



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

Distr.
GENERAL

CRC/C/SR.872
1 July 2003

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-third session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 872nd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 23 May 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

CONTENTS

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Second periodic report of Sri Lanka

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 Official Records Editing Section, 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.

GE.03-42051 (E) 300503 010703

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

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of Sri Lanka (continued) (CRC/C/70/Add.17; CRC/C/Q/LKA/2; CRC/C/RESP/35)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. de Silva, Mr. Gunaratna, Mr. Kariyawasam, Mr. Peiris, Ms. Perera and Mr. Soysa (Sri Lanka) took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that legislation had recently been amended to make it possible to obtain Sri Lankan citizenship through the maternal line.
3. While the Government of Sri Lanka always cooperated with United Nations Human rights bodies, it had decided to allow a maximum of two visits a year by special rapporteurs in order to ensure that such visits were properly prepared and conducted. For that reason, and since the Committee against Torture had visited Sri Lanka in 1998, the Government had decided to delay the visit by the Special Rapporteur on torture. He pointed out that, in its concluding observations, the Committee against Torture had determined that there was no systematic pattern of torture in Sri Lanka.
4. There was no discrimination of any kind against Tamils of Indian origin living and working in Sri Lanka.
5. Ms. PERERA (Sri Lanka) said that a new national plan of action for children (2004-2008) would be finalized by July 2003. Following a workshop organized with the assistance of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and consultations with children, a second draft of the plan, which addressed the issues of health, education, justice, protection, sanitation and child labour, had been prepared.
6. There was no discrimination against internally displaced persons, and their children's access to school was limited only by the remoteness of the camps in which they lived; that problem was being addressed by the authorities. Children of internally displaced persons could participate in all extramural activities and required only birth certificates for sports competitions involving specific age groups.
7. Application of the concept of the best interests of the child had recently been extended to court cases concerning rape and child abuse. Priority was given to such cases and the procedures had been accelerated. Since 1999, videotaped evidence had been admitted in court in cases involving minors but the accused had the right to cross-examine child witnesses.
8. The Foreign Employment Bureau conducted special programmes to address the difficulties facing the children of migrant workers, such as stigmatization at school and vulnerability to abuse and all kinds of exploitation.

9. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that many Sri Lankan migrants worked in the Middle East and were denied family reunion rights. Although many of the children left behind in Sri Lanka were cared for by members of their extended families, some needed to be looked after by the State. There was currently only one special home to accommodate such children but the Government intended to increase capacity.
10. Ms. PERERA (Sri Lanka) said that, since the Penal Code had been amended in 1995 to make incest a criminal offence, heavy prison sentences had been handed down.
11. Although allegations of torture had to be reported within one month if cases were to be brought before the Supreme Court, there was no time limit if the victim chose to bring the case before the National Human Rights Commission
12. The amended Penal Code made it an offence to identify any victim of a sexual offence in publications. Offenders could be sentenced to a maximum of two years in prison.
13. There were no restrictions on special schools for particular communities, such as Muslims. Children at all schools were entitled to adopt a particular mode of dress consistent with their religion, even if that did not conform to the dress code of the educational institution.
14. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that, with regard to identification by the media of minors who had been victims of sexual offences, the National Child Protection Authority, which he chaired, had held a number of high-level meetings with media representatives. The National Child Protection Authority had subsequently issued guidelines on how to report child sex abuse cases, with emphasis on sensitization rather than sensationalism.
15. Only one centre in Sri Lanka was equipped for videotaping evidence by child witnesses. Two new centres would be opened as soon as the requisite training was completed. A police handbook on interview techniques, including videotaping, would be published shortly.
16. The authorities had decided to target children through media and awareness-raising campaigns dealing with the rights of expression and participation. Sri Lanka was a highly patriarchal society, and parents often saw the exercise of children's rights as a threat to their authority. In government campaigns, care was always taken to match each right of the child with a corresponding responsibility.
17. He acknowledged the shortcomings of the foster parents' schemes, such as the lack of a system for monitoring the unofficial schemes in order to determine whether children were being exploited. The Government hoped to finalize a monitoring system as soon as possible. Placing children in institutions was regarded as a last resort, and the Government actively encouraged adoption, the procedures for which were being accelerated. In view of the increasing local demand to adopt, the Government was giving local adoption priority over adoption by foreigners. In cases of adoption by foreigners, the Government ensured that a thorough screening process took place both in Sri Lanka and in the country of residence of persons wishing to adopt Sri Lankan children.

