



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child Eighty-second session

Summary record of the 2416th meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 18 September 2019, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Mr. Pedernera Reyna

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* No summary record was issued for the 2415th meeting.

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

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the Republic of Korea (CRC/C/KOR/5-6; CRC/C/KOR/Q/5-6 and CRC/C/KOR/Q/5-6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Republic of Korea took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Mr. Kim Gang Lip** (Republic of Korea) said that the Republic of Korea had regularly submitted its periodic reports to the Committee since ratifying the Convention in 1991 and that in 2002 it had chaired the special session of the United Nations General Assembly on children. Previous considerations of its periodic reports had resulted in a number of measures being taken, including the adoption of the Juvenile Protection Act in 2000, which had criminalized the purchase of sexual services from persons under 19 years old and had raised the minimum age of employment to 15 years old, and the withdrawal of the reservation to article 21 (a) of the Convention in 2017. In implementing the Convention, his Government had been assisted by various non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which provided advice and criticism that reflected the voices of children.

3. Since submitting its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (CRC/C/KOR/5-6), his Government had advanced children's rights through measures that had included: the introduction of child benefits in 2017; the extension of the age limit for eligibility for those benefits in 2018; the establishment of the National Centre for the Rights of the Child to provide integrated service support for projects benefitting children in need of State protection in 2019; and the launch of the e-Child Happiness Support programme, which used big data to identify children at risk of abuse with a view to providing protection and support and, where appropriate, launching investigations.

4. In May 2019, the Government had announced a new set of policies for children, entitled "Towards Building an Inclusive Society", that were designed to increase children's happiness. The policies were centred on four key themes, namely, protection, human rights and participation, health, and play. Under the new policies, local governments would assume responsibility for child protection from the time children were taken into care until they could be returned to their homes; the birth notification system would be reviewed; the establishment of a Play Innovation Committee was planned; and 20 local governments would be designated as leaders in play innovation and provided with the resources needed to expand their play support programmes. A dedicated department would be created under the National Centre for the Rights of the Child to oversee play policies and offer professional and technical support to local governments. All the policies for building an inclusive society would be incorporated into the second Master Plan for Child Policy, due to be implemented from 2020 to 2024.

5. **Ms. Aldoseri** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), commending the State party's withdrawal of its reservation to article 21 (a) of the Convention, said that she wished to know what practical measures had been taken to amend the adoption system to comply with that provision. It would also be useful to know the time frame set for withdrawal of the reservation to article 40 (2) (b) (v). Given that, in April 2019, the Constitutional Court had declared the ban on abortion to be unconstitutional, she asked how the authorities planned to ensure that the best interests of the child were the primary consideration in the planned review of abortion legislation. The delegation should also indicate whether a training programme on the Convention had been introduced for the judiciary, prosecutors and lawyers and whether the Convention could be invoked in court proceedings.

6. An explanation of the differences between the mandates of the Child Policy Coordination Committee and the Child Policy Working Committee and the degree of coordination between the two committees and other executive bodies concerned with the implementation of the Convention would be helpful. The action taken in response to the Committee's previous recommendation that the State party should establish an appropriate coordinating body with the necessary authority should also be clarified. The delegation should likewise clarify which of the State party's many child-related policies constituted the comprehensive policy for implementation of the Convention; whether any preliminary

evaluation of the first Master Plan on Child Policy, which had run from 2015 to 2019, had been conducted; and whether there were plans to establish a dedicated ministry for children. It was also unclear exactly how the “Towards Building an Inclusive Society” policies for children could help to create an inclusive society when migrant children and children who were not Korean nationals were excluded from their scope.

7. She would like to know whether the planned comprehensive data-collection system would gather data on children in all provinces and in all situations. At present data was lacking for children in a number of categories, such as out-of-school children, preschool children, migrant children and children living in poverty.

8. The delegation should explain how the independence of the Division for Child and Youth Rights could be guaranteed when it was dependent on the assessments of the Ministry of the Interior and Safety for its existence. The Committee would appreciate information about the Division’s mandate, the legal status and mandate of the Child Rights Committee, and the resources allocated to the two bodies. It would also like clarification as to whether they were competent to receive complaints from all children, including migrant children. It would likewise be useful to know whether the Korea Monitoring Centre for Children’s Rights and the Children’s Rights Ombudspersons still existed, and if so, what relationship they had with the Child Rights Committee and the Division for Child and Youth Rights.

