



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
14 June 2011

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Fifty-seventh session

Summary record of the 1619th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 1 June 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Zermatten

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Second and third periodic reports of Bahrain (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 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)

Second and third periodic reports of Bahrain (continued) (CRC/C/BHR/2-3; CRC/C/BHR/Q/2-3; CRC/C/BHR/Q/2-3/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Bahrain took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Wijemanne** commended the Government of Bahrain on having reduced both the mortality rate of children under the age of 5 and the maternal mortality rate, as well as on the strides it had made towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. However, she expressed concern at the prevalence of sickle-cell anaemia in the country and asked whether the policy of premarital testing was systematically applied and whether a positive diagnosis could act as a bar to marriage. Given the high incidence of mental disabilities in the country and the fact that a lack of iodine in the mother could cause mental retardation in the child, she asked why the utilization rate of iodized salt was so low and whether the Government had considered systematically iodizing salt.
3. Life skills education should seek not only to prevent adolescents from falling victim to substance and sexual abuse but also to inform them of the dangers of high-risk sexual behaviour. She asked whether the Government had developed any programmes to address that issue.
4. As to breastfeeding, she wished to know whether baby-friendly hospitals and special leave for breastfeeding were available to all mothers, whether infant formula was freely available and whether the advertising of such products was regulated.
5. **Mr. Gastaud** asked which courts were competent in cases where a child was the perpetrator or victim of a crime and whether the judges presiding over such courts dealt exclusively with cases involving children. He would like to know whether there was a criminal law, or at least provisions within a criminal law, that applied specifically to minors. He had been surprised to learn that running away from home was an offence and would be interested to know the criteria used to distinguish between serious and less serious offences. Finally, he wished to know what measures had been taken to reintegrate young offenders.
6. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that Shia extremist groups with links to terrorist groups such as Hizbullah had been behind the recent street demonstrations that had divided Bahraini society. The Government had never compiled statistics based on ethnicity, skin colour or religion and so any claims founded on such statistics were false. Similarly, claims that members of the Sunni community had attacked members of the Shia community were inaccurate and only underscored the need for information provided by non-governmental organizations and international organizations to be verified. Social media were often used to disseminate false information about Bahrain. In fact, children had been prevented from attending school and deprived of health care by extremist groups, and the Government had found the majority of the victims to be Sunni children and students. The rift between the Sunni and Shia branches of Islam remained a major obstacle to restoring national unity.
7. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** welcomed the positive developments that had taken place in Bahrain but said that the situation in the country remained a source of great concern. The Committee wished to know about the impact of the recent instability and violence on the country's children. In the context of the recent demonstrations, the Committee had received reports about the deaths of two children and would like to know if any more children had died and whether any children had been arrested in that context. The delegation might also wish to comment on reports about the ill-treatment and torture of children at the hands of

the security forces, on the life sentence allegedly handed down to a child by the Supreme Court and on the alleged involvement of the military courts in that case.

8. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the international media had provided biased coverage of the unrest in Bahrain, which had distorted the international community's perception of the situation. Furthermore, international human rights organizations had provided biased accounts of events by interviewing individuals based on whether they were Sunni or Shia. The political undercurrent of the demonstrations had been largely responsible for children becoming caught up in the ensuing violence. The regulations governing demonstrations had not been respected, with the result that children had been used as human shields. In view of its obligation to protect children under the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Government had intervened and declared a state of emergency. The state of emergency had since been lifted and the Government had set about strengthening the relevant legal framework so as to increase the protection afforded to children.

9. The Bahraini legal system stipulated that young offenders aged between 15 and 18 should be kept in special detention centres attached to police stations, while young offenders under the age of 15 were sent to juvenile centres overseen by the Ministry of Social Development. In Bahrain, it was impossible for children to receive life sentences. Special courts, judges and social workers were provided for offenders aged between 15 and 18. Furthermore, children continued to be supervised for preventive purposes after leaving State care.

