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SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1383rd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 20 January 2009, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. AIDOO (Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Aidoo (Vice-Chairperson) took the chair.

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Second and third periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova (CRC/C/MDA/3, CRC/C/MDA/Q/3 and Add.1) (continued)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Moldova resumed their places at the Committee table.
2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to continue posing the delegation questions about its second periodic report.
3. Mr. KOTRANE said that the Committee had received information according to which in rural areas two thirds of children aged 14 were engaged in work, and that the Republic of Moldova was unfortunately still a country of origin for child trafficking for the sex trade. The delegation should provide the Committee with more precise information on the scope of trafficking in children and child labour, and on the penalties actually imposed for persons convicted of such crimes. The Government had filed a reservation in respect of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in which it had stated that the Protocol was applicable only within the territory under its control. He called on the State party to effectively prohibit all such exploitation both of or by Moldovan nationals, regardless of where it took place.
4. Mr. SIDDIQUI noted that child poverty was concentrated in rural areas, and that according to the report, the social welfare system was inadequate to deal with the problem. What efforts was the Government making to address poverty in general and child poverty in particular? Did it intend to adopt a poverty reduction strategy paper, as was so often advocated by the World Bank, and if so, when and in what circumstances? Was the social assistance programme implemented at the central or local level, and did it involve the participation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs)?
5. Mr. PARFITT asked whether the Government had statistics on the number of children in institutional care owing to poverty, either through abandonment or apprehension by the State. While the Government had initiated a policy to reduce the number of children in institutions, many still remained. Had it considered alternatives, such as placing them in foster care or subsidizing income for their extended family? In 2006 the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had issued a series of recommendations on how to deal with the problem of migrating parents. Had the State party taken action in response to those recommendations? Were there any formal procedures to ensure that when parents left the country for reasons of employment, leaving their children behind, guardianship was officially assigned to another person? Lastly, he asked whether the temporary placement centres run by the Ministry of Internal Affairs, which housed some 1,500 children admitted because of begging and abandonment, were custodial facilities, and if so, how the Government ensured that the rights of children placed in such institutions were respected. Were the children able to benefit from a procedure involving due process?

6. Ms. ORTIZ, referring to the high number of institutionalized children in the country, asked whether the Government had considered the possibility of reorganizing such institutions so that the children would be housed in smaller groups, each under the supervision of an adult. Was there any follow-up when children returned to their homes, and were the municipal or local authorities able to ensure such follow-up? The Government had acceded to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, and had established a National Adoption Committee. The delegation should explain how that Committee was formed and functioned, and what national and international adoption procedures it involved. Noting that adoption could be particularly useful in the light of the high number of institutionalized children, including orphans and others who were unable to return to their families, she asked whether the Government carried out any activities to encourage a more positive attitude toward adoption in Moldovan society.

7. The Committee had received reports that adoptive parents had resorted to changing their adopted children's official names. Was the State party doing anything to ensure the right of adopted children to maintain their identity? Had the Government considered lowering or doing away with the fees charged for adoption? Adoption should be accessible and free of charge, and information on adoption possibilities should be widely disseminated in order to encourage the practice. What was the Government doing to ensure that health-care professionals, jurists and judges were up to date on the legal aspects of adoption?

8. The CHAIRPERSON, noting the high prevalence of teenage pregnancies and abortions in the country, and also the particularly high rates of suicide and dropouts among adolescent boys, asked what effective steps were being taken to address those problems. Did the Government have age-relevant life skills programmes or peer-education programmes for adolescents? Were teenagers consulted when such plans were drawn up and evaluated? While the HIV/AIDS infection rate was relatively low nationally, the periodic report referred to a worsening situation among adolescents with regard both to HIV/AIDS and to other sexually transmitted diseases. What was being done to effectively combat the spread of such diseases among minors and to remove the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS?