9. An update on progress towards enacting the Human Rights Education Support Act would be helpful. In that connection, she would like to know how the Government planned to expand education on the Convention and children’s rights in schools when there was no supporting law; whether it was true that ordinances providing for children’s rights to be covered in the curriculum had been introduced in some areas but not others; and whether all professionals working with and for children received mandatory training on the Convention.

10. She invited the delegation to provide details of any plans to establish a risk management system that would allow the authorities to assess the effects of chemical substances on children. It should also provide information about the penalties imposed on the companies implicated in the deaths of children and adults as a result of toxic humidifier disinfectants in 2016. It would be useful to know whether any law explicitly stipulated that children’s rights should be respected in business activities. The measures taken to protect children working in palm oil plantations run by Korean businesses should also be explained, as should the safeguarding policies adopted to ensure that States receiving donor support from the State party implemented measures to guarantee the rights of children.

11. She would welcome clarification as to whether the prohibition on child marriage extended to all children living in the Republic of Korea, including non-nationals. Related statistics should be provided, and the delegation should confirm whether asylum seekers and refugees were required by law to register marriages.

12. Information on the platforms available for children to express their views would be appreciated. More specifically, she would like to know how students’ views were taken into account in decision-making in schools and whether the right to vote within school operating committees was extended to all students, or only to high-achieving children. The State party might also share its position on the request to lower the voting age that had been made by the children from the Republic of Korea who had met with Committee members.

13. Alternative sources of information indicated that children did not enjoy the right to privacy, either at home or at school. With that observation in mind, she wished to know what was being done to protect children’s constitutional right to privacy in schools; whether students were aware that surveillance cameras were being used in schools; and how the cameras were used by school administrations.

14. Noting that the use of corporal punishment, including at home, had been one of the main concerns raised by the Korean children who had met with Committee members, she asked whether, in the light of previous recommendations by the Committee and other human rights treaty bodies, corporal punishment was now prohibited in all provinces and in

all settings, including in the home and alternative care settings. Did the fact that, according to the report, schools were encouraged “to decide on alternative disciplinary methods” mean that schools had discretion to use corporal punishment, including indirect methods, or was there an absolute ban?

15. **Mr. Lumina** (Country Task Force) said that he would appreciate information on the specific action taken to increase budget allocations for child-related policies and measures and on any allocations that specifically targeted children in disadvantaged situations. More details about the surveys of child welfare projects mentioned in the report should also be provided.

16. He would appreciate information about any plans to integrate a child rights perspective in the third Basic Plan for International Development Cooperation so as to fully implement the Framework Act on International Development Cooperation. In view of reports of negative environmental and health impacts associated with the construction of coal-fired power plants in third countries with financial support from the Republic of Korea, he asked whether the Government intended to cease supporting such projects and what measures it had taken to minimize the negative impacts for children’s rights and the environment and to provide appropriate assistance for any child victims of such impacts.

17. The delegation should provide more details about the birth registration system, indicating, in particular, whether the online registration and notification system was fully operational; whether the system provided universal coverage irrespective of the parents’ legal status or national origin; how many children had not had their births registered; and what measures were being taken to identify unregistered children and rectify their situation. It should also comment on reports that the Ministry of Justice was opposed to a bill to reform the birth registration system as it feared that allowing registration of the births of children without Korean nationality could destabilize the system.

18. Information about the action taken to ensure that the religious beliefs of students, particularly those from minority religions, were taken into account in school meal programmes was needed. Since the report indicated that schools were not permitted to adopt rules limiting students’ rights and freedoms, he wondered what sanctions, if any, might be applied if a school did in fact impose limits of that kind.

19. **Mr. Mezmur** (Country Task Force) said that he would like an explanation of the reasons for the delay in passing the draft anti-discrimination law, particularly the social controversies surrounding the grounds of discrimination, as well as information about steps being taken to raise public awareness of the issues. He wished to know how the State party reconciled its obligation of non-discrimination under the Convention with the Framework Act on the Treatment of Foreign Nationals, which appeared to exclude children not registered as immigrants. He would also like to know how the obligation of non-discrimination could be reconciled with the differentiation made between students according to their level of academic achievement and with the perceived or real prejudice faced by single parents, for example, under the Act on Special Cases Concerning Adoption. With regard to the principle of the best interests of the child, he asked what the impact of the amendment to the Child Welfare Act, enacted in March 2019, had been, and whether similar amendments would be made to other laws. The delegation should provide details of any cases in which the best interests’ principle had been applied by the courts. Clear, updated figures on cases of suicide in 2018 and information on the impact of suicide prevention programmes, including the “one-stop service” for bereaved families, were also needed. Lastly, with regard to respect for the views of the child, he asked if there were plans to move from an ad hoc approach to child participation to a more systematic approach; what mechanisms existed to foster incorporation of the views expressed by children into policy and law; and what feedback was provided to children on their participation.

