



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

Fortieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1076th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Wednesday, 28 September 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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

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

Third periodic report of the Russian Federation (CRC/C/125/Add.5; CRC/C/Q/RUS/3; CRC/C/RESP/92; HRI/CORE/1/Add.52/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Balakhnin, Ms. Berezina, Mr. Boichenko, Ms. Fraltsova, Mr. Golovan, Mr. Golubovskiy, Ms. Gordeeva, Ms. Khvan, Mr. Kondratiev, Ms. Reznik, Ms. Samarina, Ms. Sharapova, Mr. Sizov, Mr. Tolkalin, Mr. Vulf, Ms. Yarovitsyna, Mr. Zatonkiy and Ms. Zbarskaya (Russian Federation) took places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. SHARAPOVA (Russian Federation), introducing the third periodic report of the Russian Federation (CRC/C/125/Add.5), said that considerable changes had taken place in the Russian Federation's social and economic situation since the submission of its second periodic report in 2003. Federalism and decentralization had increased, and legislation had been adopted to promote democratization and improve social policies.
3. Government reforms had led to improvements in the situation of children. At the national level, social security for families with children had increased, and the one-off financial allowance for the birth of a child had doubled. The Government was currently considering measures that would increase social support and prolong maternity leave. Monthly child allowances had been increased in 30 of the Russian Federation's 89 administrative regions, and similar increases would be introduced in other regions beginning on 1 January 2006.
4. As a result of poverty reduction policies, the number of children living below the regional poverty line had declined from 55 per cent in 2002 to 40 per cent in 2004. Although the Government was aware that some aspects of its large-scale reforms could have a negative effect on children, efforts had been made to avoid or rectify such situations. For example, the central Government's monitoring of the reforms had made it possible to broaden the range of essential medicines provided free of charge to children with disabilities. During the reporting period, and since the submission of the third periodic report, practical measures had been taken to guarantee children's basic rights. A targeted approach to solving the most serious problems of childhood had been adopted and was being funded from the national budget.
5. The presidential programme "Children of Russia", which was still being implemented, included sectoral programmes to address issues relating to children's health, juvenile crime, orphans and disabled children. Recreational activities for children were organized and financed at both the federal and regional levels. Economic growth had made it possible to increase funding for children's programmes.
6. The infant mortality rate had continued to decline, and maternal mortality had fallen by half between 2000 and 2004. As a result of a national vaccination programme, there had been a sharp decline in the incidence of measles; cases of tuberculosis and sexually transmitted diseases among children had also declined. The Government was continuing its efforts to improve health care for children. At the beginning of September 2005, the President of the Russian Federation had announced a national project to improve public health. The project, which would be

implemented over a two-year period, included the establishment of six new national medical centres, which would help to improve children's access to complex surgery. Screening of newborns for hereditary diseases, and the provision of vaccines, including against hepatitis B, would also be increased. Such measures to improve children's health would be financed from the State budget.

7. Progress had been made in reducing drug abuse among children and teenagers. Alcoholism among young people remained a serious problem, and in March 2005 a law had been adopted on limiting the sale and consumption of beer and beer-based beverages. The most difficult problem was the spread of HIV/AIDS. There were currently some 12,000 HIV-infected children in the Russian Federation. The most important task was to prevent mother-to-child transmission, and measures were being taken to ensure that all pregnant HIV-positive women had access to outpatient care and treatment.

8. The Russian school system was being modernized. Greater attention was being paid to career guidance and vocational training for older schoolchildren; schools were being equipped with computers, particularly in rural areas; and innovative technologies and teaching programmes were being developed. The Government was providing increased support for schoolteachers; beginning in 2006, teachers' salaries would be substantially increased. Improvements in health care and education were national priorities.

9. During the reporting period, particular attention had been paid to the provision of social support for children in difficult situations, including children with health problems. Social support for children with disabilities was now under the purview of the federal Government and was funded from the national budget. Staffing improvements had been made in two major children's institutions. Legislative and practical measures were required in order to improve the living conditions, education and rehabilitation of children with disabilities living in institutions.

