



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
31 July 2013
English
Original: French

Committee on the Rights of the Child Fortieth session

Summary record of the 1077th meeting

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

Chairperson: Mr. Doek

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Third periodic report of the Russian Federation (continued)

This record is subject to correction.

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

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

The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (agenda item 4) (*continued*)

Third periodic report of the Russian Federation (HRI/CORE/1/Add.52/Rev.1, CRC/C/125/Add.5; list of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the third periodic report of the Russian Federation (CRC/C/Q/RUS/3); written replies by the Government of the Russian Federation concerning the list of issues (CRC/C/RESP/92)) (continued)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Russian Federation took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Filali** noted with satisfaction that the Government of the Russian Federation had adopted an ambitious programme of measures to combat child labour, but wondered about the effectiveness of the system put in place to implement that programme, since a large number of children had been found to be working in the Russian Federation, particularly in the informal sector.
3. Where refugees were concerned, there were now large numbers of children who lacked documents and thus social support. The authorities had apparently tried to solve the problem, but the procedures for regularizing undocumented individuals seemed very slow and it would be desirable to speed them up, in application of the principle of the best interests of the child. The delegation might also state whether unaccompanied and separated children could have an advocate, in the person of a family member, to help them regularize their situation.
4. Where displaced persons were concerned, it would be helpful to know whether it was true that Chechen children were refused registration at birth in Moscow and, if so, whether a child lacking a birth certificate could make use of the different social and other services. Further information on the schooling of undocumented children would also be desirable.
5. **Ms. Ouedraogo** noted that the number of young people aged 0 to 14 diagnosed as drug users and placed under observation had increased in the previous three years and wished to know whether the Russian authorities had carried out an assessment of their policies in that area and whether they were encountering problems in implementing their programmes. It would also be helpful to know how young people involved in drug trafficking were dealt with.
6. She asked whether the new "Russia's Children" programme took due account of the specific needs of minorities, particularly Roma, and of discrimination against them. She noted with concern that people in migrant populations from the countries neighbouring the Russian Federation were also victims of violence, discrimination and xenophobia and that their children did not benefit from all the basic social services they needed.
7. **Mr. Parfitt** asked whether children aged under 18, who were forbidden by law from doing military service or taking part in conflicts, could volunteer and whether there were military academies or cadet schools for them. On that subject, the delegation might say when the Russian Federation planned to ratify the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict.
8. **Mr. Zermatten** asked whether Parliament had passed the first Juvenile Justice Act, which Mr. Putin had approved in principle in February 2005. Noting that 21.4 per cent of convicted minors received a custodial sentence, an extremely high proportion by the standards of countries that had equipped themselves with juvenile courts, he wished to know whether the Russian Federation meant to take measures to ensure that pretrial

detention was treated as the exceptional measure it was supposed to be, since in principle it was only authorized for serious crimes but it tended in practice to be used quite systematically.

9. He was concerned about the failure to hold minors separately from adults and about the geographical remoteness of detention facilities, which prevented many minors, and particularly girls, from keeping up contact with their families.

10. He wished to have further details about the number of Chechen minors held for committing criminal acts and about where and under what conditions they were being held.

11. Lastly, he inquired whether the system for dealing with minors who had not received a custodial sentence was effective or not, as it seemed that those children were ignored by social services and did not benefit from individual monitoring.

12. **Mr. Siddiqui** wished to know what lay behind the recent rise in illiteracy, particularly among girls, and what measures the Government meant to take to improve the quality of teaching in public-sector establishments. He desired to know whether criticisms of vocational education were well founded and, if so, how the State party planned to remedy those problems.

13. He asked whether the Government had set a precise timetable for meeting the education and reintegration needs of street children, bearing in mind the factors underlying the increase in the number of such children.

14. **The Chairperson**, noting that over a million minors suspected of having committed an offence had been arrested and taken to police stations in 2004, while the official number of juvenile delinquents had risen to 150,000, asked what had become of the other children, 300,000 of them aged under 14, and in particular whether they had been released for lack of evidence or because their offences were minor. He also asked why the number of fines levied on minors had increased substantially, from 0.6 per cent of the total in 2001 to 8.2 per cent in 2004.

15. **Ms. Gordeeva** (Russian Federation) said that a national prevention programme designed to assist children and families had been in operation for 10 years thanks to a network of local social organizations. It was financed out of the federal budget as part of the "Russia's Children" programme and by the different constituent entities of the Federation. There were currently 3,500 centres — as against a hundred or so a few years previously — providing personalized assistance, including psychological and social assistance, to children and their families. The programme received aid from international organizations, including the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and from the European Union.

