



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
22 January 2013

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Sixty-second session

Summary record of the 1761st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 16 January 2013, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Zermatten

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Second periodic report of the United States of America on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (continued)

Second periodic report of the United States of America on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (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 (continued)

Second periodic report of the United States of America on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (continued) (CRC/C/OPAC/USA/2; CRC/C/OPAC/USA/Q/2 and Add.1)

Second periodic report of the United States of America on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (continued) (CRC/C/OPSC/USA/2; CRC/C/OPSC/USA/Q/2 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the United States of America took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that the United States highly appreciated the value of the Committee's work and that its review of its reports prompted healthy reflection within the Government on ways to protect children. In its foreign policy the United States strongly supported efforts to protect children against involvement in armed conflict. It worked closely with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for children and armed conflict and had enacted legislation, including the Child Soldier Accountability Act and the Child Soldiers Prevention Act, to impose consequences on those who used child soldiers. It had also offered rewards with a view to bringing to justice those who, like Joseph Kony, illegally involved children in armed conflict. In all its military operations, the United States complied with the law of war. It did not target civilians, and when its military did have to deal with children who became involved in armed conflict it ensured the best possible treatment for them so as to prevent or mitigate the consequences and ensure their rehabilitation.

3. The question of whether the Government would submit the Convention on the Rights of the Child to Congress for ratification was eminently political. Many in the Obama Administration believed that it would be counterproductive to put forward a treaty for approval unless the likelihood of acceptance was very high. The incoming Secretary of State had previously chaired the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and would not fail to give due consideration to initiating the ratification procedure. The Government had no intention of withdrawing the understandings submitted by the United States in respect of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, as it considered that they did not constitute reservations and were not at variance with the instrument, their purpose being solely to define the measures to be taken to ensure that members of the armed forces under the age of 18 did not take part in hostilities. While the Government did not consider that armed groups existed in the United States in the sense used in article 4, it considered insurgent activities by non-governmental actors and the formation of certain types of insurgent groups to be criminal offences, even if such actions took place outside of the United States.

4. **Mr. Baer** (United States) said that the Child Soldier Accountability Act gave the United States jurisdiction for certain acts even if committed in other countries. While acts such as those committed by Mr. George Boley would now fall under the jurisdiction of the law, he himself could not be prosecuted under the Act because the crimes had been committed 10 years prior to its enactment. The Child Soldiers Prevention Act was an invaluable tool for United States diplomats working to eradicate the use of child soldiers throughout the world. In 2012 the Secretary of State had found that there had been credible reports of the use of child soldiers in seven countries, and full or partial waivers of restrictions had been issued in respect of four of them. The decision about whether to issue

waivers was made on an annual, country-by-country basis, the aim being to exert the maximum leverage on countries to take steps against the recruitment of children. The United States fought against the recruitment of child soldiers in other countries through its efforts to keep children enrolled in school and development work. The latter included activities aimed at building community support, including through school feeding programmes. It also supported reintegration programmes for child soldiers, for instance in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. While direct contact with non-State actors, by its very nature, raised difficulties, the United States coordinated its efforts closely with those of the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, which created action plans both with Governments and with non-State actors. It also supported independent organizations such as the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), which were known to have access to areas under the control of non-State actors.

5. Some 25 multinational companies that engaged security forces to protect their operations had accepted the voluntary principles on security and human rights, which provided guidance so as to ensure that recruitment was consistent with universal human rights standards. The legal approach to ensuring compliance with such standards relied on the inclusion of provisions in contracts stipulating performance expectations.

6. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked what the United States did to ensure that the Optional Protocols were observed both by foreign companies that did business with it and by companies that were headquartered or had majority shareholders in the United States.

7. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, noted that the relatively attractive wages paid by security companies, their operation in places where births were not systematically registered and the fact that it was often local subsidiaries that offered employment complicated efforts to counter the recruitment of minors. How did the United States establish jurisdiction and hold contractors accountable in such circumstances? Certain non-governmental organizations such as Geneva Call worked with non-State actors. Did the United States support such NGOs?