10. **Mr. Abdulla** (Bahrain) said that while there were very few migrant workers in Bahrain, expatriates with temporary contracts accounted for a considerable percentage of the population. There was a national committee dedicated to combating trafficking in persons. While child labour was non-existent in his country, a programme had been developed in collaboration with the private sector to prevent the import of goods from companies that used child labour. Bahrain had been one of the first observers at the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and had developed a range of programmes to afford better protection to workers. A law to improve the situation of domestic workers had been submitted for consideration and would be enacted within the next three months. There was no domestic law preventing the families, in particular the children, of domestic workers from joining them. Bahraini private and public schools were open to all persons resident in Bahrain, regardless of their nationality or ethnic background.

11. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** (Country Rapporteur) requested clarification on the law giving children with Bahraini mothers and non-Bahraini fathers free access to education and health care. He wished to know whether the children of foreign nationals were required to pay fees that were not applicable to the children of Bahraini nationals. In the context of the law on domestic workers, he would be interested to learn the minimum age for undertaking that type of work. Finally, he asked how children could undertake domestic work at the age of 14 if education was compulsory until the age of 15.

12. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that all workers could avail themselves of Government health insurance by paying a set premium. The insurance covered all primary care while the cost of secondary and tertiary care was met by the Government. Domestic workers could consult a doctor for a nominal amount.

13. All expatriates and foreign nationals had to meet certain criteria before being allowed to enter the country: no person under the age of 18 could enter Bahrain as a domestic worker. Although the families of domestic workers had the right to join them, the children of those workers were prohibited from working. The children of domestic workers were entitled to free education at State schools, or else they could elect to attend one of the international schools.

14. A national committee was responsible for evaluating cases of trafficking in persons and for rehabilitating and, if necessary, repatriating victims of trafficking. However, no victims had come forward as yet. A small number of cases had been handled by the Ministry of the Interior and the police. Should a child be identified as a victim of trafficking, the State would provide him or her with all necessary care and support.

15. **Ms. Varmah** asked whether children born of a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini father had the same right to health care and education as other Bahraini children.

16. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that, in recent years, a number of measures, including a ministerial decree, had been adopted to ensure that children born of a non-Bahraini father, and who had inherited his nationality and were resident in the country, enjoyed the same access to education and health care as other Bahraini children. Furthermore, the Ministry of Social Development provided social protection to widowed or divorced Bahraini mothers.

17. **Ms. Al-Asmar** (Country Rapporteur) said that the State party's definition of trafficking in persons did not adequately protect children, as it apparently made no reference to trafficking for the purposes of early marriage or camel racing. Nor did it appear to make any reference to trafficking in organs or the exploitation of children in pornography or on the Internet. There was a danger that children could fall through the cracks of a definition if its scope was too narrow.

18. **Mr. Abdulla** (Bahrain) said that camel racing and trafficking in organs were in fact both covered by the law on trafficking in persons and that those concepts had been incorporated into all relevant domestic legislation. The law had been examined by legal institutions and had been given the green light by various international organizations prior to enactment.

19. He stressed that all children residing in Bahrain, irrespective of the nationality of their parents, had access to free education and health services.

20. **The Chairperson**, turning to the question of nationality, enquired about the situation of children born of a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini or unknown father and about the measures taken to ensure that those children did not end up stateless.

21. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that Bahraini law stipulated that children born of a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini father inherited the nationality of their father. In recent years, the Government had passed ministerial decrees aimed at ensuring that children born of Bahraini mothers were afforded the same treatment as other Bahraini children. Under the law on nationality, it was possible for a non-Bahraini father to apply for Bahraini nationality and subsequently transfer the nationality to his children. Furthermore, in recent years, the King had intervened to grant Bahraini nationality to the children of hundreds of Bahraini mothers.

22. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the purview of the Convention was limited to ensuring that children had access to a nationality and that international law recognized the competence of States parties to grant nationality in accordance with established criteria. However, the competence of the Bahraini legal system did not extend to granting the child of a Bahraini mother and a non-Bahraini father the latter's nationality. If the legal system of the father's home country denied the child the father's nationality, the child would be rendered stateless. The Committee was concerned with ensuring that the country's domestic legislation granted Bahraini nationality to children who were unable to inherit their father's nationality.