16. **Mr. Golubovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that there were currently 92 centres where juvenile delinquents were placed in solitary confinement. Those institutions needed to be reorganized and the Government had doubled the budget assigned for the purpose. The Ministry of Health, in collaboration with the Ministry of Internal Affairs, had authorized the creation of additional positions, particularly in the teaching and training area, and those had already been filled. The Ministry of Internal Affairs had prepared and submitted to the Ministry of Justice a number of proposals relating to violence in those institutions, which 1,600 inspectors, including psychologists, social workers, educators and police officers, were already working with.

17. Measures of the same kind should also make it possible to forestall any increase in the number of offences committed by adolescents at schools. Conferences on education and psychology were also being held with the support of the police.

18. There was no evidence of any discrimination between different nationalities. Roma who forced minors to work as prostitutes or sell drugs were arrested not because of their nationality but because of the seriousness of the criminal offences committed. Since the age of criminal responsibility was set at 14, younger children were not arrested and criminals took advantage of that to exploit them.

19. Children who were not nationals of the Russian Federation were registered wherever their parents lived. If they had no parents, social welfare agencies were responsible for them and they had the same rights as others. They were given the papers they needed to attend school and use the health-care system.

20. In 2004, 5,000 violent offences against minors were recorded, 2,000 of them of a sexual nature. Some isolated cases of trafficking and sale of minors had been identified. Organizations that arranged for international adoption were subject to rigorous oversight measures which the Government had put in place to ensure that the files of all adopted children were available and transparent, and no infringements had been detected.

21. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** asked what measures had been taken to educate the police in children's rights and the attitude to take towards children, particularly on a psychological level.

22. **Mr. Filali**, noting that the many measures taken to halt the rise in the number of offences committed by adults against minors had not yielded the results expected, asked what was lacking to make them effective.

23. **The Chairperson** asked whether the figures for violence against adolescents included domestic violence and encompassed all forms of violence against minors, and whether cases were dealt with differently depending on whether the perpetrator was a member of the child's family or not.

24. **Mr. Parfitt** asked whether an ombudsman's service or other human rights protection agency exercised independent oversight of institutions for minors.

25. **Mr. Golubovskiy** (Russian Federation) said that 15,000 police officers were working with families and schools to protect children and ensure that minor problems did not turn into crimes. The rise in juvenile delinquency was partly due to more rigorous recording of all criminal acts. The increase that year had been a modest 4 per cent.

26. Violence against minors was punished in the same way whether committed within or outside the family, with the courts having the power only to consider any mitigating or aggravating circumstances.

27. **Ms. Berezina** (Russian Federation) said that children were acquainted with the provisions of the Convention and of human rights at primary school, with the help of a handbook entitled "Your Rights", and then throughout their schooling, where courses on the subject were mandatory. Teachers also took specialized courses as part of their initial and ongoing training. Children were provided with supplementary training through the intermediary of social and youth organizations. In 2003, a videoconference on children's rights in the twenty-first century had been followed by children from all regions in Russia and department heads from all the federal ministries, with the children having the opportunity to ask questions about different subject areas.

28. Far from increasing, illiteracy was in significant decline, since, according to official data, the proportion of illiterate people aged 10 and over had dropped from 1.9 per cent in 1989 to 0.5 per cent in 2002. The Government had adopted priority guidelines for educational development up to 2010 that provided for the preparation and integration of general education standards and the implementation of an accessible, high-quality

education system. There was also a programme that used play to prepare preschool children for their first year at school.

29. Over 10 million schoolchildren were following free supplementary courses in areas such as the arts and sport. Because the 18,000 centres currently existing were not enough to meet demand, there were plans to set up new ones and expand the range of activities on offer.

30. The teaching provided at schools was tailored to individual pupils' needs and maturity level to prepare them for a choice of occupation that was right for them. A teaching quality control programme would be launched in 2007.

31. Eleven kindergartens and seven schools had been set up in the Chechen Republic during the 2004–2005 school year. In the Russian Federation, teaching was carried out in 30 different languages.

32. The education budget represented 3.5 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2004 and was constantly rising. The additional appropriations for education should allow all children to benefit from a high-quality education.

33. There were eight categories of specialist establishments that catered to disabled children aged 7 to 17. The Russian Federation had signed the Salamanca Declaration in 1994 and the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 and was making rapid progress towards integrating disabled children into the ordinary school system. It was essential for disabilities to be diagnosed as early as possible to give children the best chance of fulfilling their potential.

