



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
5 March 2010
English
Original: French

Committee on the Rights of the Child Fifty-second session

Summary record of the 1428th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 15 September 2009, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. Lee

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Third and fourth periodic reports of the Philippines on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Third and fourth periodic reports of the Philippines on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child ((CRC/C/PHL/3-4); core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.37); list of issues (CRC/C/PHL/Q/3-4); written replies of the State party to the list of issues (CRC/C/PHL/Q/3-4/Add.1))

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Cabral** (Philippines) recalled that the Philippines had enacted six laws on child protection, namely: the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (2003), the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Act (2003), the Act Allowing Illegitimate Children to Use the Surname of their Father (2004), the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act (2004), the Newborn Screening Act (2004) and the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act (2006).
3. Furthermore, legislation to protect the land rights of indigenous people and their children had been adopted, in particular the Medium Term Philippine Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples (MTPDP-IP).
4. The issue of birth registration had been addressed by the Unregistered Children Project and the Birth Registration Project. The two initiatives had been implemented between 2000 and 2007 in 127 municipalities in the 17 regions of the country.
5. The Philippines considered it a priority to combat violence against children. It had adopted a strategic framework and an action plan to end violence against children and to ensure that national legislation was in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
6. Between 2007 and 2009, the Philippines had adopted three acts aimed directly at children: Republic Act 9523, regulating adoption procedures; Republic Act 9442 on persons with disabilities; and Republic Act 9710 to combat discrimination against girls, particularly those from indigenous or minority groups. Three other child protection acts, to ban torture and child pornography and to legitimize children born of underage parents respectively, should be enacted before the end of 2009.
7. In 2006, the mandate of the Presidential Human Rights Committee had been widened and the body had become responsible for monitoring domestic legislative instruments' compliance with eight core international covenants.
8. With an annual budget of US\$ 208 million, the Conditional Cash Transfer programme was one of the measures adopted by the Philippines to meet the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs), many of which focused on the welfare and protection of children. That ambitious programme should benefit some 700,000 poor households, and might be extended to more in the future. Similarly, the Accelerated Hunger Mitigation Programme had produced convincing results as it had significantly reduced the number of underweight children.
9. In terms of official development assistance, the Steering Committee of the MDG Achievement Fund had decided in August 2009 to provide US\$ 3.5 million for child food security and to combat malnutrition.
10. According to the 2003–2008 demographic survey, infant mortality was 25 per thousand in 2008 as opposed to 35 per thousand in 1998. Under-five child mortality was 39 per thousand, down from 48 per thousand in 1998. Between 2003 and 2008, the proportion of fully-vaccinated children increased from 70 per cent to 80 per cent. Screening tests,

immunizations and other interventions were now included in the national health care programme for newborns.

11. With regard to education, an increase in attendance and improved results at primary and secondary level had been noted.

12. The Bright Child Campaign, initiated in 2004 and spread through the media and through community theatre shows, had benefited 250,000 families in Luzon. As part of the preparations for the ASEAN Youth Caucus, the Philippines had organized a National Children's Conference, which had gathered over 80 children from different provinces to discuss issues that affected them and to develop recommendations for decision makers.

13. The Philippines played a leading role in the preparation of General Assembly and Human Rights Council resolutions on combating human trafficking, especially of women and children, as well as actively participating in initiatives on the rights of migrants and persons with disabilities, on extreme poverty and human rights, on the human rights implications of climate change and on human rights education.

14. The Government recognized that it must redouble its efforts to implement child protection legislation and programmes and to meet the obligations of the Convention. It was also necessary to ensure that more up-to-date data were available on children.

15. As of 14 September 2009, 440 minors had been convicted of committing a criminal offence. The majority were remanded in custody: 61 were under the authority of the Government's Department of Social Welfare and Development and 14 were in the care of NGOs.

16. Finally, it was important to note the adoption of an agreement between the Moro Islamic Liberation Front and UNICEF and the United Nations Country Team for the demobilization of child soldiers. That agreement followed a previous commitment by the Front to the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Ms. Radhika Coomaraswamy.