8. **Mr. Baer** (United States) said that foreign firms operating in the United States and United States companies were subject to domestic law. The cases that were most difficult to address involved contractors operating in unstable environments in other countries. In such cases, the most effective tool at the Government's disposal was the enforcement of contract stipulations that took up the provisions of the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers. The United States was now also working on the establishment of an effective oversight mechanism for the Code of Conduct. Transparency and information sharing were of particular importance in ensuring accountability in such contexts. The United States was engaged not only with ICRC, but also with NGOs that worked with non-State actors.

9. While the United States had no national curriculum, the Department of Education did provide technical assistance to local education authorities to help them draw up their own study plans. It thus encouraged school authorities to teach respect for the dignity of all. Teachers' continuous training programmes regularly addressed the protection of children. However, the main tool in the dissemination of children's and human rights was the protection of freedom of expression and association, which ensured that advocates of better laws and stronger protection could make their cases heard through the media and in advocacy groups. The widely viewed Internet video *Kony 2012*, for example, had raised awareness of the issue of the exploitation of child soldiers among tens of millions of people in the United States.

10. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that the United States had already adopted the Military Extraterritorial Jurisdiction Act and was considering the adoption of a similar law to cover

civilians. A large number of companies had endorsed the International Code of Conduct for Private Security Service Providers, which suggested that its standards would become still more prevalent. The wages paid by security companies were not the subject of any studies done by the United States Department of Labor, but wage levels and protection against the worst forms of child labour were issues addressed by the Code of Conduct.

11. **Mr. Arendt** (United States) said that the United States had had an all-volunteer military for the past 40 years. High school graduation was considered to be a natural time for students to consider whether to continue with their studies or enter the world of work. As one career option was entry into military service, recruitment of high school graduates was important and, by law, military recruiters had the same access to secondary schools as any other prospective employers. As guests of the schools, they had to respect the boundaries and limitations imposed on them by the school administrations.

12. Ninety-nine per cent of enlisted persons were high school graduates, and many had higher education diplomas as well. Only 5 per cent, or about 15,000 people, were 17 at the time of recruitment. After recruitment there was a waiting period, followed by one year of training, which meant that nearly all those entering service were 18 years of age at the end of their training. Recruiters were held accountable, were subject to regular oversight, reviews and training and were prohibited from using coercive measures or deception. Annually, there were fewer than 500 reported incidents of misconduct by recruiters. Safeguards were in place to prevent underage persons from entering the military illegally, and those who were under 18 were allowed to enlist only on a voluntary basis and, unless they had a court order of emancipation, with the informed consent of their parents or guardians.

13. Involvement by recruiters in their communities did not constitute aggressive tactics, but rather a fulfilment of responsibility to the community. To enlist, individuals had to present official proof of their date and place of birth. The documentation was verified by third parties after submission, and any attempt to intentionally recruit a person under the age of 17 was prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. The Department of Defense had received no information relating to specific cases of non-compliance with the No Child Left Behind Act and would be happy to respond to any such reports from the Committee or NGOs. The Armed Services Vocational Aptitude Battery (ASVAB) Career Exploration Program was free of charge and had been set up by the Department of Defense to inform young people about career options and help them choose a career. While ASVAB was extremely popular, the Department had, based on the concerns expressed by the Committee, resisted calls for it to be extended to the middle-school level. In the context of that programme, information was released to recruiters only if the young person in question expressed an interest in military service. Both individuals and entire schools could opt out of such programmes. The Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) programme was heralded by teachers' associations and state boards of education and was aimed at instilling in students values such as citizenship, service to country and personal responsibility and encouraging them to complete high school. Marksmanship activities were conducted with the same rules as those used by the United States Olympic team. It was estimated that fewer than 15 per cent of ROTC participants eventually joined the military.

14. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, pointed to all the complications involved in the recruitment of 17-year-olds and the relatively meagre benefit to the military, and asked whether it would not make good practical sense to stop such recruitment.

15. **Mr. Baer** (United States) said that the authorized age for recruitment was set not on the basis of the need for recruits, but out of a sense of fairness and the need to make available military careers as a work opportunity for young people.

