



**Convention on the
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Forty-ninth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1355th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 23 September 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. LEE

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

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

Third and fourth periodic reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (CRC/C/GBR/4; CRC/C/GBR/Q/4 and Add.1 and 2, HRI/CORE/1/Add.5/Rev.2)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. JEFFERY (United Kingdom), introducing the report of the State party (CRC/C/GBR/4), said that the United Kingdom's report reflected its "four nations" approach to the implementation of the Convention. Devolution had developed significantly since the submission of the second periodic report. The devolved administrations took responsibility for education, health and social policy - and, in Scotland, for justice - while the United Kingdom Government levied taxes and distributed the revenue to the devolved administrations, which allocated it according to their powers. While the United Kingdom Government was the State party for the purposes of the Convention, the devolved administrations made their own contribution to the realization of children's rights in their respective territories, and all administrations worked closely to implement the Convention.
3. All four administrations were committed to ensuring the health and well-being of every child and young person; attaining world-class educational standards; and driving forward reform of children's services in order to meet the needs of children and young people, particularly the most vulnerable. Significant steps had been taken towards those ends, and all four nations were implementing long-term strategies to deliver improved outcomes. The Children's Plan for England was explicitly aligned with the articles of the Convention; similar plans had been developed in the devolved administrations.
4. All the administrations had established structures, in most cases at the ministerial level, to ensure better outcomes for children, and four children's commissioners had been appointed to coordinate issues of common concern. The commissioners would be working with the Government, NGOs and young people across the country on the Committee's concluding observations.
5. The United Kingdom would shortly withdraw its reservations to articles 22 and 37 (c) of the Convention. It also intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography before the end of 2008, subject to the will of Parliament.
6. Ms. SMITH (Country Rapporteur) welcomed the announcement that the State party would soon withdraw its reservations to the Convention, and commended the Government on its efforts to fight child poverty, homelessness and inequality in health and education. While the Children's Plan for England was an important new development, she pointed out that they contained few references to the Convention.

7. There was still a long way to go before all children in the United Kingdom could enjoy their rights under the Convention. In the Committee's opinion, there were several areas where the Government had not fully implemented the Convention. Indeed, certain regulations were in direct conflict with the Convention, and the spirit of the Convention had not always filtered through to decisions taken by the authorities. While she was pleased to hear that the Convention had been mentioned in numerous court judgements, she noted that domestic judicial opinion on its status varied widely. In 2002, the Committee had recommended that the State party should incorporate the Convention into its domestic law; that had not yet been done. She wished to know the Government's position on the obligations it had assumed by ratifying the Convention. If the Government acknowledged its obligation to implement the Convention, she wished to know what its arguments were for not incorporating it into domestic law. Was there a possibility that the Government would reconsider its position?

8. There was no mention of any future bill of rights in the State party's report or in any other material provided by the Government, and she wondered whether that was because the Government did not consider it to be an issue that concerned children or because there were no immediate plans to adopt such an instrument. She wished to know how children's rights would be included in such a bill of rights and how the Government planned to consult with children in that regard. She asked whether there would be a special section on children's rights in the bill of rights to be drawn up for Northern Ireland in accordance with the peace agreement.

9. On the question of dissemination, she said that surveys showed that there seemed to be little awareness of the Convention among parents and children or among adults working with children. She asked what the Government intended to do to raise awareness, particularly in England. Was the Convention a mandatory part of the curriculum in specialist training courses? She wondered whether funding for the Rights Respecting Schools pilot initiative would be maintained.

10. Certain groups of children continued to experience discrimination and stigmatization. The Traveller communities in Wales and Northern Ireland were among the most disadvantaged members of society. Some of the places where they lived were unsafe, and there was nowhere for children to play. In Northern Ireland, there were even segregated schools. She asked what the Government intended to do to improve living conditions for Travellers and whether there were any plans to enable Traveller children to attend ordinary schools in Northern Ireland.

11. The obligation under article 4 to undertake measures to the maximum extent of available resources applied also to devolved administrations. Poverty levels in the United Kingdom were some of the highest in Europe. An estimated £3 billion would be needed to halve the poverty rate by 2010, and she wondered whether the Government would meet that target. She asked what instruments would primarily be used to reach the target and whether priority would be given to those most at risk.