17. **Mr. Citarella** (Country Rapporteur) welcomed the numerous measures implemented by the Philippines to improve compliance with the Convention. He noted that the report was very informative and contained some self-criticism, particularly in paragraph 11, where the lack of political will was cited as one of the main obstacles to implementing the Convention. He asked the delegation to explain that remark and how the report had been prepared.

18. He acknowledged the difficulties of governing such a vast and scattered territory, to which were added the difficult weather conditions, but emphasized that poverty was one of the main problems facing the country and there were considerable disparities in income from one geographical area to another.

19. The national budget was mainly based on revenue from national activities, but also on international aid and remittances from Filipinos working abroad. He asked the delegation whether, given the global economic crisis, a possible reduction in remittances or foreign aid had been taken into account in the budget forecasts.

20. According to the report, the budget allocations for health and education had been cut. As children made up about 38 per cent of the population of the State party, the Committee was concerned at that situation and asked for additional information in that regard.

21. He recalled that the Philippines was a country plagued by conflict, which it was trying to halt by means of peace talks. He asked what progress had been made in the negotiations, and specifically whether the fate of children had been taken into account in them.

22. While welcoming the adoption of legislation on juvenile justice and the establishment of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, which attested to a desire to improve conditions for juvenile delinquents, he asked whether the general population and child professionals were sufficiently aware of the Convention and whether the Committee's recommendations of 2005 had been followed by specific actions.

23. Noting that article 15 of the Philippine Constitution placed children at the heart of the family and recognized their right to specific protection, he asked if the definition of a child as given in national legislation complied with that of the Convention. Also, given that the minimum age of consent for girls was defined by law, he asked whether it was not a form of discrimination not to make a similar provision for boys.

24. Finally, he asked whether the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council had been given sufficient resources to carry out its mandate, as the Committee had firmly recommended.

25. **Mr. Koompraphant** (Country Rapporteur) invited the delegation to give more details on the justice system and how the State party reconciled child protection legislation with the criminal code.

26. Picking up the topic of children involved in armed conflict, he asked for information on the cases of children recruited by the New Peoples Army and the Abu Sayyaf group, who were said to have been the victims of murder, sexual abuse and kidnappings; in particular, had investigations and legal proceedings been instigated? Furthermore, he invited the delegation to specify the steps taken to ban corporal punishment, particularly within the family, schools and other institutions.

27. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether the Convention was directly applicable to domestic law and if it took precedence over it.

28. He asked if so-called "illegitimate" children (a term he considered discriminatory, preferring "children born outside marriage") were able to enjoy all their rights and, in particular, to have their filiation recognized.

29. He welcomed the State party's signature of the Rome Statute, but asked why it had not yet been ratified, despite the urgings of many NGOs.

30. **Ms. Khattab** asked if the Committee's concluding observations on the second periodic report had been made widely known and, also, what steps had been taken to increase awareness of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

31. She asked about provision of religious education in State schools and what methods were used to encourage children to be tolerant and understanding towards different religions. In particular, she asked what steps had been taken to prevent the stigmatization of Muslim children from extremist backgrounds.

32. She asked the delegation to specify the minimum marriageable age and to identify any decisions taken concerning the Muslim community that allowed the marriage of children. In that regard, she asked for details on the Government's cooperation with moderate Muslim leaders to raise awareness among Muslims of the issue and to prevent child marriages.

33. She also requested additional information on the possibility of registering so-called "illegitimate" children under their mother's surname, if the mother so wished, and on what had been done to formalize the situation of female migrant workers.

34. Finally, she asked the delegation to inform the Committee on efforts to demobilize children involved in armed conflicts.

35. **Mr. Puras** requested more information on the relationship between civil society and government bodies. He asked whether an official or unofficial local network existed for non-governmental organizations or movements representing different social groups (in particular vulnerable groups, minorities and families of children with disabilities), whether they had any links with local authorities and whether they received any assistance for awareness-raising activities or service provision.

36. He asked for details on the exercise of civil rights and fundamental freedoms and on efforts to promote confidence and tolerance within the population.