9. Ms. BALMOȘ (Republic of Moldova) said that at each government ministry there was a monitoring department that kept track of the practical implementation of laws and was responsible for reporting on implementation. Every law contained a section that specifically named the ministry responsible for such monitoring and reporting. The parliamentary committees most involved in matters related to children's rights were the committees on human rights, social protection, health and education; their work was complemented by that of the Centre for Human Rights. The Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Children had established automated data-collection systems for information on children's rights and on social protection matters, and had made a particular effort to ensure that such information systems were compatible not only with each other, but also with the State population register. With the help of UNICEF, the information system on children's rights had been devised, tested and made known to all beneficiaries and institutions for children in the country in 2007; it was now important to make it practical and useful, for example by teaching stakeholders how to use it and by facilitating access via the Internet. The National Bureau of Statistics centralized all information collected by government ministries and local authorities on the implementation of the rights of the child. Such information was disaggregated by region, age and sex. The Government had

received a loan from the World Bank for the establishment of a single, automated social protection information system, and a law on social benefits that was in keeping with the principles of the World Bank had recently been adopted.

10. In March 2008 the Family Code had been amended, making the legal age for marriage 18 for both men and women. In exceptional cases, marriage was allowed at the age of 16, but only with the consent of the parents and local child protection authorities. The Government had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and was currently in the process of ratifying that instrument and drawing up a strategy for the protection of the rights of the disabled. There were two centres functioning under the Ministry of Social Protection, Family and Children that provided care for children with serious mental disabilities. The cost of such care was quite high, but the children involved were often so disabled that a return to their families was unlikely. On the other hand, for children with less serious mental disabilities there were special schools and programmes, and a strategy was being implemented for inclusive education according to which they were to some extent mainstreamed. In 2008 a law had been adopted on labour migration, according to which parents leaving their children behind when migrating to other countries for work were obliged to file a document establishing who in their absence would act as their children's guardians. The law had entered into force on 1 January 2009. Community social centres provided services to children at the local level, and the majority of the beneficiaries of such centres were children whose parents had gone to other countries for work. The Government had not yet noted any massive return of Moldovan workers owing to the financial crisis, but there were tens of thousands of vacant posts in the country, albeit offering very low salaries. The Government had recently raised the minimum wage by 50 per cent in an attempt to encourage expatriate Moldovans to return.

11. Mr. RUSU (Republic of Moldova) said that since 2001, the Government had paid a great deal of attention to combating the economic and sexual exploitation of children. It had ratified the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and both Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and had amended the Criminal Code to criminalize both trafficking in persons and specifically trafficking in children. It had adopted a special law to combat trafficking in persons, which included provisions for assisting trafficked victims by helping them return to the country and by making available medical and psychological help. According to fairly reliable statistics, the extent of trafficking had decreased over the past three years. About 80 per cent of the time, trafficking cases involved the sexual exploitation of children; purely economic cases were relatively rare. In the latter case, children were enlisted in forced labour, for example in the Russian Federation, Ukraine and other countries. In 2007, 128 cases of sexual exploitation of children had led to prosecution, or 36 fewer than in 2006. Having acceded to international instruments and amended the law to combat trafficking and exploitation, the Government was currently concentrating on training prosecutors, police officers, judges and lawyers to raise awareness of those problems and bring about effective change. The Republic of Moldova had ratified both Conventions of the International Labour Organization on child exploitation, namely the Abolition of Forced Labour Convention, 1957 (No. 105) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182). The minimum age for work was generally 16, but with special permission from a trade union, and only in exceptional cases, children were allowed to start work at 15. There were no doubt some cases where children worked in agriculture at the age of 14, but the Government had established effective mechanisms to combat such practices and prosecute those who hired the children.

12. Over the previous six years the Government had been carrying out a project, together with UNICEF, to reform the juvenile justice system which had achieved good results; for example, prosecutors were given direct responsibility for investigations of juveniles, rather than the police. While there were no special children's courts, specialized prosecutors and judges were assigned to juvenile cases. Juveniles could be released on probation after serving as little as one third of their sentence, depending on the offence. The Code of Criminal Procedure contained special provisions relating to the administration of juvenile justice. The period of police custody for minors, which had been reduced to 24 hours, could not be extended and, once that period had lapsed, minors had to be either released or charged. Regardless of the seriousness of the crime, minors could not be held for longer than four months during a criminal investigation. While minors could be held criminally liable for an offence, the maximum term of imprisonment was automatically half of that which applied to adults. The maximum term of imprisonment for a minor who had committed more than one crime was 15 years.