10. Pursuant to the Committee's previous concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.110), the Russian Federation had endeavoured to bring its juvenile justice system into line with all international requirements. All aspects of the legal system had been amended to take account of the rights and needs of juvenile offenders. Particular attention had been paid to providing alternative punishment; minors who had committed offences under the age of 16 could not be sentenced to deprivation of liberty.

11. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC, Country Rapporteur, said that the State party should explain how Russian legislation was implemented, and what practical measures were being taken to improve the situation of children. She wished to know how the Committee's previous concluding observations had been disseminated and whether they had been publicly discussed. She requested specific information on how the Committee's recommendations had been implemented. She expressed concern about unequal access to services, and asked how the Government ensured equal enjoyment of human rights.

12. She wished to know whether the perpetrators of the horrific acts of violence at secondary school No. 1 in Beslan in Northern Ossetia had been identified, whether the necessary financial and psychosocial support had been provided for the surviving children and their families, and whether the school had been reopened. She asked whether the effectiveness of parliamentary

hearings on child rights issues had been evaluated and whether politicians were prepared to translate their discussions into action for the promotion and protection of children's rights. She wished to know what efforts were being made to ensure that decentralization did not have a negative impact on children's welfare.

13. Russian child rights programmes did not include a general national plan of action in accordance with "A World Fit for Children", the outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly devoted to children, held in New York in 2002. According to the third periodic report, a national plan of action was being drafted, and she asked for information on the status of the plan.

14. Mr. POLLAR asked what measures the State party was taking to ensure that its reservations and declarations with respect to other international treaties were not detrimental to the effective implementation of the Convention. He wished to know whether the Government planned to withdraw those reservations and declarations. He requested clarification of the status of the Convention in domestic legislation, and asked whether it could be directly invoked in a court. He wondered whether, in the event of a conflict, the provisions of the Convention would prevail over domestic legislation. He asked whether there had been any judicial decisions that had directly applied the Convention. He wished to know how the Government ensured equality in access to services provided at the regional level. Further information would be appreciated on remedies available in the event of violations of the rights guaranteed by the Convention.

15. Mr. SIDDIQUI requested additional information on mechanisms to ensure that data collected on children was systematic and reliable. He wished to know what types of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) worked in the State Party and whether they would become active development partners in future. He wondered how influential NGOs were at national level, and whether the Government planned to finance NGOs, particularly those active in the field of children's rights.

16. He wished to know when a federal office of the ombudsman for children's rights would be established and how its staff would be selected. He requested additional information on the 18 ombudsmen for children's rights in various States and municipalities; in particular, he wished to know how their staff had been selected, and whether NGOs, opposition political parties and ethnic minorities had been consulted in the selection process. The reporting State should explain how independent the ombudsmen were and whether they had adequate staffing and financial resources.

17. Mr. LIWSKI asked whether implementation of the Convention at national level was coordinated by a single body that functioned on an ad hoc basis, or whether there was a standing body that ensured coordination between the different branches of central Government. He wondered whether there was a monitoring body to prevent and remedy inequalities between the services available to children in different regions. The State party should indicate whether the Procurator's Office had identified any cases of ill-treatment of children who lived in institutions or had been deprived of their liberty and, if so, what action had been taken. He asked whether there was a programme to prevent and eliminate all forms of institutional violence against children.

18. Mr. PARFITT asked what measures were being taken to combat poverty. He wished to know how the Government planned to increase expenditure on education in order to bring it into line with that of other States in the region. It would be useful to know how the State party planned to ensure that every child in the Russian Federation had equal access to social services, including education and health. The delegation should clarify the amount of expenditure on juvenile detention centres and indicate what measures would be taken to improve conditions in those centres in order to meet minimum international standards.

19. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether information on the Convention was included in school curricula, and whether professionals working with children received training in the Convention.

