



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General  
17 July 2013  
English  
Original: French

---

## Committee on the Rights of the Child Sixty-third session

### Summary record of the 1793rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 30 May 2013, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Sandberg

## Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Rwanda (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)*

*Combined third and fourth periodic reports of Rwanda (continued)*  
(CRC/C/RWA/3-4; CRC/C/RWA/Q/3-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Rwanda took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Nyiramatama** (Rwanda) said that she appreciated the opportunity given to her to present the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Rwanda on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. She introduced the delegation.
3. In 1994, Rwanda had been the scene of a genocide that had had serious repercussions, and the Government had endeavoured to put in place institutions and policies to rebuild the country. The combined third and fourth periodic reports of Rwanda had been prepared following a broad consultative process involving the Government, civil society and representatives of local communities.
4. Since the submission of its previous report, Rwanda had made significant progress in implementing the Convention and the Optional Protocols, among other things, by adopting an integrated child rights policy and strategic plan and a national strategy for childcare reform. The Government was also endeavouring to reduce infant and maternal mortality rates and enhance access to health care. New laws and policies had been adopted to prevent child labour and protect children with disabilities. A new policy relating to children in conflict with the law was being drafted, which aimed to adapt the juvenile justice system to the needs of children. The Government had also established the National Commission for Children, which was responsible for coordinating all policies concerning the rights of the child. Furthermore, a law on the rights and protection of the child had been enacted and a new Penal Code containing numerous provisions for the rights of the child had been adopted.
5. **Ms. Aidoo** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Rwandan economy was one of the most vibrant in Africa. The State party was on track to achieve most of the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. She commended Rwanda for having ratified all the core international human rights instruments and having adopted numerous laws and policies aimed at protecting the rights of the child. However, she noted that Rwanda came up against a number of systemic problems, including geographic disparities and inequalities, gender inequalities, gender-based violence and high levels of poverty, which particularly affected children.
6. She wished to know whether the Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion was in fact the body responsible for coordinating legislation, policies and programmes relating to the rights of the child, and whether the National Commission for Children was the leading institution for the implementation of the rights of the child. She requested clarification regarding the scope of activities and composition of the National Commission for Children. Noting with satisfaction that Rwanda vaccinated all children free of charge, she was nevertheless concerned about the low level of resources allocated to the rights of the child and asked how it planned to remedy that problem. She asked for clarification regarding the method adopted by Rwanda for setting its budget. She wished to know how the Observatory on the Rights of the Child, the National Commission for Children and the National Institute of Statistics coordinated their activities. She enquired about the development of the recommendation put forward by the Committee in 2004 concerning the creation of a comprehensive data collection system.

7. She said that, according to information available to her, certain groups of children continued to be victims of discrimination and stigmatization, and asked how the laws and policies relating to the rights of the child could be properly applied in those conditions. In particular, she wished to know what was being done to fight discrimination against Batwa children, and whether the programmes implemented for them were developed in consultation with them.

8. **Ms. Khazova** wished to know whether the State party had investigated why a large proportion of births were not registered and whether there were plans to decentralize the birth registration system. She noted with concern that under current legislation parents who did not register the birth of their child in time risked a prison sentence or a fine. She asked why it was necessary to register births with several authorities. She asked whether it was possible to identify the fathers of children born out of wedlock and, if so, who could initiate the procedure. She wished to know what was written down on the birth certificates of children whose fathers were not identified.

9. **Mr. Nogueira Neto** asked what mechanisms had been set up to guarantee respect for children's ethnic identity, place of origin and sexual orientation. He asked how national legislation dealt with the subject of diversity and in what way public policies and programmes took into account the need to preserve the identity of the child. He wished to know whether national legislation criminalized homophobia, racism and xenophobia.

10. **Ms. Wijemanne** asked how national programmes were coordinated at the local level, particularly in rural areas. She also wished to know how the Government involved civil society organizations and children in the resolution of problems, and whether sufficient financial and human resources were available to implement various programmes. She asked whether the Government planned to place children who had lost their parents with members of their family, rather than in institutional care.

11. **Mr. Mezmur** asked whether the efforts made by the Government to make the birth registration system more accessible had been successful. With regard to gender-based violence, he wished to know if there were plans to create centres such as the Isange One Stop Centre at the national level.