13. Mr. KOTRANE, referring to the additional information that had been provided on cases of sexual exploitation, asked whether the cases mentioned had been tried. In the light of article 35 of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, he asked whether the Republic of Moldova could prosecute persons who exploited Moldovan children abroad and, if so, whether such prosecutions actually took place. Thanking the delegation for the information on the change to the minimum age of marriage, he requested that an appropriate reference document be provided.

14. Mr. RUSU (Republic of Moldova) said that the Republic of Moldova had signed bilateral agreements with a number of countries to combat and prevent the trafficking of children and related crimes. Joint investigations were carried out with the countries of destination and there had been cases of foreigners being prosecuted for exploiting Moldovan children outside the country, as an extraterritoriality clause had been included in the Criminal Code.

15. The age of marriage had recently been changed to 18 for both males and females in order to align domestic legislation with the Convention.

16. Ms. TĂRUS (Republic of Moldova) said that since the introduction of medical insurance all women and children had access to medical care. Under the new system, paediatric care was no longer classified as primary care. However, many family doctors were former paediatricians and continued to provide consultative care to the children they had previously looked after. The normative instruments for paediatricians had been revised in 2007. Specialized paediatric dispensaries had been set up. It was important to have adequate primary care in place for the diagnosis and treatment of children. To provide versatile care, a new rehabilitation centre had been opened on Children's Day, staffed by a range of professionals, including doctors, consultants, psychologists, social workers and education specialists. Follow-up was provided by a specialist unit for premature babies or those with serious health problems up to the age of 2 years. That unit was equipped for the early screening of conditions involving motor functions, sight and hearing.

17. A more integrated system of health management had been developed. For example, as part of a programme established by the World Health Organization (WHO) that had been extended throughout the Republic, mothers were provided with advice to promote early development at home. Offices had been set up in delivery centres and maternity hospitals, staffed by specially

trained nurses, to work with parents to promote children's health. The Government had invested in two national media campaigns to promote the health of children and pregnant women. Improved care was being offered to pregnant women, who were eligible for folic acid and iron supplements. Parents were being made aware of risk factors that could cause illnesses. An immunization programme, in accordance with WHO guidelines, was under way, and as a result vaccination rates for a number of diseases, including hepatitis B, had increased; polio had been eliminated and there were only isolated cases of measles. As a result of recent efforts, many hospitals had been declared "child-friendly". Mothers were being encouraged to breastfeed their babies and there was greater emphasis on breastfeeding in the curriculum at medical schools. Children's psychological health was indirectly reflected in the national health policy and more work was required in that regard.

18. With regard to the table on drug use, once the Government had updated the data available, it would provide the Committee with additional information.

19. There were temporary placement centres for children under the age of 7 who were left without anyone to look after them. Provisions were also made at some centres for young mothers who had nowhere to go. Those mothers and their children were fully supported by the State for three to four months, while social workers worked with them to solve their problems. Most of the young mothers concerned did not abandon their children in the centres. Some placement and rehabilitation centres had a section for the rehabilitation of seriously ill children, which aimed to avoid them being institutionalized. A professional psychologist was available at the centres to assist parents and relatives. Children in the centres were sent back to their parents or extended families after their treatment. As a result, the average length of stay had fallen sharply. Instead of being automatically transferred from the centres to boarding schools, the children were either returned to their immediate or extended families, fostered or adopted.

20. Adolescent health was a serious and urgent problem that the Government was trying to resolve by focusing on access, confidentiality and an integrated approach. Twelve centres for young persons had been opened and standards for their operation were in place. Each of those centres had a reproductive health unit that provided confidential services. Each region should further develop the services it offered.