37. **Ms. Ortiz** asked what role the media played in implementing children's rights; whether they helped to modify views; whether they raised children's awareness of their rights; or whether, on the contrary, the media stigmatized them by depicting male adolescents as being responsible for violence in society or female adolescents for sexual exploitation. Also, she wondered what steps had been taken by the government to encourage the media to play a role in the implementation of children's rights and to give children the opportunity to speak out about their rights.

38. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** said she wished to know what measures were provided for children in the Medium-Term Plan (2004–2010), which aimed to implement the 1997 act on the rights of indigenous peoples by returning ancestral lands and recognizing rights to cultural integrity, self-government and social justice. Recalling the Committee's general comment on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention and asked how the primary and secondary education systems tackled the issue of cultural diversity.

39. She asked for clarification on the relationship between the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, an independent body that acted as a mediator on behalf of children, and the Presidential Human Rights Committee. Furthermore, she wondered how the Government intended to provide the Commission with the necessary human resources to process and follow-up on all the complaints.

40. **Mr. Pollar** asked what measures had been taken to gauge the impact of international cooperation on children. He enquired whether the training documents and general information available on the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been translated into indigenous languages and whether specific training workshops had been organized, in particular for members of the armed forces, police officers and legal professionals. Finally, he asked whether the Convention was covered in school curricula.

41. **Mr. Gurán** requested further information on the Council for the Welfare of Children, the inter-institutional coordination body responsible for the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He asked for details on who chose the members, how they were chosen and if any of them represented civil society. Also, he asked whether the Council's structure would be changed once it became the National Early Childhood Care and Development Coordinating Council, in accordance with Executive Order No. 778.

42. He invited the delegation to provide details on the role of the Philippine Commission on Human Rights. With regard to the Child Rights Centre, he asked whether any changes had taken place since it had assumed the role of mediator for children, by virtue of a resolution adopted in 2007, and whether its new mandate included, for example, awareness-raising activities, or receiving complaints from children or families. He wondered whether children were aware of the Centre's existence; whether they had access to it and whether they were able to play an active part in the performance of its activities. He asked the delegation to confirm whether the Centre now had sufficient human and financial resources to carry out its work correctly.

43. **Ms. Villarán de la Puente** noted that the information provided on the right to life, survival and development was not enough to properly evaluate the progress made.

44. She asked the delegation to specify whether the share of spending earmarked for education had increased or decreased and to provide information on the policies to reduce regional disparities in child assistance. She said it would also be useful to know what proportion of the national budget was allocated to children's issues and to have clear indicators on the resources allocated to health care.

45. She asked the delegation to provide details of the anti-corruption measures, which had led to a decrease in the resources allocated for children's issues.

46. **Ms. Aidoo** noted with concern that the proportion of the budget allocated for children and social services had decreased while national debt repayments had increased. She was also concerned about the decrease in funds allocated for social services out of official development assistance and about increased borrowing. She asked how the State party intended to increase and protect the resources allocated for children and whether a system had been implemented to analyse budgetary provisions and spending with regard to children's rights.

47. **The Chairperson** noted that the State party had still not explicitly abolished capital punishment for minors, even though judges were prohibited from sentencing minors to death.

The meeting was suspended at 11.20 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

48. **Ms. Malenab-Hornilla** (Philippines) explained that the Convention on the Rights of the Child and its Optional Protocols had been incorporated into national legislation, in accordance with the Constitution.

49. The age of majority was fixed at 18 years. With regard to criminal responsibility, children under 15 years of age were not considered criminally responsible and minors aged from 15 to 18 years were considered criminally responsible to a certain degree.

50. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether domestic law was compatible with the Convention, what would happen if there was a contradiction between the Convention and domestic law and whether the Convention had ever been applied directly.

51. **Ms. Malenab-Hornilla** (Philippines) explained that, when there was a conflict between the Convention and the Constitution, it was the latter that took precedence. However, there had been cases when judges had applied the Convention directly, particularly when domestic law was silent on an issue.

52. **Ms. Caraballo** (Philippines) explained that the third and fourth periodic reports had been prepared by the Council for the Welfare of Children, which was comprised of governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations and divided into committees and subcommittees focusing on specific issues. Consultations had been carried out at national, regional and local levels in order to draft the report. Children had also been consulted.