20. The reporting State should indicate how it planned to ensure that children of refugees, asylum-seekers and illegal immigrants enjoyed the right to birth registration. She requested further information on the publication of books for children with disabilities. The delegation should explain what measures had been taken to ensure that all children had access to publications for young people. She requested additional information on the implementation of legislation on advertising and the media, including information on the relevant monitoring body. Details on measures to protect children from harmful material on the Internet would be useful.

21. Mr. ZERMATTEN asked whether the State party planned to introduce a single minimum age of criminal responsibility. He wished to know whether there were plans to exclude all minors under the age of 14 from the criminal justice system.

22. He asked whether children had the right to establish non-school-related associations and, if so, from what age. It would be useful to know whether children who belonged to associations had decision-making rights, and whether the State party encouraged children to participate in associations.

23. The reporting State should indicate what measures the Government planned to take to reduce the risk of children becoming homeless. He requested additional information on comprehensive policies to prevent alcohol abuse by young people.

24. Ms. KHATTAB asked why the minimum age for sexual consent had not been raised to 18. It was difficult to understand why non-violent lewd behaviour involving a person under the age of 14 did not constitute a criminal offence. It would be useful to know what was being done to prevent discrimination, including discrimination by State authorities, against Roma children and children from ethnic minorities.

25. Ms. AL-THANI requested updated statistics on infanticide and asked what measures the State party was taking to address that problem. She asked what was being done to address the high suicide rate among young people.

26. The delegation should provide additional information on measures to implement the prohibition against corporal punishment in schools. The reporting State should indicate whether it planned to prohibit corporal punishment in the home, and whether steps were being taken to raise parents' awareness of the detrimental effects of that practice on children's development.

27. Ms. SMITH asked to what extent the right of all children to be heard and to participate in decisions affecting them was respected in schools, other institutions and in families.

The meeting was suspended at 11.15 a.m. and resumed at 11.30 a.m.

28. Ms. SHARAPOVA (Russian Federation) said that almost 1,000 children who had been traumatized during the Beslan hostage crisis had received treatment at federal clinics. The Government had established a programme for the rehabilitation of those children and their families and a fund had been set up to support the families of victims of the crisis. The school in which the tragedy had occurred had been converted into a museum in memory of the victims.

29. Many of the families that had been directly or indirectly affected by the Beslan tragedy had been sent for rehabilitation to Ukraine, Bulgaria, Germany and the Czech Republic. A special rehabilitation centre and a fund for victims of the terrorist attack had been set up in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). A large hospital and a centre for families, women and children would open by the end of 2005. In addition, three sanatoriums for children with psychosomatic disorders had been established in nearby towns, and a number of the children from Beslan were undergoing treatment there.

30. Ms. GORDEEVA (Russian Federation) said that efforts were being made to equalize the flow of funds to the regions. Special regional development funds had been set-aside in the federal budget. The size of the compensation fund had been increased. Public funding for special federal programmes for children, was being maintained. A ministry for regional development had been established to coordinate the efforts of various ministries that monitored the budget. In general, the competence and responsibilities of the constituent entities of the Russian Federation had been identified more clearly, and their budgets were becoming more transparent.

31. Two of the four allowances paid to families with children from the Social Insurance Fund had been significantly increased, namely the birth and child-rearing allowances. Thirty-three constituent entities had increased the monthly child allowance, and the others would do so in 2006. The possibility of implementing special programmes to support families with children and encourage parenthood had been discussed in Parliament, and a draft policy outline for the protection of children's health would be discussed in the near future. A new federal programme for children for 2007-2010 was being prepared.

32. The draft national plan of action for children focused on the economic situation of families, children's health and education, and on children in difficult situations, including children with disabilities, street children and orphans. The national plan of action had been approved by the federal ministries and departments and would be submitted for approval to the President; the plan would serve as the basis for programmes to be developed by the constituent entities.

33. Prior to ratifying International Labour Organization (ILO) Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, the Russian Federation had brought its legislation into line with the provisions of

that instrument. A number of amendments had been made to the Criminal and Labour codes, including amendments on liability for the sexual exploitation of children and the distribution of pornographic materials. In addition, the Family Code had been amended to increase parents' responsibility for the maintenance and upbringing of their children.