12. Young people in the United Kingdom complained that the media demonized teenagers. While some politicians criticized media coverage of children, others who were influenced by the press were demanding more punitive measures. She wondered whether the introduction of antisocial behaviour orders (ASBOs) and the lifting of reporting restrictions on criminal cases might have contributed to negative media attitudes. She wondered whether the Government could do more to project a positive and more accurate picture of British teenagers.

13. Children's privacy was already invaded by the media and through surveillance in schools. She asked how the Government planned to safeguard children's right to privacy when the ContactPoint online directory for England came into operation. Reality television programmes in which children behaved extremely badly were not only harmful to children and conflicted with the Convention, they were an invasion of privacy, and she wondered what protection the Government could provide in that regard.

14. Mr. FILALI (Alternate Country Rapporteur) said that the State party had not fully addressed the concerns expressed in the Committee's concluding observations on its second periodic report, particularly concerning the dissemination of the Convention, minority rights and juvenile justice. He wondered how the Government dealt with the Committee's concluding observations. Did it endeavour to implement them with the participation of the devolved administrations, civil society and the human rights institutions? The State party's future reports should be based on the concluding observations rather than on descriptions of legislation of which the Committee was already aware.

15. Once the State party had withdrawn its reservations to the Convention, it should remove harmful legislation from the statute books. In that connection, he wished to know how the Government intended to ensure that that was done in the near future.

16. While the State party had a substantial amount of legislation to protect children, such legislation contained only limited references to the Convention. In general, despite considerable pressure from civil society, national institutions and the courts in favour of applying the Convention, the Government seemed reluctant to do so. That attitude hampered progress.

17. He asked whether the Children's Plan published in December 2007 represented the State party's national strategy for implementing the Convention. If so, how did it address the requirements of the Convention, including the Committee's concluding observations? If not, what plans did the State party have to develop a national strategy on children's rights?

18. The mandates of the four children's commissioners were not in line with the Paris Principles. Furthermore, their independence was questionable since, with the exception of the Scottish Commissioner, they were not accountable to Parliament but to government departments. He requested information on procedures for allocating resources to children's programmes at the national level. He wondered whether the children's commissioners were involved in any way, and how the transparency of such procedures was guaranteed.

19. He had the impression that many children with disabilities were victims of discrimination because they did not have equal access to education. The delegation should explain the reasons for that situation.

20. He expressed concern at the practice of removing young people from public places using ultrasonic dispersal devices. He asked how the principle of the best interests of the child could be reconciled with the issuing of antisocial behaviour orders.

21. He enquired whether a statutory system for investigating child death had been established, as recommended by the Committee in its concluding observations on the United Kingdom's second periodic report (CRC/C/15/Add.188).

22. Mr. PARFITT said that the devolution of responsibility for social services to the local government level ran the risk of creating disparities among the different regions or districts concerned. He asked what measures the State party was taking to ensure that children had access to the same services everywhere. He enquired what provision was made for targeting resources to certain programmes at the local government level.

23. According to paragraph 114 of the report, the Government of Northern Ireland preferred the term “welfare” to “best interests” of the child. However, there was an important distinction between the two terms: “welfare” implied some form of benevolence on the part of the Government; “best interests” recognized children as rights-bearers. In accordance with article 3 of the Convention, the best interests of the child should be a primary consideration. The delegation should indicate how the central Government took that principle into account in its decisions and in policies and programmes relating to children.

24. None of the mandates of the four children’s commissioners complied fully with the Paris Principles or the Committee’s general comment No. 2 on the role of independent national human rights institutions in the promotion and the protection of the rights of the child. Apparently, the commissioners were not empowered to investigate complaints lodged by children or others on their behalf. The authority to consider complaints not only provided children with a channel for voicing their concerns but also furnished objective information on which the Government could base its recommendations relating to children. He asked whether there was any other mechanism in the State party for reporting objectively to Parliament on child-related issues. He stressed that the budget allocated to children’s commissions should be overseen by Parliament and not by the central Government.

25. Mr. ZERMATTEN expressed concern regarding the implementation of article 12 of the Convention. He asked to what extent the views of children were taken into account in judicial decisions relating to their deprivation of liberty or placement in institutions. He enquired whether children were allowed to express their opinion when subjected to antisocial behaviour orders.

26. With regard to education, he asked whether children in need of special care were allowed to express their opinion on the type of care required. He also asked whether children with disabilities had the right to appeal against their placement in institutions with a view to seeking alternative care or accommodation. He enquired whether there was a comprehensive policy to encourage as many children as possible to express their views collectively, for example through youth forums.