34. Schools sought to nurture pupils' autonomy, which meant that the latter were encouraged to express their views and participate actively in school life. School boards included pupil representatives.

35. The Government was aware that a great many children treated as orphans actually had parents and social measures needed to be taken to combat the phenomenon. Children were placed in foster homes and families or, in some regions, in children's villages. There was a database of all children deprived of family protection.

36. **Mr. Krappmann** asked whether there were any plans to abolish school fees.

37. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** expressed gratification about the decline in illiteracy but noted with concern that the proportion of girls among the illiterate appeared to be on the rise.

38. On the subject of school fees, it would be helpful to know whether a family on an average income with three children could afford to give those children a good education and buy them all the materials they needed. Lastly, further information about the autonomy enjoyed by children at school would be appreciated.

39. **The Chairperson** expressed concern about the very large number of disabled children placed in boarding schools.

40. **Ms. Berezina** (Russian Federation) said that public-sector schools were free and that only optional classes, such as those designed to develop children's creative capacities, were charged for. It should also be mentioned that because of terrorist threats, many parents were willing to pay firms to provide security at schools. Schools asked parents to contribute towards the cost of building maintenance work, even though that was theoretically forbidden.

41. Many parents were unable to send their children to school because they could not afford to buy the necessary textbooks and materials. Schools had a special budget for assisting such families. The municipal authorities could also allocate subsidies.

42. The statistics did not show any inequalities between girls and boys when it came to illiteracy. On the contrary, girls often outperformed boys.
43. Pupils could contact the school administration about anything relating to their education or school life, either directly or through the student council.
44. **Ms. Lee** expressed surprise that pupils' parents should be obliged to pay for school security and upkeep and that compulsory education was not completely free. She noted that the rise in the number of disabled pupils placed in special classes seemed to contradict the efforts the Government intended to make to integrate disabled children into general education. She found it regrettable that nursery schools refused to accept disabled children.
45. **Ms. Berezina** (Russian Federation) said that education was completely free. Parents could not be forced to pay for security or upkeep services. She admitted that general education establishments did not currently have the resources or equipment they needed to cater to disabled children. Special institutions were much better placed to provide such children with a high-quality education while taking their disabilities into account.
46. **Ms. Fraltsova** (Russian Federation) said that a bill providing for new methods of teaching for disabled children would be brought before Parliament in October. Among other things, the bill provided for each child to be given the opportunity of receiving a dozen hours of teaching at home each week free of charge.
47. A recent study of some 9,000 teachers and 50,000 children at schools in the country's small republics had shown that there was no difference in education quality between general education establishments in the public and private sectors. The relevant legislation laid down strict criteria for approving primary and secondary schools, particularly where school curricula and teaching methods were concerned.
48. The State had been investing heavily over the previous five years to modernize public-sector education and teaching methods, working among other things to computerize schools, develop mobile school libraries and increase the quantity and variety of teaching materials. Thanks to the budgetary appropriations earmarked for the "Russia's Children" programme for 2006, some 10,000 additional schools should be able to equip themselves with a website. Those different measures showed the importance the Russian Federation attached to modernizing its education system and bringing it into line with those of other European countries.
49. **Ms. Ortiz** wished to know the identity of the central authority responsible for adoption matters in the State party, the role played by the Ministry of Education in that area, the technical arrangements and criteria for adoption, the exact procedure that had to be followed to obtain a declaration of eligibility for adoption and the Government's plans concerning ratification of the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Co-operation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption.
50. On that subject, it was reasonable to wonder whether the dissemination of data on children deprived of family protection for public information purposes was a sufficient guarantee against the illicit transfer and trafficking of children and whether the competent authorities really were doing everything they could to ensure that economic interests did not prevail over the law.
51. **Ms. Fraltsova** (Russian Federation) explained that, apart from the cost of travel and some administration charges, in particular for translation, adoption was free in the Russian Federation and had no connection with any kind of trafficking or trade in children. Different forms of oversight had been put in place.
52. In 2004, the Family Code had been amended to simplify the adoption procedure. The proposed amendments had dealt, among other things, with the number of square metres

of living space an adoptive family had to have available, the age of the children to be adopted and an extension of the time limits for registering children deprived of family protection in the official database with a view to informing the public and promoting adoption within the country. Any adoption application had to be ruled on by the courts. The directors of children's homes or heads of boarding schools had no prerogative in the matter and were only called upon, in the same way as doctors, to provide the requisite documents for the case file.