18. The main obstacle to the prohibition of corporal punishment at school was resistance by administrators, teachers and parents. However, attitudes were changing, and parents had begun to challenge the practice of corporal punishment at school for the first time. The Ministry of Education had recently issued a circular urging the sparing use of corporal punishment in State schools. Meanwhile, the National Child Protection Authority had been conducting nationwide campaigns that emphasized that corporal punishment led to other forms of physical abuse. Under the amended Penal Code, corporal punishment could be considered as cruelty to children. That offence carried a minimum prison sentence of two years; and some teachers had already been taken to court.

19. Ms. AL-THANI said that it was not enough to treat corporal punishment as cruelty to children under the Penal Code. The outright prohibition of that practice would be far more effective, and she wondered why the Government had not taken steps to change the law.

20. Mr. KOTRANE welcomed the Government's campaign to prohibit corporal punishment in schools. Although that type of punishment did not need to be included in the Penal Code, some type of legislation was necessary in order to prevent that practice. Since children were often coerced not to disclose the identity of their abusers, it was important to set up mechanisms to enable children to report abuses. The Government's role was to remind families, schools and society at large of their responsibilities towards children.

21. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that, while the Government was making efforts to amend its legislation, it faced resistance to the prohibition of corporal punishment. That practice had been instilled in Sri Lankan society during centuries of foreign domination, where it had been used as a means of controlling communities. It should be noted that the school circular actually carried a degree of legal weight; teachers who did not abide by it were subject to disciplinary action by the Ministry of Education.

22. Regarding the problem of varying standards of institutional care, he said that the Government was endeavouring to develop standardized guidelines for institutions. A study had been conducted with the assistance of UNICEF to identify the problems faced by children in institutions, particularly those who had been placed in institutions by court order. A booklet was being prepared to inform magistrates and staff in care institutions of ways to reduce the number of children in institutions.

23. There were 191 NGO-run children's homes and 22 State-run homes. Most of the approximately 1,500 children in the State-run homes had been placed there by a court order; there were approximately 9,500 children in the NGO-run homes. While the Department of Probation and Child Care was responsible for monitoring the children's homes, its 170 offices throughout the country were not able to cope with that task, owing to a shortage of human resources and to the staff's other responsibilities. The guidelines being developed to improve the monitoring process would address the issue of increasing the Department's staff.

24. Mr. LIWSKI, returning to the issue of adoption, asked whether there was one register of persons wishing to adopt children locally and another for foreigners seeking to adopt Sri Lankan children. If that was the case, he wished to know who managed the registers, and how both types of adoption were followed up. The delegation should provide an explanation for the increase in domestic adoptions vis-à-vis intercountry adoptions.

25. Ms. ORTIZ asked for details concerning the institutionalization process. In particular, she wished to know whether there was an administrative process to determine whether a child actually required institutionalization. It would be better to invest in social services that avoided institutionalization and promoted the placement of children with their extended families.
26. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that the adoption process was handled entirely by the Government; no private individuals were involved. There was a register for both domestic and intercountry adoptions: each province had its own domestic register, while the Department of Probation and Child Care kept the register for intercountry adoptions. No remuneration for adoptions was permitted. Follow-up and monitoring was handled by the Department's probation officers.
27. The Government was currently preparing a set of guidelines with a view to minimizing institutionalization. The types of children who were institutionalized included children in conflict with the law, street children, illegal child servants whose parents could not be located, children abandoned following an unwanted pregnancy or children given up for adoption by mothers who did not have the means to care for them.
28. According to a study carried out in 2002, there were some 500 street children, including 178 children of beggar families, in Colombo. The process of taking street children into custody and sending them to institutions had been abolished, and the Government was in the process of setting up drop-in centres for such children.
29. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that, while State schools were available in every community, private schools were also permitted. Although some private schools had been set up in Muslim communities, that did not mean that Muslim children could not attend other schools; in fact, they did so in large numbers.
30. Ms. SMITH said that, in its replies, the delegation had not sufficiently addressed the principle of the best interests of the child. It was extremely important that the best interests of the child should be included as a principle in the State party's legislation, particularly because it was sometimes the key to resolving conflicts involving the child's parents and family members.
31. Ms. KHATTAB said that she was interested in knowing whether the Government had taken any steps to encourage greater contact among the various communities, since that would prevent communities from becoming isolated from one another.
32. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that he agreed that the Government should ensure that the best interests of the child were respected. While the Government was in favour of greater interaction among Sri Lanka's various communities, it did not wish to take measures that infringed upon individual and community rights.
33. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that she was concerned that the exact number of non-approved placement agencies, which operated informally and served foreigners wishing to adopt children from Sri Lanka, was not known. She wished to know to what extent such agencies complied with existing regulations, and whether they were monitored by the Government. Were parents warned of the risks of using such agencies?

34. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that most of the non-approved homes were situated in the former war zones, where there were many abandoned children and war orphans. Some of the homes had been started by private NGOs or by the rebel organization. All homes were required to register with the Department of Probation and Child Care. Failure to do so could result in the closing of the homes.

35. The CHAIRPERSON said that, according to the second periodic report, a task force on suicides had been established and various measures had been taken. He requested information on the impact of such measures, as well as recent figures on the suicide rate. He also requested statistics on teenage pregnancies among girls between the ages of 15 and 18. The delegation should explain what the Government was doing to prevent teenage pregnancies and what the reason was for such high rates. Although school enrolment figures were good, there were high dropout and repetition rates and it was likely that the 100,000 children not enrolled in school were working. Those problems called into question the overall quality of Sri Lanka's education system.

36. He was concerned about children's involvement in armed conflict and the failure of the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE) to respect its commitment not to recruit children. He wished to know what steps the Government had taken to remind LTTE of its commitment and whether efforts to halt the recruitment of child combatants had been included in the peace negotiations. He commended the Government for the assistance it had provided to war-affected areas in terms of health care, education and food supplies, as well as its efforts to facilitate the return of internally displaced persons. He enquired whether, once the peace talks were completed, a comprehensive plan would be devised to deal with internally displaced children, children in war-affected areas and the reintegration of child combatants. He wondered whether the task force on human disaster management still existed and, if so what role it played.

37. Ms. AL-THANI said that more information was needed on how disabled children were integrated into society, particularly into the school system. She wished to know whether the Government had issued any publications for the disabled, such as publications in Braille. She asked whether the needs of disabled children were taken into account when activities were organized for children. The delegation should provide information on the stigmatization of children with disabilities, especially girls.

38. She would appreciate more information on the prevalence of various communicable, but preventable, diseases and on efforts to eradicate them. The Government should take more vigorous measures to deal with problems of malnutrition and underweight in pregnant women and their children.

39. She wished to know whether the Presidential Task Force on Suicides and tobacco and drug abuse were ad hoc committees. If that was the case, the Government should consider establishing permanent programmes to deal with those issues. She asked what measures had been taken to address the growing number of HIV/AIDS cases among adolescents. Efforts to abolish advertising for alcohol and tobacco were not sufficient to prevent adolescents from using those substances.

40. Mr. KOTRANE said that he was impressed with the unusual degree of objectivity with which the second periodic report had addressed the serious problem of the ill-treatment of children in Sri Lanka. Although many good ideas on prevention had been put forward, he wondered what concrete measures the Government had taken since the preparation of the report.

41. Mr. CITARELLA said that the Government should consider declaring an unconditional amnesty for returning child combatants who might otherwise be charged with crimes that they had been forced to commit. He wondered whether the commission that had been appointed in 1997 to review Sri Lanka's juvenile justice system had made any progress. He was concerned that raising the age of criminal responsibility had not been mentioned as a priority in the second periodic report. He asked why child victims of violence and/or neglect were placed in public institutions until their adult abusers had been prosecuted, since that violated the victims' rights.

42. Mr. KRAPPMANN said that it would be interesting to know whether a child's socio-economic or religious background influenced his or her decision to drop out of school and whether the problem was more acute in rural or urban areas. He wondered whether there was a high youth unemployment rate, since not all children who dropped out of school registered in vocational training courses.