34. The CHAIRPERSON requested further information on the policy outline for the protection of children and the proposals of the working group responsible for its implementation.

35. Ms. SHARAPOVA (Russian Federation) said that a draft plan of action to improve the situation of children had been widely discussed in the media and during consultations with representatives of NGOs and civil society. A special working group was currently considering the plan and would put forward proposals on ways to improve it. At the end of 2005, the plan would be considered by Parliament and then submitted to the President for approval.

36. Ms. FRALTSOVA (Russian Federation) said that the Government attached great importance to developing policies to ensure the protection of children and families in accordance with international standards. Parliamentary hearings, round tables and expert groups made it possible to consider problems faced by children and families and to propose the adoption of relevant legislation. The parliamentary committee on the family, women and children met with representatives of all the constituent entities of the Russian Federation to discuss a wide range of issues, which would form the basis of the committee's work for the years to come. The parliamentary committee dealt with such matters as family allowances, alcohol and drug abuse among children, and anti-terrorism measures. In 2004, new laws had been adopted to limit the sale of alcoholic beverages in educational and cultural establishments and to prohibit the consumption of beer in public places. Legislative measures had been taken to limit the advertisement of beer and alcoholic beverages.

37. Under a new law, families with children would receive tax deductions, the amount of which depended on the number of children in the family and on whether the children were being brought up by two parents or a single mother.

38. A bill on the establishment of an ombudsman for children's rights was currently being drafted and would be submitted to Parliament in the near future. It was currently being decided whether the ombudsmen for children's rights would be part of the Office of the Ombudsman for Human Rights, or an independent body. The Government was fully aware of the need to guarantee equal access to health and education for all children. A bill on minimum social standards, which had been drafted in 2004, focused on that issue as well as many others that affected the lives of both children and adults.

39. Ms. ZBARSKAYA (Russian Federation) said that, under the national statistical system, data was collected on the basis of routine, periodic and random observations. The system provided government departments, lawmakers and others with a wide range of comprehensive information, about the labour market, the economic and social situation in the Russian Federation, and the standard of living of the population as a whole and of various population groups. Data was collected at both the national and regional levels.

40. A national population census carried out in 2004 had collected information in a number of important areas, including unemployment. With the support of several United Nations organizations, the Ministry of Health was preparing to carry out a large-scale survey of the family to determine the birth rate; the survey, which was the first of its kind in the Russian Federation, would enable the Government to collect information on family relations, and on reproductive health and behaviour among adults and young people. Over the past 10 years, the Russian Federation had been participating in a UNICEF-sponsored programme to monitor children's living standards.

41. In the past three years, there had been a decline in the overall mortality rate and in the mortality rate resulting from suicide among young people under the age of 18. In 2004, there had been a total of 1,545 suicides among persons under 18, or 5.2 for every 100,000 persons in that age bracket.

42. Ms. SHARAPOVA (Russian Federation) said that more than 400 NGOs that dealt specifically with children's rights had been registered at the federal and regional levels. Representatives from those organizations worked with the Government on children's issues and participated in various Government working groups and committees.

43. There were 18 ombudsmen for children's rights whose legal status varied depending on the geographic area in which they worked. Although some ombudsmen were appointed by Government officials, the majority were volunteers. The ombudsmen assessed local and regional legislation to ensure that children's rights were taken into account.

44. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether the Government had developed a comprehensive policy to prevent child abuse and neglect within the family, as well as the separation of children from their families. He wished to know what type of support the Government provided to families in difficulty. He enquired whether the proposed amendments to the Family Code had been enacted and, if so, whether specific action had been taken to implement them. He wished to know what mechanisms existed to protect children who had been placed in foster care. The delegation should explain why its efforts to promote the deinstitutionalization of children had been unsuccessful. He requested information on administrative measures taken against parents who did not fulfil their obligations towards children and on the number of cases of domestic child abuse. He asked whether the Government had developed a mechanism to enable children to report incidents of abuse on a confidential basis.