53. Ratification of the Hague Convention was a topical issue that had been considered at length by the Parliament and Government. The Russian authorities had nonetheless arrived at the conclusion that the best course for the time being was to amend the country's own legislation and harmonize the procedures applied within the framework of specific bilateral agreements. Currently, for example, there was still a requirement of confidentiality for the adoption of Russian children, and abolishing that protective provision was not on the agenda. In accordance with that principle, Russian adoptive families did not receive any financial assistance. Conversely, a child's guardians received a monthly indemnity which was due to be revised upward in the near future.

54. **Ms. Khattab** asked whether there were any plans to unify the country's hundred or so emergency telephone numbers for children into a single three-digit emergency number operating around the clock.

55. **Ms. Sharapova** (Russian Federation) replied that children in distress had had access since 2004 to several emergency numbers and "confidential" helplines set up at the federal and national level and operating for the most part around the clock, including those of the interior, education and health ministries.

56. The current national health-care priorities of the Russian Government, announced some weeks previously, essentially concerned children's health and health education. Regrettably, children's health was deteriorating in the Russian Federation. At the time of the international World Health Organization International Conference on Primary Health Care, held in Alma-Ata in 1978, the Soviet health system, one of whose founding principles was non-payment at the point of use, featured among the world's best. Currently, budgetary appropriations for health care represented no more than 2.5 per cent of GDP and many services and types of care were now charged for. Nonetheless, medical care and follow-up — including both primary health care and specialist care — remained free for children, irrespective of national origin or status (migrant, refugee, etc.).

57. As part of its project to modernize the health system, the Government had decided to solve the problem of understaffing by tripling the number of doctors and care staff working at paediatric centres by January 2006, greatly increase the number of general practitioners' services and practices and give children greater access to the latest medical technologies. Six highly specialized medical centres with leading-edge equipment, dedicated mainly to children, would be built by the end of 2006.

58. A number of measures had been taken to deal with the rising incidence of sickness among school-age children: canteens had been set up in schools to serve hot meals to pupils, a specific item for children's diet had been created in the federal budget, a bill on the sale of iodized salt and iodine supplementation for various food products was currently being considered by Parliament, infirmaries and care services were being reintroduced in schools, and education curricula now had to be approved by the Institute of Hygiene and Youth Healthcare, which evaluated the degree of stress they represented for growing children. For example, the teaching day was currently limited to about five hours for a child of 10, as against seven for a child of 15.

59. Child obesity and overeating were not a problem in the Russian Federation. The trend was rather the opposite. Children were increasingly subject to stress and, in some

regions, lacked basic essentials, which explained why 10 per cent of conscripts were underweight.

60. The large number of early pregnancies was a matter of concern to the Government, which was deploying numerous information and prevention activities: family planning centres, specialist gynaecology services and information centres for young people had been set up throughout the country, educational establishments were holding conferences with reproductive health-care professionals and a variety of events had been instituted. World Health Day on 7 April had been held that year with the support of UNICEF and other organizations concerned with children's rights, and the theme had been maternal and infant health. That "telethon" had brought together and mobilized over 50,000 children and teachers, care staff, sportsmen and -women, artists and politicians, and a live 12-hour teleconference had been held between Vladivostok and Saint Petersburg. All those efforts seemed to be gradually bearing fruit, as the number of teenage pregnancies was down slightly.

61. One of the most serious of the country's current problems was the spread of HIV/AIDS. At that time, 40 per cent of seropositive people were women of child-bearing age and 15 per cent of women of marriageable age were infected. Some 12,000 seropositive children had been recorded in 2004, but the figures were believed to be underestimates, as schools did not carry out screening. Orphaned children with AIDS who had been abandoned by their mothers were taken into care homes and monitored by paediatric hospitals, mainly in Saint Petersburg, Irkutsk, Magadan and Sochi. Five children suffering from AIDS had been adopted in the previous three years, which was indicative of a progressive shift in mindsets in the country.

62. Since 2003, the Government had had access to various sources of financing (the federal budget, an AIDS prevention programme, contributions from a global fund) that had enabled it to make antiretroviral medications available to pregnant women and children who were seropositive or at a more advanced stage of the illness. The Ministry of Finance had been instructed the previous week to include an AIDS treatment item in the 2006 budget, and that should allow care to be provided to 25 per cent of sufferers.

63. The prevalence of tuberculosis among children was also rising sharply. A prevention programme had been adopted and an anti-tuberculosis programme had been put in place in hospitals, which now had the full array of medications needed to treat the disease. Children were thus better cared for now and there was increased and ongoing monitoring, particularly in schools; they could be vaccinated at any of 3,500 paediatric centres. Measures had also been taken to help the most vulnerable families, namely poor families and those affected by alcoholism or drug abuse, to secure decent living conditions.