53. With regard to the spread of knowledge about the Convention, it should be noted that a multiple-indicator survey had been carried out throughout the country to evaluate the general population's awareness of it. The results had been used to develop new awareness-raising and popularization techniques. The Committee's concluding observations on the previous reports had been diffused via the various branches of the Council and the third and fourth periodic reports had been published as a brochure.

54. A research institute and the National Statistics Office had been given the task of analysing the living conditions of poor children, particularly in rural communities. A child welfare index had been established, based on a number of indicators enabling an assessment to be made of the services to which children had access. The study aimed to define the human rights-based policies needed to combat child poverty. The Philippines

would need support in that area in order to attain the Millennium Development Goals and reduce regional disparities and gender inequality.

55. **Mr. Rosales** (Philippines) said that the Philippines had committed itself to the peace process and had implemented peacekeeping and peacebuilding which covered child protection, prevention of child recruitment by armed groups and their reintegration into society. The Office of the Presidential Adviser on the Peace Process, which had been set up recently, was responsible for coordinating those programmes. Children involved in armed conflicts were protected by the Constitution and by Republic Act 7610 on child protection. They received assistance, psychological and legal support, help with social reintegration, as well as medication, provisions and clothing. The same measures would be implemented in the event of a natural disaster.

56. **Mr. Salo** (Philippines) said that the definition of a child, as adopted by the Philippines, was the same as that given in the Convention. Also, under Republic Act 9710, adopted in 2009, all persons aged 18 years or over who were unable to protect themselves against ill-treatment or exploitation due to a physical or mental disability were legally considered as children and protected as such.

57. Measures to strengthen human rights institutions were being considered, in particular with regard to the Presidential Human Rights Committee, the independent body that monitored the Philippines' compliance with international instruments.

58. **Mr. Filali** asked whether the definition of a child established in domestic law applied to the whole of the Philippines and, if so, what was the State party's position on the Code of Muslim Personal Laws, which authorized early marriage and, therefore, did not comply with that definition.

59. **Mr. Salo** (Philippines) explained that the legislation applied to all, except those subject to the Code of Muslim Personal Laws that coexisted with domestic law. He said that the Government was in favour of strengthening the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, and that a bill would soon be sent for second reading by Parliament. The mandates of the Commission on Human Rights and the Presidential Human Rights Committee were complementary. The Commission was an independent constitutional body, providing mediation, while the Committee was part of the Government. The Children's Rights Centre fell under the Commission, and in particular was dependent on it financially. Finally, the Philippines had signed the Rome Statute on the International Criminal Court on 20 December 2000 and its ratification was currently under consideration.

60. **The Chairperson** asked for clarification on the Children's Rights Centre's role as a mediator for children; on whether the Centre could receive complaints; and on the composition of the Presidential Human Rights Committee and the Commission on Human Rights.

61. **Ms. Maurás-Pérez** noted with concern that the budget and human resources of the Children's Rights Centre were very limited.

62. **Mr. Citarella** (Country Rapporteur) asked for clarification on the respective roles of the Commission on Human Rights and the Presidential Human Rights Committee, and on what happened when the Commission considered that the authorities had taken a decision that contravened international instruments.

63. **Mr. Filali** asked whether the Commission on Human Rights was present nationwide and whether there was a hierarchical relationship between the Commission and the Presidential Committee.

64. **Mr. Salo** (Philippines) explained that the Commission was an independent constitutional body, with its own budget, and that it monitored the compliance with all

human rights instruments by the national authorities. It had only a consultative role. The Presidential Committee, on the other hand, was responsible for the implementation of the instruments.

65. **Mr. Gurán** asked for further details on the budget and mediation role of the Children's Rights Centre and whether statistics were available from the Centre on the types of complaint received.

66. **Mr. Salo** and **Mr. Lepatan** (Philippines) explained that the Centre could carry out investigations and checks and was authorized to receive complaints. It was independent and was financed by the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, whose budget could only be altered by Congress. When it received cases where children's rights had been violated, it referred them to the Commission's regional offices, which were authorized to carry out investigations.

