees; that project had recently been presented to the Minister, who had shown great interest.
17. The Ministry of Education enforced strict penalties against teachers who used corporal punishment; such cases could, moreover, be brought before the courts.
18. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC inquired whether the Ministry of Education, the police, or the judiciary had information regarding the number of complaints that had been brought against teachers, and how such cases had been handled.
19. Mr. OKOUR (Jordan) said that the prohibition against corporal punishment in schools had been in effect since the foundation of the Kingdom. There were, however, cases of violence among students; the Ministry handled those cases, and published a yearly report. The delegation could provide statistics if the Committee so wished.

20. The Ministry offered teacher training and further education programmes to teachers throughout their careers, and provided incentives to those who chose to participate. Moreover, the Ministry was working with universities to create programmes that conformed with its educational requirements. Each year, a certain number of teachers were given leave to pursue advanced degrees. A hierarchy of teachers existed, based on the number of teaching hours completed; statistics were available.
21. As for children who failed at school, the Education Act stipulated that children under the age of 16 must attend school, unless their health prevented them from doing so. In the first three years, a student who had failed could not repeat a grade, and simply moved to the next level. Thereafter, a student who had failed a year could either repeat a grade or move up a grade. The Ministry had created special units for children with learning difficulties, designed to teach them basic subjects and to reintegrate them into the classroom. A number of private institutions also assisted children with such problems. The Ministry ran five schools for the deaf and hard of hearing. In addition, it ran two schools for the blind or visually impaired, beginning at kindergarten age, and provided services for visually impaired students wherever they were located - including the use of Braille and computers equipped with screen-reader programmes. Currently, there was a project under way to provide magnifying equipment and other innovations for partially sighted students.
22. However, there were few facilities for mentally disabled students. The Ministry had concluded an agreement with a Swedish agency to develop a pilot programme for 28 mentally disabled children between the ages of 4 and 14. In addition, medical check-ups were provided regularly in grades 1 to 4. Tests were given, in addition, to assess children's difficulties in various areas. In conjunction with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Ministry had developed an e-guide for assistance to teachers in diagnosing and handling such problems.
23. The Ministry paid particular attention to the early years of childhood, which had a strong impact on later life. About 60 per cent of all Jordanian children attended kindergarten; such schools were run either by the Ministry or by the private sector. In the latter case, they required certification by the Ministry. In addition, the Ministry trained and appointed kindergarten teachers and provided teaching materials, computers and toys.
24. The Government was cooperating with civil society on a national programme to raise the awareness of parents regarding the importance of the early childhood years. There was, in addition, a training programme for parents administered by the Ministry of Religious Affairs.
25. Programmes had been developed to encourage students to remain in school, including the provision of school uniforms and other materials free of charge. Moreover, great efforts were made to assist dropouts in returning to school. The Jordanian school system was flexible: a student could return to school even after three years' absence. The Ministry also operated a comprehensive literacy programme, including literacy centres staffed with qualified teachers; free textbooks were provided and subsidies offered to students. Night courses and home-study courses were also available.

26. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC said she had been surprised to learn that in Jordan boys and girls did not attend the same schools; she wondered if that practice was traditional, and whether it obtained in both public and private schools. She would also like to know whether the Ministry of Education was responsible for religious schools, and what measures it was taking to abolish the practice of sending children to school in shifts.

27. Information from non-governmental sources indicated that children from ethnic minorities did not benefit from free access to primary education. Clarifications would be welcome. Was the Government contemplating measures to ensure that all children living in Jordan, including refugee children, had access to free education?

28. The CHAIRPERSON asked what educational opportunities were available to children of non-Jordanian fathers, who apparently could not apply for residency until they had spent 15 years in the country.

29. Mr. OKOUR (Jordan) said that private schools were co-educational at the primary and secondary levels. Public schools were co-educational at the outset; girls and boys were later separated with a view to avoiding problems related to the special characteristics of Jordanian society. He wished to emphasize that there were no religious schools in Jordan. There were, however, some religious clubs and associations that provided teaching in the Koran, under the auspices of the Ministry of Religious Affairs, including summer clubs.

30. The Ministry of Education was endeavouring to abolish the double-shift system. He did not have statistics for Amman; he was certain, however, that schools in other parts of the country did not have double-shift systems. Jordan attached great importance to the right to universal education for all, and sought to ensure that children from all ethnic groups and nationalities had access to education. Children whose parents did not have legal residency could attend private schools.

31. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether private school education was free.

32. Mr. OKOUR (Jordan) replied that only the public schools were free. The regulations provided, however, that the children of Jordanians who were married to non-Jordanians could be admitted to public schools under certain circumstances: if the father had died, if the parents had divorced, if the father was ill or otherwise unable to work, or if the father had disappeared. So humanitarian factors were taken into consideration. If, however, the father had a work permit, the child could study in a public school free of charge.

33. Ms. RASHID (Jordan) said that breastfeeding was a widely accepted practice at all levels of society. Some 94 per cent of children benefited from breastfeeding during the first 24 hours of life. Roughly 72 per cent of women breastfed their children during the first 12 months, whereas 25 per cent switched to breast milk substitutes before the infant reached the age of 6 months. The Ministry of Health was working with partners such as UNICEF to promote breastfeeding and had set up a breastfeeding department within the Ministry. Five paediatric hospitals actively promoted breastfeeding. Working mothers were entitled to 10 weeks of maternity leave; efforts were under way to extend the length of such leave to 14 weeks. The public sector allowed up to three months of maternity leave. Although mothers returning to work were allowed one hour per day to breastfeed their babies, there were no special

breastfeeding areas in the workplace. A code resembling the International Code of Marketing of Breast-Milk Substitutes had been established, stipulating that the media could not be used to promote the use of artificial substances. A national AIDS strategy focused on a multisectoral approach to health and involved the participation of men and women in the review of health issues. An information campaign targeting health workers had been launched to teach them about the rights of the child. The Ministry, in conjunction with UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), had issued guidelines on childhood diseases and human-rights-related issues. Specialized clinics and a national mental health centre provided treatment for the mentally ill and services such as family counselling. Social workers provided support for schoolchildren with behavioural problems, although only 3 per cent of consultations dealt with children suffering from those problems. A Ministry of Health-UNICEF programme had been implemented to sensitize parents to the intellectual, social and psychological development of the child.

34. Mr. PARFITT requested information on the age of consent for health interventions, including issues relating to sexuality.

35. Ms. RASHID (Jordan) said that children who were able to express themselves and describe the symptoms of their ailments, generally as of the age of 10, could be treated without the presence of a parent or guardian.

36. The CHAIRPERSON asked for further clarification, especially with regard to adolescents seeking medical advice without their parents.

37. Ms. RASHID (Jordan) said that, in matters relating to reproductive health and sexuality, girls were usually accompanied by their mothers. Surgical operations required the consent of one or both parents, depending on the case. Early pregnancy figures had declined from 7 per cent in 1990 to 4 per cent in 2002. The average age of marriage in Jordan currently stood at 22, owing to legislation raising the minimum legal age for marriage. Early pregnancies were treated as high risks, and the relevant ministries promoted family planning and warned against the dangers of early pregnancy. Only one third of women received post-natal care. According to a 2002 survey, 80 per cent of women believed antenatal care was not necessary and 20 per cent were not aware of the service. Infants were immunized against tuberculosis early on. To reduce the percentage of anaemia in schoolchildren, which stood at 20 per cent, an anaemia awareness programme and a project to enrich wheat with iron, especially for children under 5, had been launched, and fortifiers were distributed in the schools and made available to other age groups as well.

38. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that health legislation focusing on the best interests of the child had been enacted in the past three years. Parental consent was indeed necessary for serious surgical operations, in accordance with the Medical Code, except in emergency situations. Primary schoolchildren enjoyed full health insurance coverage, a scheme sponsored by the Ministries of Health and Education.

39. Ms. MDANAT (Jordan) said that the age at which children in Jordan were allowed to work had been raised from 7 to 16, in particular in relation to hazardous work, in conformity with International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182: Worst Forms of Child

Labour Convention (1999). As a result of Jordan's ratification of the ILO Convention, a Child Labour Unit had been established in the Kingdom. National measures included free access to work, budget funds earmarked for child labour, a National Youth Strategy 2005-2009, plans to conduct a national survey to provide accurate child labour statistics and follow-up action with respect to the ILO Convention.

40. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether child domestic workers or children working in family-run firms and factories were to be included in the national survey.
41. Ms. MDANAT (Jordan) said that the percentage of child domestic servants was low. The inclusion in the survey of child servants working within the family context was controversial. The survey would be comprehensive, containing data on all age groups and types of labour.
42. Mr. AL KABARITI (Jordan) said that Jordanian legislation prohibited hazardous child labour. If children were engaged in work under the age of 18, it was often within the framework of vocational training. In some Jordanian homes children were no longer recruited to perform domestic work. Jordanian legislation relating to nationality contained provisions on children. Any child born on Jordanian soil, even if the father's identity was unknown or the child was stateless, was entitled to Jordanian nationality. Foundlings could also acquire Jordanian nationality. Any minor whose father had given up his own nationality was allowed to keep his or her Jordanian nationality. Any person above the age of 18 was subject to the law of nationality that included a 15-year residence requirement: it was up to the State to decide whether or not to bestow nationality.
43. The CHAIRPERSON requested information on the status of children born on Jordanian soil of a Jordanian mother and a non-Jordanian father who had not yet fulfilled the 15-year residence requirement.
44. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that according to Jordanian law, nationality was attributed to the father. If only the mother was a Jordanian, the non-Jordanian father would be subject to the residence requirement. There were some exceptions: children with a Jordanian mother could be granted Jordanian nationality if the father was dead or his identity or whereabouts unknown. All services were provided to Jordanian and foreign children alike, without exception. Children living on Jordanian soil with their mother received annual residence permits and could not be deported. To receive a residence permit, foreigners had to state their reasons for living in Jordan, such as work.
45. The Government of Jordan was not a party to the United Nations Convention on the Status of Refugees, 1951, but had signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) on refugee issues. Under another MoU entered into with UNHCR, the Government had set up a camp for refugees of the Iraq war and provided educational services for children in partnership with UNHCR and UNICEF. Educational testing was conducted under the supervision of the Ministry of Education and certificates were issued upon completion of schooling. Child refugee figures varied: there

were currently 28 child refugees in Jordan between the ages of 0 and 4; 1,020 child asylum-seekers between the ages of 1 and 4; 621 asylum-seekers under 18 living alone and 7 under the age of 17 living with family members. Under an MoU signed with UNHCR, the Jordanian Government had agreed that no child refugees would be returned to areas of armed conflict.

46. No cases of sexual exploitation had been recorded. The Family Protection Department, established in Amman in 1997, with branches in the governorates, handled all issues of physical and sexual assault, whether the offence was committed within or outside the family. It comprised many children's institutions, forensic practitioners and psychiatrists. Cases were followed up by the Ministry of Social Development.

47. The Juvenile Conduct Monitoring Act, 2001, prohibited the exploitation of children, including the provision of drugs or illegal substances, alcohol and tobacco to children. Children were denied access to discotheques and places of adult entertainment. Owners of pharmacies, liquor stores and entertainment centres were obliged to post product warnings for children.

48. Draft legislation relating to the establishment of an ombudsman's office was currently under discussion. Complaints regarding the ill-treatment of juveniles were lodged with the Public Security Directorate which had offices in police stations.

49. Education was compulsory. Parents had to take an oath attesting that they would send their children to school.

50. Regardless of age, a child's right of inheritance was guaranteed under the law. The difference in status between boys and girls was based on the principle of social solidarity. The head of the family was in charge of all money matters, but could not manage a woman's affairs without her consent.

51. The Government was developing new traffic directives aimed at reducing the alarmingly high number of traffic accidents. With the help of the media, the Government was setting up traffic circuits in public gardens to teach the population how to observe traffic rules.

52. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan) said that the large numbers of displaced persons pouring into Jordan, primarily from Iraq, complicated the issue of children's legal status and nationality and raised a variety of humanitarian, legal and political issues. The Government considered such persons first and foremost to be Arab brothers and sisters in need of assistance. That situation had been preceded by a steady flow of Palestinians over a period of decades, most of whom insisted on their status as refugees and refused to adopt another nationality. Nevertheless, it was important to note that, by virtue of its generosity, the Jordanian Government had more than made up in practice for whatever shortcomings existed in its legislation with respect to international legal norms.

53. Jordanian law contained no provisions relating specifically to "honour killings"; under the Penal Code, however, a person who committed a crime in the heat of passion, resulting in the death or injury of the victim, could be granted clemency or a commuted sentence. Although that provision had been applied in a small number of cases, the extent of the phenomenon had been exaggerated.

54. Mr. POLLAR commended the Jordanian Government for the tolerance and generosity it had shown to the more than 2 million displaced persons it had hosted since 1948. Very few other countries would have accepted such a burden.