23. **The Chairperson** added that the same could be said of children born of a Bahraini mother but whose father was unknown.

24. **Ms. Varmah** asked what became of a child whose parents had divorced but who had not inherited the nationality of his or her father.

25. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that there were no stateless children in Bahrain. If a child was born and his or her parents were unknown, the child would be granted Bahraini nationality by default and would become the responsibility of the Ministry of Social Development. Adoption procedures could be instituted at a later date and all necessary documentation, including a passport, would be provided by the State. The Government was not in a position to grant Bahraini nationality to a child who was already a national of another country. In that case, procedures should be instituted in the child's home country with a view to fulfilling the requirements for acquiring Bahraini nationality.

26. **Mr. Al-Alawi** (Bahrain), replying to the questions on education, said that stereotyping in vocational training could be attributed to cultural background, as many families believed that certain vocations were gender-specific, rather than to a particular ministerial policy. However, there was always freedom of choice. In his country there were specialized schools offering a wide range of vocational training to female students. Vocational training was provided in specialized schools where curricula were tailored to the needs of the Bahraini labour market. There was also a higher institute for vocational training where students with a high-school diploma could undertake further studies and obtain a university degree.

27. Human rights concepts, including the rights of the child, had been incorporated into the curriculum at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels. Moreover, efforts had been made to organize extra-curricular activities aimed at fostering a better understanding of human rights concepts.

28. The Government had made the protection of the children caught up in the recent demonstrations one of its top priorities. It had focused its efforts on restoring national unity and raising awareness among students, especially in the wake of the violence that had broken out in schools as a result of the demonstrations. To that end, awareness-raising campaigns had been launched in collaboration with the Ministry of Social Development, the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

29. **The Chairperson** requested additional information on vocational training, given that it did not in fact constitute higher education. He wished to know how children could access a hands-on education that would allow them to ply a specific trade. Were there schools that offered vocational training to children who either could not or did not wish to pursue higher education?

30. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that there were academies offering vocational training at high-school level, as well as community colleges that awarded higher education diplomas. The Ministry of Labour invested millions of dollars each year in providing young people with the training they needed to access the labour market. Young people who had completed their education but who lacked the skills necessary for a given profession were retrained. Both young people in training and new graduates received unemployment benefits. Furthermore, schools ran programmes aimed at teaching students how to start their own business. The Government had allocated a budget to two microfinance banks and one major development bank in an attempt to stimulate entrepreneurship and to give young people access to the labour market.

31. **The Chairperson** enquired as to the nature of the preschool education available in Bahrain.

32. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the Ministry of Education was responsible for registering and monitoring day-care centres for children aged between 3 and 6, while the Ministry of Social Development administered nurseries for children aged between 1 and 3.

In view of the fact that day-care centres and nurseries represented the livelihood of many women in the private sector, the Government preferred preschool education to remain a private market. However, the Government was in the initial stages of developing a project aimed at establishing home nurseries whereby a woman could look after up to five children in her home. In addition to its administrative role, the Government provided training for the staff of nurseries and day-care centres and reviewed their training courses. It also subsidized preschool education for poor families, with the assistance of charities and support groups. In Bahrain, it was still customary for the extended family to live together under one roof, which could, to an extent, allow children to be cared for at home. The Government was contemplating the expansion of the welfare system so as to offer poor families free access to preschool education.

33. **The Chairperson**, noting that cost seemed to be the greatest impediment to accessing preschool education, asked whether the Government, as part of its new strategy, planned to make nurseries and day-care centres public or to keep preschool education in the private sector.

34. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the Government would give due consideration to the cost of preschool education in its new strategy, which would incorporate the Government's plan to expand the welfare system in order to offer free preschool education for the most impoverished families. However, it was preferable that the preschool education market remain private for the time being.

35. **Ms. Nores de García** asked whether there was a specific programme aimed at boosting the literacy level of the 17 per cent of women who were illiterate, given the correlation between the standard of living enjoyed by children and their mother's level of education.

36. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) queried that figure, as the literacy rate in her country stood at almost 100 per cent. She asked whether the statistics could be referring to the number of school dropouts.