64. **Ms. Al-Thani** wished to know whether there were programmes to help drug-using mothers suffering from AIDS so that they did not abandon their children and the latter did not have to spend the first months or even year of their lives in hospital.

65. **Mr. Liwski** asked whether the State party had considered increasing the share of GDP allocated to health.

66. **Ms. Sharapova** (Russian Federation) said that her country currently spent 4.5 per cent of GDP on health, as against 2.8 per cent five years before. Besides the construction of new hospitals, the plan was to increase the pay of health-care personnel, train more general practitioners and set up new specialist health-care centres so that more children could benefit from medical progress.

67. Children born to mothers suffering from AIDS were not currently hospitalized with their mothers for any longer than necessary to determine whether they themselves were seropositive, which took three to four months. During that period the mother received free

care, including treatment for any opportunistic diseases she might contract. If the child was also seropositive an allowance of 1,000 roubles a month was paid to the family. In cases where children had been infected not by their mothers but because of a medical procedure, an indemnity was paid to the family in the form of a pension.

68. The Russian Federation was experiencing a disturbing upsurge in drug abuse, as the number of drug users had increased by a factor of 15 between 1985 and 2000. To combat that scourge, services providing psychological and medical care to young drug users had been set up across the country in 2000 and doctors visited schools to provide young people with information and in some cases identify those who were at risk of becoming drug users or had already fallen victim to drugs. The policy had apparently borne fruit, as the situation seemed to have improved since 2000.

69. In view of the severe climate and geographical isolation affecting the children of peoples in the north, and the low level of social development in many northern territories, special measures were being taken to improve those peoples' access to education services and high-quality health care. As part of the targeted federal programme "Economic and social development of indigenous minorities of the north up to the year 2011", assistance was being provided to the children of indigenous peoples in the north via the building of schools and kindergartens and the refurbishment of children's homes. All regions of the north currently had their own targeted regional programmes to finance children's homes and health care, and to provide assistance for children in difficulty.

70. There were 3,000 homeless adolescents and about 8,000 displaced minors in Russia. Until 2004, those young people, like the children of refugees, had only had access to emergency medical services and could not consult specialists. A law had accordingly been passed in 2004 to remedy that situation and everyone could now benefit from health services in the district where they were registered, without having to produce a birth certificate.

71. **Mr. Zatonskiy** (Russian Federation) said that Russia was currently working to develop a juvenile justice system and set up juvenile courts. Russia was also trying to make the criminal justice system more humane, not least by revising the federal Criminal Procedure Code and the federal Penal Enforcement Code. Aware that the average length of incarceration of minors in custodial establishments — four years — was far too long, in 2004 the competent authorities had remitted numerous sentences, with the result that the number of minors in educational labour colonies had been cut by half. It should be pointed out that under article 80 of the federal Penal Enforcement Code, minors and adults given custodial sentences had to be held in separate cells, other than in exceptional cases. As regarded juvenile delinquents of Chechen origin, they were convicted not because of their nationality but because they had committed offences, and their conditions of detention were identical to those of the rest of the prison population.

72. **Mr. Vulf** (Russian Federation) said that the Russian Federation was participating actively in the preparation of the Comprehensive and Integral International Convention on Protection and Promotion of the Rights and Dignity of Persons with Disabilities that was currently being considered by the General Assembly in New York, while at the national level it had put in place rehabilitation programmes for disabled people, including children, one element of which was the publication of books in Braille.

73. The federal media law had established a legal framework whose purpose was to prevent children from having access to material and information of a violent or pornographic character that might impair their development, but it only applied to organizations domiciled in the Russian Federation and falling under the jurisdiction of the Russian courts. To protect minors against material of that kind, the Ministry of Culture had set up a committee of experts with responsibility for monitoring television programmes

with a view to formulating recommendations for television broadcasters. On that subject, it was a matter for satisfaction that the directors of the major Russian broadcasters had voluntarily signed a charter in which they had undertaken not to broadcast information likely to impair the development of the new generation.

74. The age of sexual consent had been set at 16 after a nationwide consultation process which had aroused vigorous debate. That was the age recommended by experts at the Council of Europe, and matched the age set in many other countries.

75. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** expressed satisfaction at the constructive dialogue the Committee had held with the delegation of the Russian Federation and explained that the concluding observations would deal with the positive points and subjects of concern that had come up throughout the process of considering the third periodic report.

76. **Ms. Sharapova** (Russian Federation) assured the Committee members that all necessary attention would be paid to the recommendations of the Committee and that her country would pursue the implementation of children's rights with the same conviction.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.