16. While compliance with the Optional Protocol was well established and taken seriously, both the country and in particular its armed forces were extremely aware of the need to protect children. The guard forces that were engaged in detention activities in military operations had particularly high rates of post-traumatic stress disorder because they witnessed the destructive effects of armed conflict, especially on children.

17. There were currently no juveniles held at the detention facility at the United States base in Guantánamo, Cuba, and the overall number of juveniles detained by United States forces in general had decreased to fewer than 20. Juveniles were detained only when it was absolutely necessary and for the shortest possible time, with the accent placed on recovery and social reintegration. He had recently visited detention facilities in Afghanistan and had been told that it was difficult to find opportunities for the transfer of minors to an appropriate environment affording them hope. In many cases, if the juveniles were released they would be thrust back into hostilities and subjected to the mistreatment of the Taliban. Over time, the United States military had improved its procedures for the release of minors from detention. Currently, they were sent back to their homes only if commitments among their relatives and village elders could be secured to ensure that they would not once again become involved in the armed conflict. Those minors who faced prosecution were tried in Afghan courts, but their cases were monitored by the United States military. All juvenile detainees had access to psychological and psychiatric counselling.

18. **Mr. Madi** asked whether the United States detained any non-Afghan minors in Afghanistan and, if so, whether they were handed over to their countries of origin and in what circumstances. Was there a system to follow up on their cases after repatriation?

19. **Ms. Lee** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict) said that, according to information before the Committee, only detainees under 16 years of age were separated from adults, and she asked whether those between the ages of 16 and 18 were also separated.

20. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that the United States military sought to release minor detainees as soon as possible, but first had to ensure that they would not return to a situation of ill-treatment or become a danger to themselves or others. In the meantime, they were provided with various services, including health care and legal representation. He did not believe any third-country minors were currently being held by United States forces in Afghanistan.

21. **Mr. Baer** (United States) said that the detainee population changed on a daily basis. United States forces had held third-country minors in detention in the past. In such cases, the military took great pains to transfer them to their home countries and to obtain assurances that they would be treated decently and reintegrated into society. Both the United States and ICRC conducted follow-up on the situation of those individuals.

22. All detainees under 18 years of age were given special treatment. In some cases younger detainees had been separated from particularly violent older minors. He could not guarantee that minors had never been mixed with adults, as sometimes their age was not initially known, but the military commanders ensured that all minors were given special care and that no detainee was ever abused.

23. **The Chairperson** asked if ICRC or other humanitarian organizations had access to minor detainees during their detention.

24. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that ICRC did have access to detainees.

25. **Mr. Baer** (United States) said that ICRC delegates discussed with the United States forces the case of each minor detainee they visited. The Afghanistan Independent Human Rights Commission also had access to all detainees. United States intelligence operations tracked forced recruitment by the Taliban, and there was no question that the latter was

recruiting increasing numbers of minors. The United States investigated such cases whenever possible, but so far had not gathered enough evidence to bring charges of war crimes.

26. The United States military took great pains to minimize civilian casualties. It did not publicly report the number of such casualties because the Taliban would use that information to its advantage. However, the United States forces caused far fewer civilian casualties than did the Taliban. The current figure was half that of two years earlier and was the lowest it had ever been during the conflict. Criminal activity was a different matter and was always investigated and prosecuted. There had been hundreds of federal criminal convictions associated with the conflict. United States Army Staff Sergeant Robert Bales, accused of killing 16 Afghan civilians, would be arraigned later that week on charges of premeditated murder. The United States Government had provided compensation to the victims, including medical care.

27. **Ms. Hill** (United States) said that the United States ran the largest refugee resettlement programme in the world and regularly provided a safe haven for thousands of children fleeing conflict. She recognized that former child soldiers could face grounds for exclusion from asylum because they might have participated in terrorist activities or persecution. There was no blanket exemption from exclusion for all former child soldiers, but several group-based exemptions could apply to them, and the individual's age at the time of the terrorist activity or persecution was taken into account. Regulations were currently being established in order to consider the degree to which perpetrators acted of their own volition when the decision was taken whether to apply such exclusions to them. Those regulations would also apply to former child soldiers who had acted under duress. During removal proceedings, the Department of Homeland Security had the right to refrain from raising certain grounds for exclusion on a case-by-case basis.