12. **Ms. Oviedo Fierro** requested clarification regarding national children's summits and the implementation of decisions made there. She wished to know what issues would be dealt with at the next summit. She also requested more detailed information on children's participation in the summits.

13. **Mr. Gurán** wished to know what status the three national institutions responsible for the rights of the child enjoyed. He asked how children were informed about the possibility of appealing to those institutions.

14. **Mr. Gastaud** asked what policies were implemented to allow children to freely access national and international information sources and what measures had been taken to guarantee the effective enjoyment of freedom of belief for all communities.

15. **Ms. Aldoseri** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the reports of certain non-governmental organizations that human rights defenders were occasionally subjected to threats, harassment and intimidation were accurate, and invited the delegation to explain the extent to which the State party cooperated with civil society in the implementation of the Convention.

16. **Ms. Nyiramatama** (Rwanda) said that no one in Rwanda asserted their specific ethnic identity; united by the same language and the same culture, citizens identified themselves as Rwandans. Therefore, it was not possible to attribute the existing disparities between certain population groups to ethnic origin.

17. The Ministry of Gender and Family Promotion was the institution responsible for drafting policies and strategies for families and children, while the National Commission for Children, which was attached to the Ministry, was responsible for implementing them. The Advisory Council of the Commission was composed of senior officials from several ministries (education, local government and justice), the Civil Society Platform and the Private Sector Federation and had decision-making power, particularly regarding budgetary allocations; it did not require a particularly large budget outlays, given that it was mainly in charge of distributing the funds made available by the public authorities and coordinating work to support children.

18. In order to better follow the progress and reintegration of children after leaving orphanages or centres for street children, the competent authorities had established a monitoring system at the district level and created a database listing each of those children by name. Local authorities could thus intervene as soon as the child needed financial, psychological or medical support and have the necessary funds, which were allocated to them as part of the budget decentralization process, to do so.

19. **Ms. Aidoo** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the State party had monitoring tools to evaluate whether inequalities between children in urban and rural areas were declining, how many members made up the National Commission for Children, and whether all districts were represented on the Commission. She would like to know whether the Commission and the Observatory on the Rights of the Child exchanged information and used a single database.

20. **Ms. Herczog** asked whether the information collected on children was confidential.

21. **Ms. Wijemanne** noted that, although maternal and infant mortality rates had decreased significantly, certain geographic areas and population groups registered rates that were still very high. She therefore wished to know whether the State party had tried to identify the most vulnerable groups in order to guarantee respect for their right to life, survival and development. She asked whether the State party planned to prohibit corporal punishment in all contexts, and whether it endeavoured to make the population aware of the harmful effects of violence against children. Finally, she asked for further information on Batwa children's access to essential services, particularly education and health care.

22. **Ms. Nyiramatama** (Rwanda) said that the aim of the database on children was, over time, to collect data, broken down by age, on all the children in the country; however first priority had been given to collecting information on the most vulnerable children among them. In order to keep the data confidential, the Commission called on the services of professionals, including psychologists and social workers. To date, the Commission was made up of 19 permanent members paid by the State, who would be joined by two representatives from each of the country's districts, chosen from among local social workers who specialized in child protection. While preparing a report for the United Nations treaty bodies, the Government consulted the Advisory Council of the National Commission and civil society.

23. The Observatory on the Rights of the Child reported to the National Commission but was present at all levels of power, so that children who believed that their rights had been violated could appeal to the representative in their own village; they could also go to the authorities or the police to file a complaint.

24. In order to encourage the registration of births, there were plans, first, to increase the number of awareness campaigns in the media and to organize "registration days". Later, the legislation would have to be revised with a view to doing away with the penalties imposed on parents who did not register their child with the registry office within 30 days of birth.

25. The first national children's summit took place in 2004. Composed of children who had been democratically elected from all parts of the country, including children with disabilities and particularly vulnerable children, the summits were held every year and allowed young people to voice their concerns and to influence national policies regarding children by putting recommendations to the Government. This summit was also an opportunity for children to participate in identifying priorities for strategies for development and the fight against poverty.

26. **Ms. Aidoo** asked whether efforts to involve men in campaigns to stop violence against women had produced good results.