43. Mr. LIWSKI said that, as a developing country, Sri Lanka had one of the best records in the area of reducing the infant mortality rate. He wished to know whether the statistics on infant mortality provided in the written replies corresponded also to the war-torn Northern and Eastern provinces. He would be interested in knowing whether a campaign to promote breastfeeding had been introduced as part of the efforts to reduce infant mortality, and what the results had been. Details should be provided about the socio-economic and ethnic profile of teenage mothers and whether access to birth control programmes had significantly reduced teenage pregnancies. He wondered what sort of health care was available for pregnant teenagers and whether the incidence of teenage pregnancies contributed to the maternal mortality rate. Lastly, he asked whether medicines and regular tests were guaranteed to HIV/AIDS-infected adolescents and whether such services were also provided in the Northern and Eastern provinces.

44. Mr. AL-SHEDDI said that it was regrettable that, although education had been compulsory since 1998 for children between the ages of 5 and 14, so many school-age children did not attend school. He wondered what sort of administrative procedure was responsible for the problem. Although basic education was supposed to be free, some State schools charged fees. As a result, poor families often could not afford to send their children to school. He requested the delegation to provide further clarification on that issue.

45. He expressed concern that very few children received early education and that the majority of pre-schools were privately run. He wished to know whether the Government intended to become more involved in that important sector in order to ensure that children from poor families had an opportunity to receive pre-school education.

46. He wished to know the outcome of the national plan of action for human rights education, which had been established as part of the Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004). In that regard, he wondered whether the Government intended to include human rights education in school curricula.

47. He wondered what was being done to prevent the growing problem of sex tourism involving the exploitation of young boys. He also wished to know how the police dealt with the boys involved; according to allegations, they were treated as criminals.

48. Ms. KHATTAB said she could not understand why the literacy rate was so high, in view of the high dropout rate. She wondered how many years of education a child was expected to have in order to be considered literate. Since the unemployment rate was high among educated people, it was unlikely that poor people would have any incentive to obtain an education.

49. She wished to know whether the Government had a school feeding programme. Such programmes encouraged children to attend school and helped to prevent malnutrition. She wondered what sort of a penalty would be imposed on a father who failed to send his child to school. Small fines were often ineffective, as it was more profitable for the child to work. She also asked whether parents were encouraged to allow their children to participate in leisure activities, since children often received private tuition in the evenings and had little time to relax. She wondered whether Sri Lanka had adopted any legislation to combat domestic violence and whether any system had been introduced to gather data on violence.

50. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether there was any mechanism to monitor and evaluate educational reform. She also wondered whether parents received any support in encouraging their children to pursue their education. Regarding the management of natural and humanitarian disasters, it was unclear whether a rapid response mechanism was in place. On the issue of adolescent health, it would be useful to know whether there were any centres, other than school health clubs, that provided health counselling to adolescents. The existence of such a service outside the school environment might encourage young people to talk more freely about their problems.

51. Mr. FILALI said that further information should be provided about the community schools, which apparently had a legal status in Sri Lanka. He would like to know whether the Government imposed a curriculum on such schools, or whether the schools established their own curricula.

52. He noted with concern that, under the Penal Code (Amendment) Act of 1995, prosecution for incest could be instituted only with the written sanction of the Attorney-General. He wondered what happened in cases where incest had clearly been committed but written sanction was refused. He wished to know whether any other recourse was available to child victims. He expressed concern about the Judicature (Amendment) Act of 1998, the aim of which was to dispense with the requirement of a non-summary inquiry in cases of certain serious criminal offences against children. Dispensing with an inquiry was tantamount to a violation of the right of the alleged perpetrator to a fair trial.

53. He was concerned about the situation of two categories of child victims of armed conflict. The first comprised children who had been forcibly conscripted by LTTE to wage war against the Government and who now faced prosecution for their action. He wondered whether an amnesty law had been introduced for those children and whether any financial resources had been provided to facilitate their reintegration into society. The second category comprised children who had been orphaned, raped, injured or traumatized as a result of LTTE action. He would be interested in knowing whether such children received any form of counselling.