28. The Department of Homeland Security followed regulations established by the Department of Health and Human Services on determining the age of unaccompanied minors by using whatever documentation was available. The minors' own assertions about their age were taken into consideration, but were never the sole basis on which their age was determined. If medical examinations indicated that the individual was 16 to 18 years of age, he or she was presumed to be 16.

29. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that child soldiers were victims of crime, and yet they were facing discrimination when requesting asylum in the United States. The vast majority had been recruited by armed groups that the United States considered to be terrorist organizations. The Government should consider granting them asylum as a general rule rather than as an exception.

30. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that a balance must be sought between consideration of the status of individuals as former child soldiers and the seriousness of the crimes they committed.

31. **Ms. Hill** (United States) said that the Government was committed to identifying and apprehending persons who engaged in sex tourism. Prosecution efforts focused on undercover operations in the United States and cooperation with foreign law enforcement agencies to prosecute United States citizens and long-term residents involved in sex tourism abroad. The Government trained law enforcement officials in other countries on how to identify cases of sex tourism, published warnings to its citizens on Government web pages and conducted awareness campaigns beyond its borders, such as the *No Te Engañes* (Don't Be Fooled) campaign. Legislation had recently been adopted banning the issuance of passports to persons convicted of offences related to sex tourism.

32. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that she wished to know the exact

title of the legislation referred to in the State party's report increasing the number of mechanisms through which the Government could prosecute persons engaged in sex tourism.

33. The burden of proof for child victims of labour exploitation seeking protection and services was heavier than for those who were victims of sexual exploitation. With that in mind, she asked what the Government was doing to ensure that children sold or trafficked for purposes of labour did not have to prove they had been coerced or defrauded. It was her understanding that there were no special courts for children involved in immigration proceedings. She therefore wished to know what screening procedures were in place for minor migrants who were detained and how their best interests were determined.

34. **Mr. CdeBaca** (United States) said that the burden of proof was the same for victims of both labour and sexual exploitation; only the quantity of proof required was different. It was assumed that children under the age of 18 could not fully consent to sexual acts, so victims of sex trafficking did not have to show that they had been coerced. Victims of labour exploitation, however, were required to show that they had been held in coercion; otherwise they were considered to be victims of the lesser crime of child labour. The Supreme Court had ruled that the particular vulnerabilities of the exploited individual must be considered. A child was thus considered to be more vulnerable and thus more easily coerced than an adult. In all cases, the burden of proof lay with the Government vis-à-vis the defendant, not with the victim.

35. **Ms. Hill** (United States) said that child migrants were screened pursuant to the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act. Some of them ended up in the custody of the Department of Health and Human Services, through which many social services were available to them, while others were referred to immigration courts, the staff of which were trained to identify children that might have been trafficked or exploited.

36. The Government had withdrawn accreditation from some adoption agencies that had been charging excessive fees. Under legislation adopted just a few days earlier, the ability to withdraw accreditation now applied even in the cases of countries that had not ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption. The recent legislation on sex tourism could be found in the United States Code, title 18, section 2423 (c).

37. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that he had the impression that interests of public security prevailed over the best interests of the child in many instances. He asked how the Government was working with the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and other services to ensure that it acted in the best interests of the child.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.40 p.m.

38. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that there were many situations in which persons who did not directly participate in hostilities received hazardous duty and imminent danger pay. The granting of asylum to former child soldiers required a complex balance of considerations and must involve an assessment of the acts they committed. While the best interests of the child was a pervasive standard in United States law, security factors too were a special consideration.