67. **Ms. Balagtas-Gupo** (Philippines) said that corporal punishment against children had been forbidden by law in the Philippines since 1974 and penalties for such acts were in force. All forms of physical and mental violence towards children were banned. Article 59 of Presidential Decree No. 603, promulgated in 1974 and known as the Child and Youth Welfare Code, prohibited cruel treatment of a child or deliberate violation of a child's dignity. Similarly, Republic Act 7610 of 1992 stipulated that the State must protect children from all forms of violence, negligence, exploitation and discrimination. In 1993, rules and regulations on the protection of children in armed conflicts had been promulgated by the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Education had published rules banning corporal punishment in schools. Teachers found guilty of such acts were dismissed. The Commission on Human Rights had also produced notices reminding civil servants and individuals to observe rigorously the laws and regulations banning corporal punishment of children. The House Bill 682, awaiting consideration by Congress, redefined corporal punishment as any physical or mental violence inflicted on children as a punishment. The revised definition covered public humiliation, verbal and other violence and degrading treatment. Under the aforementioned bill, a child's parents, ascendants, teachers or guardians who used any form of corporal punishment, risked criminal penalties. However, parental discipline was part of Filipino culture and in general gave good results. The majority of parents considered that it was necessary to maintain parental authority over children while reinforcing awareness of the ban on violence against them.

68. In 2004, the Ministry of Education had published standard school curricula for madrasas, in which the general elementary education curriculum had been supplemented with complementary lessons such as teaching of Islamic values and Arabic. The Ministry of Education had developed training programmes for Muslim teachers to ensure they acquired the necessary teaching skills and knowledge of English. Those teachers could also take an exam to allow them to teach in any public institution.

69. The Ministry of Education was currently preparing a programme for indigenous peoples, which would take into account their culture and traditions and would also provide teacher training.

70. **Mr. Citarella** (Country Rapporteur) asked for details on the mandate of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children and whether it might conflict with that of the Juvenile Justice and Welfare Council, set up to monitor the implementation of the 2006 Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act. Furthermore, despite the adoption of the aforementioned Act, apparently very few provinces of the State party had a special code for dealing with issues affecting children or provided adequate training for judges.

71. He emphasized that many cases of torture or other cruel treatment in prison had been reported and added that, in some cases, it appeared that children were detained in the same establishments as adults.

72. **Mr. Koompraphant** (Country Rapporteur) noted that the State party's report referred to very few acts of violence against children and asked how the authorities intended to improve the tracking of such acts. He also asked what action could be taken in cases of sexual violence against a child; what measures were taken to protect children who were witnesses in criminal proceedings; how police and prosecutors worked with child protection services and social services to facilitate inquiries, questioning and all procedures concerning child victims; who supported and prepared child victims when they were called as witnesses; and how the social reintegration of child victims was organized. Furthermore, he wondered whether any programmes existed to provide support and advice to parents before children whom they had neglected, subjected to violence or exploited were entrusted to them again. Finally, he asked whether the State party needed any support from the international community to implement articles 18, 19, 27 or 39 of the Convention.

73. **Ms. Varmah** asked whether all children, including children living in poverty, children with disabilities, indigenous children, children who worked, children affected by armed conflict, street children or children infected with HIV/AIDS, had access to education and whether it was free. Also, she wondered whether all families, including poor families, had access to preschool education institutions; what steps were being taken by the Government to reduce school dropout rates both at primary and secondary levels; whether all teachers were fully qualified and properly trained and whether they received appropriate salaries in order to be able to provide quality teaching.

74. Furthermore, she asked what had been done to ensure the free registration of the births of the Muslim and indigenous children on the island of Mindanao and, more generally, whether the Government intended to implement a free birth registration system available to the whole population. Finally, she requested more information on what was being done to ensure that children whose births had not been registered were not deprived of their right to a name and nationality.

75. **Mr. Filali** asked what the State party had done to disseminate knowledge of the provisions of the 2006 Juvenile Justice and Welfare Act and to implement it. According to the State party's report, only 300 prosecutors had received training on the new law, out of a national total of around 2,000. Also he asked what measures had been adopted to ensure that children were not held in detention together with adults, to improve hygiene and food in prisons and to allow detainees access to health care and education. He wondered what steps were taken to ensure that trials involving children were carried out within a reasonable time frame.