21. Ms. ILUTĂ (Republic of Moldova) said that, in recent years, there had been increased cooperation between the Government and the education authorities, and the number of children not covered by the education system had fallen sharply. Schools were responsible for registering children, which was an important factor in the increase in school attendance. Material assistance was provided by local authorities to poor families so that their children could attend school. To prevent children from dropping out, closer connections had been forged between the education authorities and organizations that defended children's rights.

22. Community parents' associations provided substantial help toward the achievement of educational aims and the number of such associations had increased over the last 10 years. Parents' associations helped in a number of areas, including the upkeep of school facilities, the supply of teaching materials, the organization of after-school activities, and the provision of support for gifted children and children from poor families. The concept of parents fundraising for schools was new in the Republic of Moldova. While the underlying ethos of the associations

was that participation should be voluntary and that funding should be transparent, there had been incidences where that had not been the case. As a result the parents had set up coordination centres, under the leadership of the education minister, which brought together representatives from different associations and lawyers. Likewise, a telephone hotline had been set up with a view to eradicating any undesirable aspects of the activities of the parents' associations.

23. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC (Country Rapporteur) asked whether she had understood correctly that the groups of parents described were participating in the education system and, if so, whether they were provided with any training and whether their activities were evaluated or monitored. She asked whether the State was fulfilling its obligation to provide education that complied with the provisions of article 29 of the Convention. While she supported the provision of informal assistance to schools, she asked how prepared the members of the associations were to participate in such an important part of a child's life.

24. Mr. KRAPPMANN, referring to statistics on school attendance published by sources other than the State party, asked whether it was because certain groups of children in the population had been overlooked, such as children with disabilities, children from poor families or Romani children, that the State party was able to report such a high school attendance rate.

25. Ms. ILUTĂ (Republic of Moldova) said that the reason some children did not attend school at all was often that their parents refused to let them go.

26. Ms. BALMOȘ (Republic of Moldova) said that children with disabilities were generally sent to specialized schools. In 2008, a strategy on inclusive education had been developed. Under the Constitution and domestic legislation, education was provided free of charge and was compulsory up to grade nine. Parents' associations collected funds in order to provide additional support for schools. Those funds could be used to provide financial support to children from poor families or with special needs.

27. There were not many NGOs addressing the needs of children with disabilities, but those that did exist, such as Humanitas, received support from the State in order to further develop their programmes. That development was particularly important because in the past the options for children with disabilities had been limited: they were generally sent to boarding schools or taught at home when teachers were available. All boarding school children went to camps or rehabilitation programmes in summer. Newer alternatives included special summer programmes, under which the Government paid parents allowances to keep their children with them throughout the summer holidays. In addition, there were programmes for the deinstitutionalization of children. In 2005, there were 13,000 children in boarding schools in Moldova, but that number had decreased to 7,000 by 2008.

28. Under an interesting new programme in the south of the country called "Every Child in Moldova", orphans attended ordinary schools but returned at night to the centres where they lived. Even after completing school they could remain in those centres until they found work.

29. As for the question of alternatives to institutionalization, she said that there were currently 66 family-type homes for orphans, as well as a foster care programme. A new type of foster family had been created, and potential foster parents attended summer training camp to qualify.

30. The CHAIRPERSON said that, since time was short, the Committee would welcome answers to all its questions at a future date. It was particularly concerned by the problem of the institutionalization of children, and the development of good parenting practices. It would also like to know whether the State party was conducting any studies on the important issue of adolescent health, and whether it was developing life-skills programmes.

31. Ms. BALMOȘ (Republic of Moldova) said that her delegation had taken note of all the questions raised and would provide answers in due course. She said that there was only one social services centre, under the auspices of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Fifteen hundred children had been treated there, mostly runaways from boarding schools or from their families. The centre provided specialists; after treatment, the children were then sent either back to their families or to alternate families or centres.

32. There were in fact many health protection programmes in Moldova for children, adolescents and mothers; the Government would provide detailed information later. It would also provide information on access to schools.