39. **Mr. Washburn** (United States) said that national coordination of the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography was especially challenging given that, in addition to the state and federal levels of government, there were also more than 500 tribal nations with a certain degree of sovereignty. A multidisciplinary approach was used to provide care for child victims of sex offences, and each victim was assigned an advocate who coordinated the investigation and

the services provided. When victim advocacy improved, victims were then more likely to come forward. The figures on child sex offences might thus rise, but that would not necessarily indicate an actual increase in those offences. Millions of dollars were allocated for training grants as part of the national coordination efforts.

40. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked if there was a mechanism in place to ensure that the best interests of child victims of sex offences were respected throughout all legal proceedings, for example by ensuring that the child did not come into contact with the alleged perpetrator during the trial and was questioned by a specialist rather than by the defence lawyer.

41. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that, despite the inherent challenges, his Government believed it was succeeding in its coordination efforts and would not have ratified the Optional Protocol if it did not believe it could address those challenges.

42. **Mr. Quinn** (United States) said that there were many Government agencies that focused on child pornography. The Immigration and Customs Enforcement Cyber Crimes Center managed a national programme to combat child exploitation, conducted large-scale investigations and provided technical and operational support in the field. Other bodies were also involved in combating cybercrime involving children, such as more than 60 task forces taking part in the Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force Program across the country. The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children served as the clearing house for information on child victims and operated the CyberTipline, which had received 16,000 tips in the past week alone. A total of 77 per cent of the tips received through the CyberTipline in 2012 had pointed to situations in which the alleged perpetrators were outside the United States, whereas in 2006 the reverse had been true, with 77 per cent involving allegations against people within the United States. International cooperation was therefore essential. The United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement service served as the country's representative to the Virtual Global Taskforce, an international alliance of 11 law enforcement agencies and 11 NGOs.

43. The results of Operation Sunflower, a nationwide initiative to combat child pornography, had been announced just two weeks earlier. The operation had led to the arrest of 240 persons on charges of sexual exploitation of children, 222 of whom had been arrested in the United States. In 21 cases the arrests had directly resulted in the rescue of victims, and a total of 123 child victims had been identified and rescued from sexual abuse. Thanks to proactive efforts to engage the public, three offenders and three victims had been identified through video footage.

44. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether the State party's policy of obliging Internet service provider hosts to report cases in which their servers were used for the distribution of child pornography or the promotion of paedophilia was proving successful, and what were the consequences for those who failed to comply.

45. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that implementation of the policy involved certain issues, which could be summarized as follows: whether it was possible to identify which service providers were being used to disseminate child pornography, whether their hosts could be prosecuted for the failure to remove such content, and whether it was possible to track its distribution from one server to another, nationally and internationally, and to prosecute those responsible.

46. **Mr. Quinn** (United States) said that law enforcement agencies could track the IP addresses of the Internet service providers concerned in the United States and abroad, and that to that end they cooperated with police forces in other countries. The hosts of service providers found to be carrying child pornography were legally obliged to notify the authorities, remove the content from public access and keep it for 90 days in order to allow

for inspection by law enforcement bodies. The success rate in having such content removed from the public domain was almost 100 per cent.

47. **Ms. Gannon** (United States) said that, wherever possible, offending content was seized by court order, because it provided key information that could be used to prosecute offenders and identify victims both in the United States and abroad.

48. The Department of Justice was developing a new strategy to coordinate efforts to combat child pornography and child sex trafficking at the national, state, local and tribal levels. It would address law enforcement and prosecution of perpetrators, research and data collection, victim support services during and after prosecution, including financial assistance and counselling, and the treatment of sex offenders in prison and their supervision upon release. The United States Marshals Service, which also worked with law enforcement agencies abroad, had been assigned the task of tracking and registering child sex offenders after their release from prison.

49. It was possible for child victims to testify via closed circuit television or to make a deposition prior to the hearing. Law enforcement officials received training on how to safeguard the best interests of victims. Child victims could, if they felt their rights were not being upheld by the State, file a writ to that effect.

50. The Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention had recently awarded a grant for the establishment of a national information database that would be open to more than 60 accredited law enforcement agencies across the country.