45. Ms. ORTIZ asked whether the child's right to know and be cared for by his or her parents before being put up for adoption was guaranteed in Russian legislation. The delegation should indicate whether adoptive parents were informed of the adopted child's history, and whether such children were guaranteed the right to know their identity. She enquired whether legislation still prohibited revealing the identity of the biological parents in cases of adoption; if so, that prohibition should be withdrawn, given the harm that could result from concealing information regarding a person's identity. She wondered whether the Government had considered providing financial support to families who wished to adopt a child. She enquired whether prospective adoptive parents consulted school directors or Internet websites and chat rooms when choosing a child to adopt. She wondered what measures were being taken to ensure that the interests of adults did not prevail over the interests of children in matters of adoption.

46. Owing to the weakness of the central adoption authority, intercountry adoptions posed a number of problems. She wished to know what obstacles were preventing the Russian Federation from ratifying the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, which would help to regulate adoptions and prevent the sale and trafficking of children.

47. Ms. AL-THANI requested information on efforts to deal with the prevalence of iron deficiency disorders and on the status of a bill to require universal salt iodization. She asked what measures were being taken to prevent obesity among Russian children and to promote breastfeeding. She wished to know the reasons for the resurgence of tuberculosis and diphtheria, and what the Government was doing to contain those diseases. The delegation should explain what steps were being taken to discourage teenagers from using abortion as their preferred method of contraception.

48. She would appreciate a full account of the Government's strategy to prevent HIV/AIDS. She asked whether testing and medicines were available to everyone on a confidential basis. She wished to know what steps were being taken to counter discrimination against HIV-positive children.

49. Ms. LEE said that she was concerned that the Constitution of the Russian Federation did not explicitly prohibit discrimination against persons with disabilities. The delegation should explain how the Government guaranteed children with disabilities access to compulsory free education, and how it integrated such children into mainstream schools. She requested clarification concerning reports that an increasing number of children with disabilities were being placed in institutions. She asked what the State party was doing to address the situation of ethnic Koreans, who had been forcibly expelled from the Soviet Union during the Stalin era, and the fact that their descendants had not been offered the possibility of returning to their cities of origin in the Russian Federation.

50. Mr. LIWSKI asked whether public health reforms currently under way in the Russian Federation were intended to improve primary health care, and whether such reforms included paediatric services. He wished to know to what extent the health reforms would be affected by the disparities in budgetary allocations for the central and remote regions of the Russian Federation.

51. Ms. KHATTAB asked what efforts were being made to address the fact that more than half of the Russian Federation's children lived in families whose average income did not exceed the regional subsistence wage. She wished to know whether the Government was implementing poverty-reduction measures. According to reports, teenage prostitution, which was one of the worst forms of child labour, affected some 25,000 young persons in the Russian Federation; many teenage prostitutes had alleged that they worked under threat. Although trafficking in children had been criminalized by the courts, the Russian Federation was still considered to be a major source country for women and girls who were trafficked globally for the purpose of sexual exploitation. According to reports, some 20 per cent of the millions of illegal immigrants in the Russian Federation were victims of forced labour. She wished to know what the Government was doing to combat those problems. Since intercountry adoptions were often commercially motivated, she asked what measures were being taken to encourage domestic adoptions and to discourage intercountry adoptions.

52. Mr. KRAPPMANN asked how equal educational opportunities could be guaranteed throughout the Russian Federation. He asked what steps were being taken to abolish school fees in order to provide free education for all, as required by the Convention. He wished to know what the Government was doing to ensure that quality standards in education were being met nationwide. He wished to know more about reforms in the areas of teacher training and learning methods. He asked whether schools were under State control, and requested additional information on the system of vocational training. He wished to know whether human rights and child rights education was provided to all children. He wondered whether human rights education was an ongoing subject of instruction or whether it was offered only on a one-time basis. He enquired whether children were involved in school and community programmes and projects, to help them to gain a practical knowledge of human rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.