27. He expressed concern at the powers of the police to disperse groups of young people causing a public nuisance by using ultrasound devices, since that practice seriously undermined the right to freedom of association.

28. He questioned whether it was reasonable to expect parents, particularly single parents, to pay a fine of up to £100 when their children failed to attend school.

29. Antisocial behaviour orders were not compatible with the provisions of article 16 of the Convention, since they were not covered by the principle of protection of the personality. Moreover, they had been criticized by the media and the former Council of Europe Commissioner for Human Rights.

30. The report dealt too briefly with the right to the protection of privacy. He shared Ms. Smith's concerns regarding the negative picture of teenagers portrayed by the media and the possible physical and mental risks posed by the participation of children and teenagers in reality television shows.

31. Ms. VUKOVIC-SAHOVIC said that the State party had not yet achieved the target of allocating 0.7 per cent of its gross national product to official development assistance. She had been surprised to learn that not enough information on human rights and the rights under the Convention had been disseminated in the United Kingdom, since that country had helped to fund the mainstreaming of human rights education in the Balkans.

32. NGOs had prepared useful reports on the issue of discrimination against gay and transgender children in the United Kingdom, and the delegation should provide further information on relevant legislation and explain how the Government intended to combat discrimination against such children.

33. Ms. AIDOO asked whether the State party's current arrangements for coordinating the implementation of the Convention were adequate. She wondered whether the United Kingdom Government had considered the possibility of an additional mechanism to coordinate efforts among the four nations or its children's commissioners. Such a mechanism could help to raise the profile of the Convention, ensure a comprehensive and regular review of its implementation and provide a platform for exchanging experiences and ensuring closer involvement of NGOs.

34. Mr. KOTRANE said that, according to information submitted under the Human Rights Council's universal periodic review mechanism, 3.8 million children in the United Kingdom lived below the poverty line, and almost 30 per cent of children in Northern Ireland fell into that category. He wondered what progress the State party was making towards attaining the strategic objective of eliminating poverty by 2010.

35. He expressed concern at a recent court ruling that the Convention was not directly applicable in the United Kingdom. He wished to know what information was provided to British judges and other legal professionals concerning the Convention and the Committee's concluding observations that might help to convince them of the supremacy of the Convention.

36. Mr. PURAS asked how the British Government and the devolved administrations ensured the involvement of interested parties in decision-making on controversial issues, such as the reproductive rights of children with disabilities, and the balance of authority and responsibilities between parents and adolescents.

37. The delegation should comment on the effectiveness of antisocial behaviour orders. He asked whether there had been any government research on the subject. According to some NGOs, such measures contributed to the early criminalization of British youth and created even greater tensions between them and adults.

38. Mr. POLLAR enquired how much multilateral and bilateral assistance the State party had provided during the reporting period, and what progress had been made towards achieving the target for international assistance set by the United Nations in the 1970s.

39. Mr. CITARELLA asked whether the devolution of power and the different legal systems functioning in the United Kingdom gave rise to any differentiation in the treatment of children.

40. The CHAIRPERSON requested additional information on the policy of keeping DNA records of children in conflict with the law. That policy did not seem to be uniformly applied throughout the United Kingdom and she wondered whether there was any system for monitoring it.

41. The procedure for allocating resources was not sufficiently transparent and focused mainly on the short term. She asked whether a child impact assessment was conducted when allocating resources. She drew attention to disparities in expenditure among the different parts of the United Kingdom, and noted that Northern Ireland had the lowest budget for education.

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

42. Ms. JACKSON (United Kingdom) said that the United Kingdom Government and the devolved administrations shared responsibility for ensuring overall implementation of the Convention. The mix of legislation and policy used to give effect to the Convention focused on what would make a difference to children's experience and life chances. The United Kingdom had not incorporated the Convention into its domestic law; rather, its approach was to amend existing laws as necessary to ensure compliance with the Convention. Courts could refer to the Convention for guidance in interpreting and applying domestic law. The wide consultative process undertaken before the introduction of any new legislation provided opportunities for public comment on the compatibility of the proposed legislation with the Convention. Giving effect to the Convention depended on the establishment of policies and programmes designed to bring about real improvements. Such progress had been made through the Children's Plan, which explicitly aligned a comprehensive 10-year strategy for children with the provisions of the Convention, thereby providing an excellent basis for monitoring progress on children's well-being in England.