54. Ms. ALUOCH said that she wished to know more about the Government's plan to introduce a feeding programme for children whose mothers had been imprisoned. She welcomed the fact that, under the plan, efforts would be made to find alternatives to remand in prison for mothers with children under 5 years of age and that legislative reforms had been envisaged to make bail for mothers more flexible. However, it was disappointing that no budget and no time frame had yet been set. She wondered whether community service would be introduced as a non-custodial sanction for mothers found guilty of committing petty offences.

55. The CHAIRPERSON asked how the Government intended to address the fact that child victims of abuse were placed in institutions with juvenile delinquents. He also wished to know whether steps had been taken to prevent the placement of juvenile delinquents in adult prisons. The delegation should provide information on the Government's plans to introduce a special juvenile justice system. He wondered how the introduction of such a system would affect the right to privacy. He wished to know whether the Government was concerned at the increase in the number of female juvenile delinquents. He expressed concern that the legal principle of *doli incapax*, according to which a child between the ages of 8 and 12 was not punishable for a crime unless he or she was proved to be sufficiently mature, was reversed in Sri Lanka; consequently, a child was punishable unless it could be proved that he or she was not mature enough to be punished. In that context, the delegation should explain the legal provisions governing the minimum age of criminal responsibility in Sri Lanka.

The meeting was suspended at 4.55 p.m. and resumed at 5.10 p.m.

56. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that, although the presidential task forces were established on a temporary basis, they contributed enormously to policy development and the establishment of new institutions to address specific concerns. For example, the Task Force on General Education had been established in 1997 to review the educational system. It had identified a number of subjects for incorporation into the Government's new educational objectives, including value education, national integration and career guidance, and there had been some discussion as to whether human rights should also be included. Regrettably, it would take time and money to implement the reform proposals.

57. Although education had traditionally been funded by the State, the private sector was becoming increasingly involved. However, most pre-school education was provided by the private sector and the Task Force on General Education recognized that, while it would be counterproductive to bring pre-school education under State control, such education nevertheless required competent guidance and adequate supervision.

58. While all State schools had to adhere to the national curriculum set by the Government, community schools did not have to meet those requirements. Nevertheless, since all students were expected to sit the public examinations set by the Government and some students had the opportunity to sit international examinations such as the University of London GCE Advanced Level, community school courses inevitably had to incorporate certain elements of the national curriculum. There were no private universities in Sri Lanka, although there was a growing number of private and international schools. English had been introduced as a language of instruction in State schools, in addition to Sinhala and Tamil.

59. Mr. de SILVA (Sri Lanka) said that, in the mid-1990s, Sri Lanka had suffered from one of the highest suicide rates in the world and adolescents had been one of the most vulnerable groups. Since then, the suicide rate had fallen drastically. In addition to the Presidential Task Force on Suicides, social workers participated in suicide prevention. In order to prevent young people from committing suicide out of sympathy for others, the President had forbidden the State-owned press to publish reports relating to suicide.

60. Available statistics indicated that Sri Lanka had one of the lowest rates of teenage pregnancy in the developing world. Most teenage pregnancies occurred in remote rural areas where there was a high level of poverty, and among girls working on tea and rubber plantations. The average age of marriage for women in Sri Lanka was 25 years; the average age for men was 27.

61. Although recruitment of child combatants had continued, a decision had been reached in the UNICEF-mediated talks between the Government and LTTE to set up three transit centres in the Northern and Eastern provinces. While no laws on amnesty had been adopted, few child combatants who had been involved in criminal activities had been prosecuted. He had no data to support the allegations against the Home Guard; the Home Guard was recruited by the Government and the minimum age of recruits was 18. He acknowledged that paramilitary forces, mainly composed of Tamil forces that opposed the LTTE, might be recruiting children; the Government would have to address that issue in the near future.

62. Hepatitis B had recently been added to the immunization list and by 2004 all children would also receive Haemophilus influenza type b vaccination. The Presidential Task Force on Tobacco, Alcohol and Illicit Drugs would be integrated into the National Child Protection Authority (NCPA) and would continue its work in that field.

63. Marginalized iron deficiency remained a problem. Seven children with HIV/AIDS had been identified in Sri Lanka and 100 children were expected to become affected. All children and pregnant mothers infected with HIV/AIDS would receive antiretroviral therapy free of charge. Steps were being taken to extend the service to other persons. Although most mothers and adolescents knew about HIV/AIDS, fewer than half of them were aware that preventive measures could be taken. A project on preventive measures, focusing in particular on adolescents and children, had recently been launched with support of the World Bank.