33. As for the matter of adoption, she said that recently an adoption statute had been enacted, which laid out the basic principles for adopting children in the Republic of Moldova. Her Ministry was developing a programme under which adoptive parents would provide training to other potential adoptive parents, and hoped that resources would be available for that purpose in future.

Initial report of the Republic of Moldova on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/MDA/1, CRC/C/OPAC/MDA/Q/1 and Add.1)
(continued)

34. Mr. PARFITT (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict) said that the statement by the Republic of Moldova on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict delivered at the morning meeting had been comprehensive, and he therefore had few questions. For the most part, the Republic of Moldova was in full compliance with the Optional Protocol.

35. Under existing legislation, children aged 16 were called up to give what was called medical evidence, essentially to establish if they were fit to be recruited when they came of age. There was also, however, a provision in the legislation allowing 17 year olds to attend military school. He would like to know whether at age 17 a young person could be classified as a member of the military and subject to military law or whether he or she retained civilian status.

36. He would also like to know whether criminal sanctions applicable to persons who recruited children into the military also applied to those who recruited children for other kinds of armed groups. Skirmishes had occurred between the Government and the secessionist regime of Transnistria; it would be useful to know whether armed groups from that region recruited children, and whether the Criminal Code applied to such types of situations. In addition, he inquired whether the Government of Moldova had extraterritorial jurisdiction to prosecute a foreigner who recruited children from that country to serve elsewhere, or a Moldovan who recruited children on foreign territory.

37. He commended the Republic of Moldova for its policies and procedures for young refugees and asylum-seekers, and inquired whether efforts were made to determine whether they had been involved in hostilities in a foreign country or had been recruited for that purpose.

38. The delegation had mentioned that the Ministry of Economy and Trade was responsible for issuing permits for the sale of small arms to foreign countries, and had also referred to a law on the monitoring of the movement of strategic goods. He would like to know whether that Ministry was aware of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and consulted its text when deciding to send arms to a foreign country. In addition, he would like to know whether consideration was given to the end-user of such arms, since there were often go-between countries in such transactions.

39. Mr. FILALI asked whether military schools had military or civilian status, whether teachers were paid by the Ministry of Education or by the military, and whether the curriculum contained the usual school subjects or was essentially designed to teach children to be soldiers.

40. Mr. PURAS (Country Rapporteur), referring to a remark made by the delegation at the morning meeting, asked whether children were considered citizens and as such had a sacred duty to bear arms in the event of a military conflict.

41. Mr. POLLAR asked how and to what extent children were affected by the civil unrest of the 1990s, how that conflict had affected their grown-up lives, and whether rehabilitation services were available for them.

42. The CHAIRPERSON asked what measures the State party was taking to disseminate the Optional Protocol, especially among children in general and among those in military schools in particular, whether professionals were aware of its existence, and whether peace and human rights education existed.

The meeting was suspended at 4.45 p.m. and resumed at 5 p.m.

43. Mr. MALAI (Republic of Moldova) said that in Moldova the word “recruit” simply indicated a registration process for young people. Sixteen year olds were not subject to military law; they were simply registered with the military. The Ministry of Defence and the Ministry of Health then evaluated their health, and recommended a course of treatment if necessary. Those young people were informed about the rights and obligations of citizens with respect to the protection of the country. They were not affected by military law and had no military obligations.

44. Turning to the matter of extraterritorial jurisdiction, he said that the Criminal Code stipulated that any person, whether Moldovan or foreign, recruiting children in Moldova, and any Moldovan recruiting children in the territory of another State was criminally liable. The Republic of Moldova had concluded treaties with most other countries on the exchange of information relative to that matter. There were difficulties in obtaining such information, however. The Government was aware of paramilitary groups, such as Cossacks, that recruited and trained minors, which did not necessarily mean those children were involved in armed conflicts.

45. Refugees and asylum-seekers came to the Republic of Moldova from many countries. The Ministry of Internal Affairs checked their identities and backgrounds while they were in the holding centres and attempted to discover if they had been involved in armed conflicts. If so, the Ministry did everything possible to preserve confidentiality, and to provide rehabilitation with a view to reintegrating them into normal civilian life. After their course of rehabilitation, children could attend school as would any Moldovan citizen.