55. Mr. PARFITT asked what services were available, including at weekends, to assist children who had been sexually assaulted.

56. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that, since the inception of the Family Protection Project in 2000, amendments had been made to laws and procedures concerning domestic violence, including violence against children, in such areas as reporting to the police, emergency medical treatment and referral of children to a psychiatrist or social worker. Police officers and specialized family defenders were available 24 hours a day to respond to cases of domestic violence. Complete services, including forensic doctors and psychologists, were provided throughout the Kingdom, not just in the capital.

57. In cooperation with members of the judiciary, the security forces and forensic doctors, the United Nations Development Fund for Women had conducted a study on murders of women in Jordan, including “honour killings”, between 2000 and 2005. Although persons accused of murder could claim that their crime was committed for reasons of honour, there were actually very few cases in which judicial rulings were based on those grounds. Article 340 of the Penal Code had been amended to allow mitigating circumstances for persons of either sex who caught their spouse in the act of infidelity and to abolish exonerating circumstances. It would take some time to change social behaviour that had been entrenched for centuries, but efforts to increase awareness and to train judges would help bring about change.

58. Mr. RATROOT (Jordan) said Jordan had won the Franklin Delano Roosevelt International Disability Award in 2005 for its exemplary work on improving the lives of the disabled, carried out pursuant to the United Nations World Programme of Action Concerning Disabled Persons. The Ministry of Social Development was responsible for providing services to disabled persons, and the National Council for the Welfare of Persons with Disabilities had established a national register of disabled persons in order to determine the prevalence of the phenomenon in Jordan. The Welfare of the Disabled Act, adopted in 1993, guaranteed the rights of disabled persons and established a set of mechanisms to address their needs. A programme that provided institutional assistance 24 hours a day had been launched and the Government was in the process of extending its coverage to various parts of the country.

59. There were approximately 24 childcare institutions in Jordan, housing some 1,000 children; 74 per cent of such children were in government-operated centres. Of those, roughly half had been institutionalized as a result of family problems and the other half owing to the fact that their parents were unknown. A number of mechanisms had been established to assist children whose parents had divorced, including the National Assistance Fund, which helped needy divorced couples and their children. Services were also provided to children who had been placed in host centres following the divorce of their parents. New rules regarding host centres had recently been established that focused on the best interests of the child; the centres had been given a year to bring their services into conformity with the new rules.

60. The rate of early marriage among girls was decreasing. In the period covered by the third periodic report, married girls under the age of 18 accounted for 17 per cent of all married females, compared with 20 per cent in 1998. Owing to the numbers of women pursuing higher education, the average age of marriage currently stood at 27.

61. All government ministries that provided services to children competed in obtaining awards for the quality of those services. Jordanian society was characterized by tolerance, not violence. Cases of physical violence that did not constitute infringements of the law were handled by social and administrative experts.

62. Mr. AL MHAISEN (Jordan) said that the problem of street children, as it was known in other countries, did not exist in Jordan. There were a number of specialized institutions, both governmental and non-governmental, that operated programmes for juvenile offenders awaiting trial and those who had been convicted. Such programmes provided psychological and social support, as well as education and training. Subsequent support was provided to such children through social services aimed at reintegrating them into society.

63. Special programmes existed to care for single-parent and needy families, including the National Assistance Fund, charitable funds, rehabilitation programmes and microcredit schemes. The Government recognized that poverty had a negative impact on children; it was currently implementing measures to tackle poverty and to provide for children in need.

64. Mr. AL TARAWNEH (Jordan) said that Jordan recognized that it still faced a number of obstacles and challenges in giving effect to the Convention; however, that recognition provided the beginnings of a solution.

65. Mr. PARFITT (Country Rapporteur) thanked the members of the delegation for their frank comments. There had been many positive developments in Jordan in promoting and protecting children's rights, not the least of which was the role played by the King and Queen of Jordan. He looked forward to the publication in the Official Gazette of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, as well as the adoption of the Children's Rights Act, which would provide a legal foundation for existing and future children's policies, programmes and services in Jordan.

66. Mr. BURAYZAT (Jordan) thanked the Committee members for their constructive comments. On behalf of his Government, he looked forward to a continuing dialogue with the Committee in order to improve the situation of children in Jordan.

67. The CHAIRPERSON thanked the delegation for its participation in the Committee's proceedings.

The meeting rose at 5.45 p.m.