51. **Mr. Washburn** (United States) said that a complex web of laws was in place at the federal, state and tribal levels to protect the rights of children. In some jurisdictions, children had the right to be accompanied by an adult when testifying. Court cases involving child victims could be expedited in order to minimize their exposure to trial proceedings. Tribal law was also gradually being amended in that regard.

52. **The Chairperson**, speaking as a member of the Committee, said that the United States Federal Government should encourage all the states to act uniformly in order to avoid secondary victimization during judicial proceedings. He asked for more detailed information about cases of child exploitation involving religious groups in the State party. He also wished to know whether the customers of child prostitutes or consumers of child pornography could be prosecuted.

53. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that the outcomes of cases involving religious communities and sexual exploitation had been kept confidential in order to avoid secondary victimization.

54. **Mr. CdeBaka** (United States) said that, as a rule, companies employing forced child labour wished to avoid criminal prosecution and could be readily persuaded to curtail such practices. With regard to customers of child prostitutes, the collection had recently begun of nationwide disaggregated data on arrests of both procurers and customers of child sex services. Ignorance of the prostitute's age was not accepted as a legal defence. Many states were considering the introduction of a policy of zero tolerance towards customers of child prostitutes.

55. **Ms. Maurás Pérez** said that in its legislation the State party needed to provide clearer definitions of trafficking and other key notions in the Optional Protocols and that it should improve the collection and analysis of the appropriate statistics. The root structural and social causes behind the offences addressed by the Optional Protocols should be studied. National strategies needed to be translated into effective action on the ground, and monitoring mechanisms were required to assess their impact. Education was a key issue, as awareness of the problems began at home and in schools. Protection of victims had to be

understood not only in terms of the provision of services and support, but also in terms of avoiding secondary victimization and promoting the reintegration of victims into society.

56. She asked how regularly the various agencies involved in combating the crimes covered by the Optional Protocols met, and what sort of specific training was provided to professionals who worked with children, including teachers, judges, police officers, security personnel and health workers.

57. Turning to the issue of international cooperation, she urged the State party to help countries, particularly those with limited resources, to develop legislation in line with the provisions of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption, to which the United States was a party, and to develop a code of ethics for maternal surrogacy. She asked what was done to safeguard the rights of unaccompanied migrant children in irregular situations when they were returned to Mexico. That issue was especially problematic in the case of children who were not Mexican nationals.

58. **Ms. Lee** said that gaps remained in the State party's understanding of its responsibilities, but that considerable progress had been made. It was to be hoped that the United States would accede to the Convention and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure. Greater focus should also be placed on the preventive role of education in the State party.

59. **Mr. Koh** (United States) said that the Committee's country rapporteurs had helped the delegation to focus more clearly on the challenges facing the State party, which had a complex, multi-ethnic society. The aim of the agencies involved in implementing the two Optional Protocols was to achieve full coordination of efforts at the national, state and tribal levels. For the purpose of preparing periodic reports to the Committee, those agencies met every two years, but meetings between various bodies on specific issues, such as trafficking and child exploitation, took place more regularly. The Government agencies also worked closely with civil society. The focus of efforts lay in a strategy based on partnership, prevention, prohibition, prosecution, and the protection of victims.

60. With regard to legal definitions, many of the State party's laws predated the Optional Protocols, but they were gradually being updated. Efforts were being made to develop and refine national databases. The State party was fully aware of the need to safeguard the best interests of children and was committed to preventing the participation of children in armed conflict and to holding those responsible for their recruitment accountable. Education had a key role to play in prevention.

61. It was possible to envisage that the United States would accede to the Convention in the future.

62. **Mr. CdeBaka** (United States) said that ongoing efforts were being made to improve the quality of data on trafficking and child pornography and to make such information available to as wide an audience as possible. While the State party's federal system could be seen to create certain problems, it also had distinct advantages. Individual states could and did experiment with innovative strategies that, if successful, were often emulated by other states. For instance, baby safe haven legislation implemented in the State of New York had been adopted in nine other states. The President of the United States had declared January 2013 to be National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month. That served as an eloquent illustration of the importance attached by the State party to such matters.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.