27. **Ms. Nyiramata** (Rwanda) said that efforts to raise awareness among men of all ages, led by an NGO that was part of the Collective of Rwandan Associations for the Advancement of Women and Promotion of Peace and Development, had produced very encouraging results. Such an increase in awareness was made possible by the active participation of men and boys, who had been made aware of their responsibilities and encouraged to challenge and rethink the notion of masculinity. A study that would be published in two or three years' time would make it possible to better understand the root causes of this type of violence and thus to better combat it. With the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), a website aimed especially at children would be created to inform them of their rights. In Rwanda, strategies and programmes were all inspired by the results of studies carried out on the ground among target populations, which made it possible to gather the testimonies of the people concerned, particularly children, and therefore better respond to their needs. The implementation of anti-poverty policies was rigorously monitored and the results of the measures taken closely scrutinized. The many NGOs associated with the National Commission for Children played a vital role in that respect, both at the outset, by getting out among the population and, further down the line, by working alongside policymakers. A study on the needs of children placed in institutional care had made it possible to produce guidelines for children's reintegration into families or adoption, in accordance with current laws and the interests of the child.

28. **Ms. Aidoo** asked what role civil society played in the development of public policies concerning aid for disadvantaged children.

29. **Ms. Nyiramata** (Rwanda) said that the NGOs, which benefitted from total freedom of expression, were systematically consulted at all stages of the policymaking process and that no programme was approved without their agreement.

30. In Rwanda, corporal punishment deemed humiliating or degrading was forbidden by law. A ministerial order would soon be issued that would specify the forms of corporal punishment considered to be degrading, with a view to making parents aware of their responsibilities and familiarizing them with the principle of positive parenting. The Commission would make recommendations on the matter by highlighting the best interests of the child.

31. **Mr. Cardona Llorens**, recalling that corporal punishment was still commonplace in Rwanda, asked whether awareness campaigns had been organized to change mindsets and encourage parents to discipline their children by means other than physical violence.

32. **Ms. Nyiramata** (Rwanda) said that many awareness-raising initiatives had been launched, including a weekly radio broadcast on the rights of the child that regularly dealt with the topic of corporal punishment. During a national conference on the subject of violence against children in 2010, many recommendations were made and then included in public policy.

33. **Ms. Aldoseri**, commending the considerable progress made by Rwanda in the field of education since the 1994 genocide, asked why the secondary school enrolment rate of

boys seemed to have been decreasing for several years and said that she was concerned about the high dropout rates among girls. What specific measures were being taken to reverse that trend? She requested the delegation to provide disaggregated data on the number of children who were pursuing vocational studies, on the number of girls taking scientific courses and on the level of general education of disadvantaged or marginalized children.

34. **Ms. Aidoo** asked what initiatives the State party was taking to improve preschool education and care for young children. She also wished to know the results of poverty reduction strategies that targeted children and the measures taken to assist children who took on the bulk of household responsibilities. She wished to know what measures had been taken to provide suitable accommodation for populations who had suffered the loss of their traditional homes through demolition campaigns, such as the “Bye bye Nyakatsi” campaign, and requested information on the fate of Batwa children, whose parents had been forced to leave their ancestral lands as part of those campaigns.

35. **Mr. Madi**, noting with concern that child labour was far from being eradicated in Rwanda, asked whether it was correct that children of 17 years of age could work in mines.

36. **Ms. Al-Shehail** asked whether mechanisms for the follow-up and monitoring of intercountry adoptions had been implemented and whether they were a guarantee of transparency.

37. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the State party had made an effort to raise public awareness of the discrimination and stigmatization suffered by children with disabilities and to facilitate the deinstitutionalization of those children. He asked whether it was true that a child between 10 and 14 years of age who had committed an offence punishable by a sentence of more than 5 years’ imprisonment was tried as an adult. Additionally, he wished to know whether there were children’s judges, whether changes to the criminal justice system for minors in conflict with the law were envisaged, whether emphasis was placed on reintegration and restorative justice and whether child victims were systematically provided with a lawyer.

38. **Ms. Herczog** asked what conditions governed the placement of a child in a foster family, what the selection criteria for those families were and how the placement was monitored. She said that it was also necessary to clarify whether adoption was subject to the consent of the parents, even if they were incapable of caring for their child.

39. **Ms. Wijemanne** asked what strategies had been implemented to fight against child malnutrition and encourage breastfeeding and to make young people aware of the issues linked to substance abuse and sexual and reproductive health.

40. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether national adoptions were authorized and what monitoring mechanisms had been put in place to prevent the exploitation of adopted children.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*