37. **The Chairperson**, echoing the question posed by Mr. Cardona Llorens, asked why the State party had not harmonized the age limit for compulsory education, which currently stood at 15, and the minimum age for undertaking paid work, which currently stood at 14. He would be interested to know whether children dropped out of school at the age of 14 in order to undertake paid work.

38. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the minimum age for undertaking paid work had been established as 14 in accordance with International Labour Organization (ILO) labour standards.

39. **The Chairperson** said that the normal age for undertaking paid work was 15 and that setting it at 14 constituted an exception.

40. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that her country operated a unique system for monitoring the health of children throughout their childhood, and schoolchildren received comprehensive care. The Ministry of Health was working to develop a system for monitoring children at the preschool stage. As to teenage health, a national committee had been established for that age group, surveys had been conducted in collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) on adolescent health issues and efforts had been undertaken to provide teenager-friendly services. Furthermore, the countries of the Gulf Cooperation Council were working to develop a regional strategy on teenage health. The Ministry of Health had incorporated elements of reproductive health into the school curriculum and had appointed a nurse and a psychological counsellor in all schools.

41. **Ms. Sulaibeekh** (Bahrain) said that life skills courses had been introduced in schools four years previously. Citizenship education covered the subjects of human rights,

the rights of the child and women's rights from grades 1 to 12. In the light of recent events, the Government had sought the assistance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and international experts in an attempt to restore national unity and rebuild trust between students, teachers and parents.

42. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** asked whether the courses on life skills and reproductive health were the same for boys and girls.

43. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the courses were indeed the same for boys and girls. The Ministry of Social Development ran community centres and family counselling bureaux that catered to the needs of teenagers. Further life skills education was provided to both boys and girls through youth clubs held in those community centres.

44. A strong campaign mounted by the Ministry of Health to promote breastfeeding had achieved positive results. Furthermore, under current law, women were given a daily two-hour breastfeeding break for two years. The Ministry was closely monitoring the situation and had registered an increase in the incidence of breastfeeding. There would always be cases of mothers unable to breastfeed. However, breast-milk and other food substitutes were subject to strict national and regional control, including under Gulf Cooperation Council regulations and domestic legislation relating to the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes.

45. **Ms. Al-Asmar** said that she had read reports that the low exclusive breastfeeding rate in Bahrain was related to the lack of workplace childcare facilities. The time required to return home and go back to work made it difficult for women to breastfeed during working hours.

46. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that her Government had made efforts to encourage large private companies, organizations and Government offices to provide workplace day-care facilities. However, polls of women suggested that they were not in favour of such facilities. Most Bahraini women who could afford to do so hired nannies and preferred to leave their children at home rather than bring them with them to work.

47. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that mothers must not be blamed for using breast-milk substitutes, as companies ran advertising campaigns to convince mothers that their products were healthier than the mothers' own milk.

48. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that commercials for milk substitutes were rare in Bahrain. In addition, as the Koran stated that mothers should breastfeed their children for two years, many women considered breastfeeding a religious duty.

49. Turning to the question raised concerning sickle-cell anaemia, she said that a law had been enacted introducing mandatory premarital screening of common hereditary diseases. Every marriage contract currently stipulated that the relevant medical tests had been done. It was for the couple to decide on whether or not to marry after undergoing the tests. Nevertheless, the screening had reduced the incidence of sickle-cell anaemia dramatically.

50. Regarding nutrition, she said that all salt in Bahrain was iodized and all flour fortified with iron. Medicine and vitamins were dispensed free of charge at the health clinics run by the Ministry of Health. Preventive measures were also taken such as free regular checkups of healthy people and of adolescents at school to ensure that they remained healthy and fit.

51. **Mr. Kotrane** said that the State party's assertion that there were no children in Bahrain living or working on the streets was contradicted by paragraph 514 of the report, which set out the reasons for child labour in the country. He asked whether children caught begging were punishable under the Vagrancy Act mentioned in the report. He would also

appreciate further information on the scope of child labour and measures taken to tackle the problem.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.50 p.m.

52. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the juvenile justice system not only dealt with juvenile offenders but also provided for preventive measures for minors at risk of coming into conflict with the law, including counselling and family support. The system included juvenile courts and judges and special provisions for minors. The Penal Code, for example, was not fully applied against juvenile offenders. Responsibility for their rehabilitation had been transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Ministry of Social Development. In some, less serious cases, juvenile offenders were permitted to attend ordinary schools. Juvenile offenders received regular family visits and were afforded adequate health services.

53. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** enquired about the age at which a minor was punishable under criminal law. It was unclear whether the age at which a minor could be held criminally liable ranged from 15 to 18 or 7 to 18.

54. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the jurisdiction of the juvenile justice system extended only to minors aged under 15. However, delinquent minors aged between 15 and 18 were subject to special provisions not pertaining to adults, including separate places of detention and much lighter penalties than those imposed on adults. No children served life sentences. A bill currently pending would extend the jurisdiction of the juvenile courts to cover minors aged between 15 and 18.

55. **The Chairperson** enquired about the statutory age at which a delinquent child was subject to the jurisdiction of juvenile courts.

56. **Ms. Al Khalifa** (Bahrain) said that no criminal penalties were imposed on children under the age of 15. They were brought before civil courts for any criminal behaviour.

57. **Mr. Metwally** (Bahrain) said that any civil liability for the conduct of children aged under 7 was incurred by their parents or guardians. Juvenile delinquents aged between 15 and 18 handed custodial sentences were not placed with adults. There was no pretrial detention of children aged under 15. Civil law applied to minors until they reached the age of 15 and criminal law applied thereafter. Judges used their discretionary power to hand down lighter sentences against offenders aged between 15 and 18.

58. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that paragraph 102 of the report of the State party recognized the difficulties arising from the fact that persons between 15 and 18 years of age bore criminal responsibility. He reiterated his inquiry about the sentence imposed by the Supreme Court of 5 July 2010, which allegedly condemned a minor aged 17 to life imprisonment for his involvement in the murder of a police officer.

59. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the person convicted of the murder of a police officer had been born in 1991 and had been 19 years of age when he had committed the crime.

60. **The Chairperson** said that further details of the case were needed, particularly the exact date that the offence was committed and the convicted person's date of birth. Noting that criminal law was applied to minors aged 15 to 18 in Bahrain, he drew the State party's attention to article 37 of the Convention and general comment No. 10 of the Committee (CRC/C/GC/10). With regard to paragraph 514 of the report, setting out the reasons for child labour in Bahrain, he requested further information on factors such as the family environment.

61. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that the Government worked closely with non-governmental organizations to create a better family environment. Community centres sponsored by the Ministry of Social Development provided personal, family and marriage counselling. Couples wishing to divorce must first undergo counselling. Free legal advice was provided to both men and women. In many cases, the counselling had managed to stop divorces from going forward.
62. Bahrain had also instituted a foster care system to deal with neglected or abused children. The Government provided funding to foster families and was working to train staff for foster care programmes.
63. **The Chairperson**, noting that the interests of the child were not the same as those of their parents, enquired how children's interests were taken into account in cases of divorce and foster care.
64. **Ms. Al Khalifa** (Bahrain) said that children of parents in divorce proceedings were seen by a counsellor or a judge. Cases could also be referred to the Office of the Public Prosecutor, where counselling was also provided. House visits were made to protect the best interests of the children of divorced parents, and the child's views on where he or she preferred to stay were sought. Their progress in school was also monitored to determine whether they should be in the father's or mother's custody.
65. **Ms. Al-Shehail** said that the Government seemed to put emphasis on institutional rather than family care for children deprived of a family environment, including children of unknown parentage. Were efforts being made to find a substitute for institutional care? She referred to paragraph 353 of the report concerning the provision of alternative care to boys in foster care after they reached age 14. Information was lacking, however, on the fate of girls in such situations.
66. **Mr. Madi** said he understood that children were not heard in courts but rather by social workers and officials in the Office of the Public Prosecutor. Mothers had custody of boys up to the age of 7 and girls up to the age of 9. The children were then placed in the father's custody. He enquired what would happen if a boy expressed his wish to remain in his mother's custody.
67. **Ms. Al Jeeb** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain provided excellent services to children of unknown parentage, although there were very few cases of such children in Bahrain. There had been 140 children cared for by the Children's Home of the Ministry of Social Development since its establishment. The Government made every effort to ensure that the children were placed in foster families, and the children bore the names of the families. Furthermore, they were afforded the necessary psychological, health, educational and other services. There were currently 17 children living in the Boy's Home for children over 15 years of age. There were currently no girls over the age of 15 in the Children's Home, as girls were immediately taken into foster care or entered freely into marriage. When a boy turned 18, he was provided with an apartment, employment assistance and an allowance for meals. There were currently 14 young men living in such apartments who were well integrated into society. There was also a royal charity organization that cared for Bahraini orphans. Furthermore, unmarried women and unemployed men received social security allowances.
68. **Ms. Al-Shehail** asked what would happen if an orphaned girl were not taken into foster care before the age of 14. Was the lack of girls aged over 14 taken into foster care the result of cultural restrictions? She asked whether there were programmes to educate society to overcome any such restrictions so that it might be acceptable to take a girl over 14 years of age into a household for foster care.