76. **Ms. Herczog** asked if the pilot programmes, sponsored by foreign NGOs, to ensure visits by health professionals to the homes of young parents had been implemented nationwide. She noted that maternity leave in the Philippines was very short (a total of six weeks), that the maternal and infant mortality rates were high and that breastfeeding rates remained low. She asked whether the State party had taken into consideration the recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to extend maternity leave to eighteen weeks. With regard to encouraging breastfeeding, she asked whether the State party intended to ban advertisements for formula milk and to raise awareness amongst doctors, parents and the general public of the benefits of breast milk. A bill on reproductive health was being examined by the Senate. Considering the high number of cases of sexual violence against children, the prohibition of abortion and the fact that the general public was not aware of reproductive health issues, she asked whether the bill would be adopted soon so that effective policies could be put in place to prevent unwanted pregnancies and better inform young people on how to stay healthy.

77. **Ms. Ortiz** asked what assistance was available at the local level to families and teachers to prevent their recourse to corporal punishment of children. Noting with concern the large number of women who had emigrated and left their children in the Philippines,

she asked who cared for those children, whether they went to school and whether families who emigrated received State financial aid. Such aid should be used to dissuade parents from emigrating or to encourage them to return to the Philippines. She asked what checks were carried out to ensure that aid was given to those families most in need and to counter corruption and misappropriation of funds. She also wondered whether children and their families had access to mechanisms to report misuse of funds allocated for child health care, whether parental advice networks existed, what follow-up was given to the implementation of the Milk Code and what difficulties were encountered in implementing it.

78. **Mr. Puras** asked what the State party was doing to ensure early detection of disabilities. He also wondered whether children with disabilities and their families could take advantage of health care and social services and whether children with mental disabilities had access to education, since according to some reports only 3 to 5 per cent of children with disabilities finished primary education.

79. He noted that children's health was still a subject of concern in the Philippines and asked what the Government was doing to improve access to health services, particularly in remote areas. He asked whether a project to reorganize the health care system had been set up, in order to put existing resources to better use and focus on primary health care. Emphasizing that 11 per cent of child deaths were the result of accidents, such as drowning, falls and road traffic accidents, he asked whether the State party had defined an accident prevention policy. Finally, he requested additional information on mental health and asked whether the Government had drafted a national mental health policy and how it dealt with issues such as bullying in schools.

80. **Ms. Khattab** asked what steps the State party was taking to implement the Milk Code and raise awareness of its provisions among the general public.

81. **Mr. Pollar** noted that the State party's report made no reference to child refugees and asked whether there had been cases of children arriving in the Philippines from other countries, what measures were foreseen by the Government in cases where it would have to take care of such children and what legislation and procedures were applicable to children considered as refugees or asylum-seekers. He also asked how the Government intended to curb violations of the rights of children living in areas affected by armed conflict and, bearing in mind that children could volunteer to join government and non-state entities' forces provided that they did not undertake combat missions, how the Government ensured that its policies did not contravene the Convention.

82. He requested the delegation to provide details of the criteria used by the State party to allow access by United Nations bodies to the non-state entities' forces to monitor observance of enlisted children's rights.

83. **Ms. Maurás-Pérez**, noting that the school dropout rates in primary and secondary education had increased and that the education budget had been reduced over the last few years, she asked what the Government intended to do to rectify the situation. She also requested information on whether the assistance given to the poorest families was dependent on certain criteria, in particular some aimed at increasing school attendance and what measures were foreseen to increase the percentage of children in preschool education.

84. She recalled that the Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women had noted in 2006 that reproductive health and sex education for young people were areas of serious concern in the Philippines. In that regard, she asked what the Government intended to do to speed up the adoption of the bill on reproductive health, currently being examined by the Congress, which covered issues such as sex education and preventing early pregnancies and sexually transmitted infections.

85. Despite the 2003 act for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, children continued to work in the mining industry, which received a great deal of foreign investment. Families had been expelled from mining areas without any financial compensation and the high levels of pollution that resulted from mining activity had repercussions on the health of men, women and children. She asked what the Government intended to do to put an end to that situation.

The meeting rose at 13.05 p.m.