46. Moldovan law stated that citizens had the right to bear arms once they reached the age of 18. No one under that age was allowed to carry or use a weapon. The Ministry of Internal Affairs issued licences for bearing arms and carried out checks to ensure that the regulations were respected.

47. The law also stipulated that the government committee responsible for the sale of weapons must identify the end-user, and must ban any sale if it learned that they could be used in internal or international conflicts. There was weapons technology in Moldova left over from Soviet rule that was not being used by the national military; the sale of such technology must also be arranged by the government committee. The Republic of Moldova had concluded many international conventions and agreements and was determined to fulfil its obligations thereunder.

48. There was only one high-level military school, for the training of future officers for the armed forces and border patrols. Persons aged 17 and older could be accepted, but they were not subject to military service and could not be involved in armed conflict or war under any circumstances. They could become soldiers at the age of 18, but only after taking the military oath and signing a contract. They were then known as contract soldiers and accordingly subject to military law with all the applicable protections.

49. Mr. FILALI said he would like to know whether students in that school could be called up for duty.

50. Mr. MALAI (Republic of Moldova) said that those students were not covered by military law, and at the age of 18 could return to their families and continue their education in any civilian school; the law prohibited their involvement in armed conflict. The State provided for them and taught them discipline, and they could earn a baccalaureate degree - all without taking a military oath. The subjects taught in that school were 50 per cent those of a regular school curriculum, including humanitarian law, and 40 per cent military, including the skills and knowledge necessary for soldiers. On completion of their studies, youths who had studied in the school became officers and were deployed to military units.

51. As of 1990, a number of constitutional changes had been introduced to ensure that children under 18 years of age could not be involved in armed conflicts. Young people could, however, be placed in the reserves, where they were taught about humanitarian law, including the Convention and the Optional Protocol. In addition, curricula in secondary schools included subjects in which their rights in that area were explained. Institutes of higher education also offered courses in humanitarian law and the protection of children's rights. Generally speaking, the population knew about the existence of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, but he admitted that more could be done to ensure their dissemination.

52. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether any cases had arisen of the sale of military technology or weaponry dating back to the Soviet period, given that such weapons had found their way into a number of regions around the world where armed conflicts were being waged.

53. Mr. PARFITT (Country Rapporteur for OPAC) asked whether the recruitment of children between 16 and 18 years of age was a single event or whether it was an ongoing process requiring their continued presence over time. He would also like to know whether children who had failed the military examination were then exempt from military service or whether they were required to have medical treatment until they were deemed fit to serve.

54. Mr. FILALI asked how the armed forces carried out recruitment, whether the media were involved and whether their representatives visited secondary schools to that end. It would also be useful to learn whether publicity for the armed forces stressed the financial benefits of military service in order to attract recruits from the poorest segments of the population.

55. Mr. MALAI (Republic of Moldova), referring to the weapons left in the country after the collapse of the Soviet Union, said that in general they were already obsolete and it would be difficult to use them in other armed conflicts. It had been planned to sell a number of MIG 29 aircraft to a certain country, but when the Government had been informed that they might theoretically be used in an armed conflict, the sale had been cancelled, and the aircraft had eventually been sold to the United States of America. Further examples could be given in respect of other weapons systems. Strict controls made sure that any military technology sold by the Republic of Moldova was for civilian purposes only and was not destined for use in an armed conflict.

56. In 2008, it had been reported that ammunition left behind by the Soviet Union in the Republic of Moldova had been employed in the armed conflict in Georgia, but investigations carried out by independent experts had concluded that the reports had been untrue.

57. Replying to a question by Mr. Filali, he said that the recruitment campaigns of the armed forces merely appealed to the sense of patriotic duty of young people and the need for them to help defend the homeland. No reference was made to the financial attraction of military service. Legislation prohibited minors from participating as soldiers in armed conflicts. According to recent statistics, 60 per cent of young people over the age of 18 years had attended classes, in which they were made aware of the provisions of the Convention and the Optional Protocol and of their right to refuse any attempt to force them to be involved in an armed conflict.