69. **Ms. Al-Asmar** said that children who were given the names of the foster family might well wish to exercise their right to discover their family origin at a later date. Marrying girls at the age of 14 was a violation of international law. She enquired about the guarantees to ensure that orphaned girls received decent treatment by their husband and in-laws.

70. **The Chairperson** asked what exceptions were made for marrying a girl under the age of 15 and whether the fact of being an orphan could serve as a reason to marry. He also sought clarification of the meaning of *kafala*, or foster care. Did entrusting a girl to a family's care constitute *kafala*?

71. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain did not allow orphaned girls to marry at age 14. Since the founding of the Children's Home, all the girls staying there had been adopted almost immediately. It seemed that families preferred to take in girls. There were apartments for young women in the event that they needed to return to the Home. The foster care arrangements were aimed at getting children out of institutions. The apartments were centrally located and fully integrated into communities. There were no early marriages. Marriage was left to the discretion of the young women and their families. While there had been failed marriages among the girls who had left the care of the Home, there were also many success stories.

72. Turning to the question of children with disabilities, she said that Bahrain had signed the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and would soon ratify it. The Government had worked to integrate children with disabilities into regular schools. It also worked in partnership with and provided full funding to non-governmental organizations working in that field. It was drafting, in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), a strategy for persons with disabilities, and provided them with material assistance, employment and the necessary equipment. For example, every blind person had been given a personal computer.

73. In response to another question raised earlier, she said that there was no child labour in Bahrain. An exception was made for children over the age of 14 who were permitted to work during the summer holiday doing light jobs. The law against begging was meant to protect children against family members or groups who might wish to take advantage of them. Bahrain had been working with UNDP to reach the Millennium Development Goal of ending poverty. It had a strong pension system, unemployment insurance scheme and welfare system to get people out of poverty and it placed particular emphasis on support for poor families so that the children would not be needy, neglected or abused.

74. **Ms. Al-Asmar** said that the dialogue had been productive, frank and open, although some issues required further clarification. She looked forward in the next report to further information on the status of implementation of the Convention, more statistical details and a progress report on the relevant pending legislation.

75. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that the dialogue had been very fruitful indeed, as it had helped to clarify many of the doubts that the Committee had. The delegation had demonstrated the State party's clear determination to comply with the Convention. It had described many of the challenges facing the State party in ensuring that the Convention was implemented, some justified, others less so. More efforts might be made on coordination, the establishment of a national institution in accordance with the Paris Principles, the elaboration of a definition of the child and age restrictions for marriage, labour and criminal liability to ensure that the rights and best interests of children were ensured. There was a need for Bahrain, in keeping with the spirit of the Convention, to consider children as holders of rights and not just as an object of protection. While Bahrain had made great strides in protecting children, it must endeavour to empower children by increasing their awareness of their rights.

76. **Ms. Al Balooshi** (Bahrain) said that Bahrain would always honour human rights, including the rights of children, and that her delegation would return to Bahrain with many new and useful ideas.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.