43. Mr. MacLEAN (United Kingdom) said that public services in Scotland focused on the creation of a country that provided opportunities for all citizens to prosper by increasing sustainable economic growth. To that end, steps were being taken to work with the public and civil society sectors to ensure that children and young people in Scotland were successful learners, confident individuals, effective contributors and responsible citizens. Ministers were committed to tackling inequalities in Scottish society and to improving the life chances of children and young people at risk. An agreement had been signed between the central Government and local authorities that set out shared objectives and responsibilities for the delivery of better outcomes. Scotland had adopted a rights-based approach in its development of policy and legislation relating to children. The Children's Rights Team worked with the Scottish Commissioner for Children and Young People and other stakeholders to consider better ways of implementing the Convention in Scotland. Positive outcomes included the extension of access to continuing and higher education to children of asylum-seekers, and the abolition of remand in custody for children under the age of 16.

44. Scotland's Early Years Framework was based on the notion that the earliest years of life (defined as pre-birth to age 8) were crucial to a child's development and life chances. The Framework shifted the focus from service provision as the vehicle for delivering outcomes for

children and families to building their capacity to secure outcomes for themselves through the effective use of public services. The Early Years Framework recognized that children and families had a right to be valued and supported by the communities in which they lived and to play an active part in their community.

45. Mr. KAVANAGH (United Kingdom) said that the Northern Ireland Human Rights Commission had been tasked by the Secretary of State for Northern Ireland to examine the scope for defining a bill of rights for Northern Ireland. If adopted, the bill of rights would be enacted under the United Kingdom's domestic legislation. To assist in that process, the Government had established a bill of rights forum composed of politicians and community representatives whose objective was to make recommendations to the Commission. The Commission was expected to submit suggestions on the content of the bill of rights to the Secretary of State on 10 December 2008.

46. Ms. JACKSON (United Kingdom) said that there were no immediate or specific plans to incorporate the Convention into the United Kingdom's domestic law as a result of considering a bill of rights for Northern Ireland. The central Government and the devolved administrations were still in the process of discussing the possible contents of a bill of rights, which would be subject to a broad consultative process. Clearly, any such instrument must address children and families, and the Government was examining ways in which it might draw on the principles and provisions contained in the Convention.

47. Ms. CHISHOLM (United Kingdom) said that, in 2004, the National Assembly for Wales had decided to adopt a rights-based approach in all its work with children and young people and had made steady progress in implementing it. A group of young people had recently spoken to the Cabinet Committee on Children and Young People, and Cabinet ministers were keen to ensure that Wales responded positively to young people's comments and observations. Wales had been the first United Kingdom nation to appoint a children's commissioner. It had also established Funky Dragon (the Children and Youth Assembly for Wales) whose members met regularly with ministers to raise concerns and discuss issues. Funky Dragon was a sustainable model and its members were gaining confidence as spokespersons for children and young people throughout Wales.

48. The Rights to Action agenda, established in 2004, provided that children and young people should be seen as citizens with rights and opinions to be taken into account. At the local level, there were 22 multi-agency children's partnerships, which had just produced their first three-year plan of action. Although Wales still had a long way to go, it was committed to working with its NGO community and with children and young people to achieve its goals.

49. Ms. JACKSON (United Kingdom) said that, although the Children's Plan was an important component of the United Kingdom's overall efforts to implement the Convention, it was not a nationwide plan of action. As a State party to the Convention, the challenge for the United Kingdom was to maintain constant communication with all devolved administrations in order to monitor progress in implementing the Convention. To that end, good working arrangements among the devolved administrations had been established, and a series of indicators of children's well-being had been devised for the United Kingdom. England had

developed a set of national priorities that addressed a whole range of issues affecting children, including health, safety, education and poverty. At the local level, a standard set of indicators had been developed.

50. In 2008, the Government had increased its expenditure on education, health and social assistance to combat child poverty. Although the effects of that expenditure at the local level was less obvious, the use of national indicators was expected to make it easier to monitor local outcomes.

51. The central Government was making efforts to raise awareness concerning the Convention, which had been embedded in the Children's Plan. Although the Convention was not an explicit part of the national curriculum, teaching materials on the Convention were available for teachers to use in incorporating children's rights in citizenship curricula. Human rights training, and training in the Convention in particular, was available to a wide range of professionals who worked with children. In England, the Children's Workforce Development Council had developed a common core of skills and knowledge for the child-oriented workforce in England. Judicial personnel were responsible for keeping abreast of the latest developments in legislation, including legislation relating to children.