64. The NCPA programme on child abuse had resulted in a significant increase in reported cases of child abuse between 1995 and 2000. As a result of training in the recognition and reporting of child abuse, doctors, social workers, members of the police force, and teachers were becoming more aware of child abuse issues.

65. NCPA had been involved in a number of legal reforms. Police units were responsible for investigating cases of child abuse both by following up complaints and carrying out active surveillance. The Save the Children cyberwatch project, funded by Norway, had taken over the trafficking surveillance programme, funded by the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Organization (ILO). To date, 31 foreign paedophiles had been arrested as a result of cyber surveillance.

66. The average duration of lactation was 27.5 months. Exclusive breastfeeding usually lasted 3.7 months and full breastfeeding, 4.6 months. Working mothers received 86 days of leave, excluding normal holidays. A decision had recently been taken to extend that period to one year.
67. Ms. PERERA (Sri Lanka) said that the Government and LTTE had finalized a plan of action to meet the needs of children who had been affected by the war in the Northern and Eastern provinces. The plan of action had been developed in accordance with the commitments undertaken at the Oslo and Berlin peace talks and was based on such principles as the best interest of the child, the importance of the family for children, and an integrated approach to child welfare. The plan provided for child rights training for LTTE and the Government, child rights awareness campaigns at the community level, measures to increase parents' awareness of the ways of preventing child abuse, and the establishment of a mechanism for the discharge of under-age recruits and their reintegration into society. All children affected by the war would be given an opportunity to receive an education. Children in transit centres would be provided with essential health-care and nutrition services. The plan had been officially approved by the Government, and LTTE was expected to approve the plan in the near future.
68. The Government had not implemented the amendments proposed by the law commission in 1997 since it no longer considered them sufficient. Entirely new laws should be introduced to ensure the full implementation of children's rights.
69. With the exception of Colombo, where a special juvenile court had been established, children were tried in magistrates' courts. Owing to a lack of institutional facilities, victims of abuse were kept with child offenders and were sometimes forced to travel to courts with adult offenders in vehicles belonging to the prison department. The Government was currently addressing that serious situation. The new juvenile justice laws were designed to improve community service facilities, establish complaint mechanisms, raise the age of criminal responsibility and prevent recidivism.
70. Although some women in prisons kept their children with them, the problem was not beyond the Government's control. The Government had set up crèche facilities and NGOs provided food and other support.
71. While failure to send children to school was a criminal offence, the regulations concerning compulsory education did not provide for specific penalties, which would have to be determined on a case-by-case basis.
72. The draft law on domestic violence, which would soon be submitted to Parliament, recognized all the offences in the existing Penal Code and added emotional abuse as a new offence. The law would empower courts to issue protection orders designed to prevent perpetrators from coming into contact with their victims. Provisions for interim relief, which required the perpetrator to maintain the victim's family, would also be made. However, she believed that the law would have to be supplemented in order to ensure that women were not too embarrassed to lodge complaints. Although women's and children's complaint bureaux had been set up at all police stations, measures were needed to ensure that police officers took complaints seriously and followed them up with the relevant authorities.

73. Mr. SOYSA (Sri Lanka) said that a number of NGOs and institutions were providing rehabilitation for drug abusers. A modern, well-equipped rehabilitation centre for adolescents under 18 years of age had recently been established. With the assistance of UNICEF, the Government had set up a centre for the early detection of disabilities in children. A community-based rehabilitation programme, involving some 4,000 volunteers, had also been launched. Mothers of children requiring rehabilitation received a grant to start up a small business or income-generating project.

74. Mr. KARIYAWASAM (Sri Lanka) said that, while the Government of Sri Lanka was mindful of its responsibilities with regard to children, the economic situation in Sri Lanka and the lack of human and financial resources were making the implementation of those responsibilities increasingly difficult.

75. The CHAIRMAN commended the State party on its efforts in various fields and expressed his hope for the speedy and successful conclusion of the peace talks, which would enable the Government to continue improving the situation of Sri Lankan children.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.