58. Replying to a question by Mr. Parfitt, he said that when children between the ages of 16 and 18 registered at a recruitment centre, they were required to appear only once, and they could not be called in more than three times to take a medical examination or to clarify personal data. If the medical examination revealed the presence of an undiagnosed illness, comprehensive medical care was provided free of charge. Recruits could express a preference as to which branch of the armed forces they wished to join, and it was also possible to apply for alternative civilian service.

59. Mr. PARFITT (Country Rapporteur for OPAC) asked whether any of the four ombudsmen had jurisdiction in the armed forces and whether a young person could report to the ombudsman that his rights had been violated.

60. Mr. MALAI (Republic of Moldova) said that there were no ombudsmen in the Ministry of Defence, but a special monitoring unit in the Ministry dealt with such matters. An anonymous hotline had been set up, and any soldier or member of his family could use it. The alleged violation was then looked into, following which a report was submitted and the appropriate measures, where necessary, were taken to put an end to the violation.

61. Mr. RUSU (Republic of Moldova) said that both adults and children could also refer any allegation of a violation of their constitutional rights to a civilian ombudsman, including violations of the Convention and the Optional Protocol. In addition, anyone could report a criminal offence to the prosecuting authorities, which must then conduct an investigation.

62. Mr. MALAI (Republic of Moldova) said that the country's military system was undergoing sweeping reforms to bring it into line with international standards. The Republic of Moldova would continue to work to raise young people's awareness of the Convention and the Optional Protocol, and it would be grateful for the Committee's help in that regard.

63. Mr. PARFITT (Country Rapporteur for OPAC) noted that on the whole, the State party was in compliance with the Optional Protocol. Some concern remained in connection with recruits between 16 and 18 years of age. Extraterritorial jurisdiction was well covered, together with services for children who were asylum-seekers and who were affected by armed conflict. He thanked the delegation for the information provided during the meeting, which had helped clarify a number of questions regarding the country report and the responses to the list of issues.

64. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee looked forward to being sent additional information by the delegation before completing its concluding observations. The Republic of Moldova had undergone the enormous process of changing its legislation and drafting many national plans and strategies. She was convinced that when the delegation returned for consideration of its next periodic report, it would be able to provide the Committee with statistics and information on the latest developments on the ground. The Committee urged the Republic of Moldova to put all its plans into effect by making available sufficient financial resources for educational programmes and better training for teachers. Priority attention should be given to educational reforms, further improvement of the health-care system, the protection of children from violence in all settings, and problems associated with the institutionalization of children.

65. Ms. BALMOȘ (Republic of Moldova) thanked the Committee for the productive discussion. The delegation would take back home the lessons it had learned and draw initial conclusions. She confirmed that one of the five priorities which her Government had set in its strategy for national development was in fact the protection of children's rights. Many shortcomings persisted, but the Republic of Moldova knew how it must address them. First and foremost was the need to improve the quality of education, for example by modernizing schools. The new educational programme and code constituted another important step. Considerable resources had been earmarked for raising educational standards through better teacher training. A new programme aimed to provide for housing, medical and social services, and cultural events to attract young teachers to rural areas.

66. The Government was also working to tap the enormous potential of civil society for its development projects. In conjunction with NGOs, youth centres had been set up, where young

people could receive the type of information not readily available in school. Every effort was made to ensure that children were actively involved in solving problems of concern to them. With the help of the media and civil society, the Government was promoting a public discussion of domestic violence and child neglect, trafficking in children, drug addiction and HIV/AIDS. Films had been produced and training courses and seminars held on those topics. Financial resources for family support and centres for the care of young people must be increased. With the assistance of international donors, special programmes had been developed for children with disabilities, who in the past had not received the financial support they needed. Partnerships existed with a number of international bodies in that area. In sum, many programmes existed which targeted children - all that remained was to implement them.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.