52. Ms. SMITH asked whether all police staff were aware of the Convention and understood its provisions.

53. THE CHAIRPERSON asked whether it was wise for the Government to assume that all judicial personnel possessed the same level of knowledge about the Convention.

54. Ms. JACKSON (United Kingdom) said that legal practitioners were a highly esteemed professional body that adhered to a strict set of standards. While precise degrees of knowledge might vary from one practitioner to another, she was confident that members of the legal profession would consider it a matter of principle to be informed about the Convention. The central Government was in the process of developing a programme to raise awareness of the Convention among other professionals and staff working with children.

55. Mr. JEFFERY (United Kingdom) said that, when working with children, police staff were regarded as part of the child-oriented workforce and were keen to adopt the same set of understandings as other professionals who worked with children.

56. Ms. CHISHOLM (United Kingdom) said that Wales acknowledged that little progress had been made in implementing article 42 of the Convention. Funky Dragon reports had revealed that only 8 per cent of children and young people questioned in Wales actually knew about the Convention. Consequently, a number of plans had been developed to raise awareness among children and young people. Steps were being taken in schools to ensure that curricula contained consistent information about the Convention and that schools were being operated in compliance with its principles.

57. Among the general workforce, there was a regrettable lack of training opportunities for professionals who might otherwise be expected to be familiar with the Convention. The workforce development strategy that would enter into force in coming months consisted of a

common core of knowledge that included the Convention and the Optional Protocols and other relevant instruments. The strategy would target persons preparing for professions - including the police force - that involved contact with children and young people.

58. Mr. FILALI asked what accounted for the fact that awareness of the Convention in Scotland was reportedly as high as 44 per cent, while in Wales and England it was only 8 and 13 per cent, respectively.

59. Mr. MacLEAN (United Kingdom) said that that question would be studied in due course and the findings would be shared with colleagues in the other devolved administrations.

60. Ms. JACKSON (United Kingdom) said that, in the United Kingdom, efforts had been made to involve children and young people in consultations on all strategies that affected them. For example, consultations with young people living in care had contributed to the formulation of proposals for relevant legislation. The principle of participation had also been applied to legislation at the local level. The Children Act 2004 required local authorities to consult children and young people in developing strategic local plans. The Education and Inspections Act 2006 required local authorities to take steps to ascertain the views of young people in their area regarding existing positive activity provision. Funding had been provided to develop an online gateway linking persons who worked with children and young people to a network that focused on the effective involvement of young people, and also to a set of training tools based on the Convention to increase the participation of young people in decision-making.

61. Ms. CHISHOLM (United Kingdom) described various activities designed to ensure and promote the participation of young people and children in Wales, including Funky Dragon (the Children and Young People's Assembly for Wales), a body that was exerting growing influence on the Welsh Assembly Government's policy on issues affecting young people and children. Within the Welsh Assembly Government, an internal participation project sought to promote a participatory approach to policy development, review, delivery and evaluation. Children contributed to the work of the Assembly in various ways.

62. Since 2005, primary, secondary and special schools were required by law to have a school council in order to promote participation. Support was given to the Children and Young People's Participation Consortium for Wales and its Participation Unit. The Consortium, a network of national organizations working together to promote article 12 of the Convention, had produced a set of standards to promote genuine participation and planned to develop a system whereby children could evaluate organizations. Further work was needed to develop a Welsh national participation strategy with a firmer legislative basis and sustainable funding, to mainstream participation and to increase work with children under 10.

63. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee was interested in hearing about children's participation in criminal procedures and the weight given to their views in that context.

64. Mr. PARFITT asked how children's voices were heard, not only in criminal procedures but also in civil matters, such as when they were placed in care.

65. Ms. STEWART (United Kingdom) said that the court process for children was designed to ensure their participation and understanding. For example, children involved in proceedings where antisocial behaviour orders were imposed had the right to be heard. Before an order was issued, the child would discuss his or her behaviour with child offender teams and explore the reasons for it as well as its consequences. The child also had the right to be present and represented in court and have any prohibitions explained in court.

66. Mr. KAVANAGH (United Kingdom) said that, in Northern Ireland, the juvenile justice system gave young people an opportunity to explain their involvement in an offence, listen to the victims, and develop a plan that met their specific needs; such conferences took place before the case was brought before a court. Research indicated that participants and their parents found the conferences beneficial and welcomed the opportunity to provide explanations and discuss positive change.

67. Ms. SMITH (Country Rapporteur) said that corporal punishment was a core issue for children's rights and that respect for children's dignity and physical and psychological integrity was essential. Children needed special protection, and corporal punishment should therefore be prohibited. She wished to know when the State party would introduce a complete ban on corporal punishment, including within the family. The infliction of pain on children in detention through thumb and rib distraction techniques was painful and could cause injury, and she asked when that practice would be prohibited. Moreover, she wished to know whether the Counter-Terrorism Bill 2007-2008, which had harsh rules on detention, was applicable to children over 10 years of age. With regard to juvenile justice, she asked whether the State party planned to raise the age of criminal responsibility in England and Scotland in the near future.

68. The Committee preferred rehabilitative measures to punitive measures and believed that juvenile justice should be closer to the child welfare system than to adult criminal justice. In that context, she asked whether juvenile justice might be devolved to Wales in order to enable it to develop a holistic approach. The delegation should comment on the use of tasers, in view of the concerns raised by the Northern Ireland Policing Board on that issue. She also asked whether plastic bullets and batons were still used for riot control.

69. With regard to education, she asked how many parents had been imprisoned for their children's truancy, and questioned the effectiveness of doing so or fining children for truancy. She suggested that investment in home schooling could represent a more effective solution. She asked whether Funky Dragon had sustainable funding for the future.

70. Mr. FILALI (Alternate Country Rapporteur) asked whether any studies had been conducted on the use of physical restraint in institutions for young offenders, since that practice had led to injury and death in some cases. Although the State party had emphasized its commitment to protecting children, in 2007 the Government had introduced a regulation extending the circumstances under which painful distraction techniques could be used, without consultation, on children in detention centres in order to maintain order and discipline. He requested information on measures taken on the basis of the views solicited from communities, parents and children on the right to leisure.

71. He asked whether disparities existed between national decisions on matters relating to immigration and asylum and those of the devolved administrations. No data had been provided on the number of child asylum-seekers or on the prosecution of asylum-seekers over 10 years of age. The State party should explain the difference in approaches to juvenile justice in the different regions. In particular, he wished to know whether justice could be devolved in all regions, and whether devolution might lead to the generalization of the social welfare approach that had emerged in Scotland. The Committee remained concerned about the age of criminal responsibility. He asked how, under certain circumstances, a 10-year-old could be charged with a serious crime and tried as an adult.

72. Mr. KRAPPMANN asked the State party to comment on complaints that the school curriculum had become utilitarian and dominated by tests. Although a high percentage of children enjoyed school, research indicated that constant testing created anxiety and pressure. He asked whether there was a plan to reduce the number of tests. He requested information on measures to prevent bullying and to promote positive social interaction in schools.

73. Since children from disadvantaged groups were more often excluded from school than other children, he asked whether the State party used social work to counter that problem. The State party should explain whether children who were unable to attend school received an education comparable to that of their peers. He requested information on measures planned by the Government to eliminate disparities in academic achievements related to social background and asked whether the Government intended to raise the age of compulsory education to 18.

74. There had been rapid growth in the foundation of academies in the State party that were not subject to the Education Act. He asked whether the activities of those academies were monitored and whether the academies observed children's rights. The State party should indicate whether schools actually listened to children's views on all academic and social matters affecting them.

75. Mr. PARFITT asked whether poverty was one of the reasons that children were placed in care. He wished to know what the Government was doing to ensure that children were not placed in care for that reason alone. Although it was commendable that advocacy services focused on the best interests of the child, he asked why only a quarter of children interviewed considered social work and legal assistance to be helpful. He wished to know how effective the automatic enforcement of maintenance orders had been and whether women were allowed to keep some of their maintenance payments while on welfare. He asked what the State party was doing to ensure that children taken into care could be returned to their parents and that children in care lived a fulfilling life when they left. The report mentioned the need for a plan for each child in care, with independent review officers assigned to consider and review those plans periodically on an individual basis. He wished to know whether such measures were being carried out. He requested information on remedies available to children who were not satisfied with the care that they received, and where they could lodge complaints. Perhaps the independent review officers could be authorized to receive complaints.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.