20. **Ms. Winter** (Country Task Force), noting that the reason given for the low reporting rate for cases of violence against children was that those who should be reporting such abuse were afraid of repercussions, said that she wished to know of any measures planned or in place to protect reporters of abuse. She would also like information on any plans to upgrade the child abuse detection system and expand it to protect children who were not in

school. She wished to know more about the degree of cooperation between the specialized Child Protection Agency and civil servants in the municipalities. Since employees of the Agency apparently lacked the power to separate children from abusive parents or step-parents, did police enjoy such powers? She wondered why it was that over three-quarters of reported incidents of child abuse were committed by family members and how the Government planned to address that situation. Furthermore, could the delegation explain what measures were planned to minimize the negative impact of the Act on the Prevention of Violence in Schools, which could force the parties to a conflict to resort to legal action? It would likewise be interesting to hear how the Government planned to remedy the fact that victims of sex crimes could themselves face detention for up to two years, especially since the draft revised Act on the Protection of Children and Youth against Sex Offences had not yet been passed in parliament owing to the Government's objections, possibly arising from a lack of social consensus. What was the Government doing to achieve that social consensus?

The meeting was suspended from 3.50 p.m. to 4.15 p.m.

21. **Mr. Kim Gang Lip** (Republic of Korea) said that an evaluation of progress made under the first Master Plan for Child Policy was ongoing but had not yet been completed. There were currently no plans to establish a dedicated ministry for children.

22. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea) said that the Act on Special Cases Concerning Adoption had been revised following the withdrawal of the reservation to article 21 (a) of the Convention.

23. **Ms. Cho Soyoung** (Republic of Korea), recalling that the Criminal Procedure Act and Civil Procedure Act guaranteed the right of appeal for all citizens, including children, said that in order to withdraw the reservation to article 40 (2) (b) (v), the Military Court Act would first need to be revised, since the rulings of military trials under extraordinary martial law were unappealable. It was therefore difficult to provide a specific time frame for withdrawal of the reservation.

24. **Ms. Kim Young Joo** (Republic of Korea) said that, with a view to amending the legislation on abortion by December 2020, in the wake of the Constitutional Court's finding of unconstitutionality, the Government would closely analyse the ruling and conduct broad consultations to gather the views of women and religious, medical and legal representatives. It would then draft legislation for discussion at the inter-ministerial level.

25. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea) said that the best interests of the child would be fully taken into account in the process of gathering views. In addition, in order to prevent unwanted pregnancy, education on contraception and clear information on abortion would be provided to out-of-school youths and others. Support would be provided to young persons facing mental and physical challenges post-surgery and a specialized counselling centre for at-risk pregnancies would be established.

26. The Child Policy Coordination Committee was the main committee responsible for child policy. The Child Policy Working Committee reviewed policy alternatives and made suggestions. The National Centre for the Rights of the Child, which had been established in July 2019, would support the Child Policy Coordination Committee, thereby enhancing implementation of the Convention. While the Child Policy Coordination Committee was not convened frequently, there were many other forums for discussion of child policy and child rights, including at the inter-ministerial level. Some of those forums were chaired by the Prime Minister, thereby ensuring effective coordination.

27. The data collected from the Comprehensive Survey on Conditions of Children, which was conducted every five years, were fed into the Master Plan for Child Policy. A new team responsible for statistics management would be set up within the National Centre for the Rights of the Child in 2020, and work to develop a comprehensive system for managing child-related data was under way. Various ministries, including the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the Ministry of Education, would work together to compile better integrated child-related statistics and improve the efficiency of data management.

28. The independence of the National Human Rights Commission was guaranteed by law, and its budget was being increased to allow for further expansion of its independent monitoring activities.

29. **Ms. Kim Jiyun** (Republic of Korea) said that the Government was working to ensure that children's rights were systematically taught in the country's schools and that the national curriculum had been amended in 2015 to strengthen human rights education. For that purpose, human rights teaching materials had been developed for use in the classroom or via online platforms, teachers received training in human rights and gender-equality issues, and experts reviewed textbooks on a yearly basis to ensure that the relevant principles were adequately and appropriately reflected.

30. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea) said that, since the revision of the Child Welfare Act, training on the rights of the child had been compulsory for professionals working in childcare facilities such as Community Child Centres and Dream Start centres.

31. **Mr. Song Kwan-Sung** (Republic of Korea) said that, in line with the Act on Consumer Chemical Products and Biocides Safety, women and children were the priority consideration in safety standards for consumer chemical products, due to the greater likelihood of children becoming exposed, for example, by licking their hands. Disinfectants used only for children's products were subject to different standards than those applied to general purpose disinfectants and warning labels and child-resistant packaging were mandatory for certain products. The Environmental Health Act regulated children's activities, toys and other products in terms of the associated risk. The chemicals used and physical and electrical safety attributes were covered by other legislation.

32. Since it had been confirmed, in 2011, that toxic materials had been used for humidifier disinfectants, the Government had taken steps to increase corporate responsibility in respect of chemical products, introducing new product safety legislation and new assessment and registration requirements for chemical substances and making it obligatory for companies to prove the safety of their products before placing them on sale and to stating any hazards associated with specific products at the time of their registration.

33. When animal testing had identified pulmonary fibrosis in 2011, the Government had ordered a product recall and had recommended that consumers should stop using the product in question until further evidence was available. Tests on six humidifier disinfectants had found substances suspected of causing pulmonary fibrosis in one product, leading to another recall, and companies using fraudulent labelling had been fined. In April 2014, the Government had amended the Environmental Health Act to help victims of the humidifier disinfectants with medical and funeral expenses. Lawsuits had been filed against the companies concerned to cover costs incurred.

34. **Ms. Jhang Hyunjoo** (Republic of Korea) said that, because of conflicting social views regarding the inclusion of sexual orientation in the list of prohibited grounds for discrimination, anti-discrimination bills brought before the National Assembly had been withdrawn or repealed, thereby hindering implementation of the Committee's recommendations. However, the list of tasks established under the third National Action Plan for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights included measures to ensure the passage of anti-discrimination legislation. Seminars would be held to gauge public opinion prior to reviewing the legislation proposed.

35. **Mr. Kim Jiyun** (Republic of Korea) said that, thanks to the Government's efforts, the number of schools in which students participated in school governance had more than doubled, to over 2,000, in 2018. A current proposal would, if passed, allow students to submit suggestions and requests to their principals and boards of governors. It would also place schools under an obligation to provide a budget and allocate space for student councils to operate. City and provincial education offices also supported initiatives to increase student autonomy, providing training and distributing promotional material on best practices.

36. Although human rights, and the freedoms of assembly and expression in particular, were enshrined in the Constitution, individual schools could restrict certain activities, such as student participation in assemblies, on safety and other grounds. However, students had

to be consulted before school regulations were revised. A revision of the decree implementing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act that extended the scope of school regulations would increase students' privacy and loosen restrictions on their freedom of expression by changing the rules on hairstyles, dress codes, inspections of belongings and the use of electronic devices.

37. **Ms. Kim** Young Joo (Republic of Korea) said that the Civil Act prohibited disciplinary action that was contrary to a child's welfare, a provision that in principle outlawed corporal punishment and other forms of abuse. The Government was working to raise awareness of the issues prior to introducing an outright ban on corporal punishment and was organizing public consultations with a view to limiting the scope of the right to take disciplinary action.

38. **Mr. Kim** Jiyun (Republic of Korea) said that student human rights ordinances explicitly prohibited corporal punishment in schools. The guidance given to schools put forward alternative disciplinary options such as autonomous school courts and student consultations. Victims of corporal punishment could complain to the education authorities or seek remedies using the human rights advocacy system. In Gwangju, for example, when a student sought redress, a dedicated committee would discuss the events and report to the education superintendent, who would then order corrective action and issue notice of the outcome. The Government would provide financial support for all schools at all levels to help them to establish similar systems.

39. **Mr. Ko** Deuk Yung (Republic of Korea) said that corporate punishment was prohibited in all education facilities and perpetrators of child abuse were barred from employment for a period of time. Staff criminal records were reviewed annually, staff received an hour's training each year to remind them of their obligation to report child abuse and children received preventive education to equip them to avoid such infringements of their rights. School operating committees were exploring ways to promote human rights and prevent violations, a protection officer was conducting fact-finding surveys on human rights violations and central and local government were working together to monitor the situation. Pursuant to the Child Welfare Act, any persons who had abused a child sexually or in any other way and any persons who had suffered from mental illness were ineligible for inclusion on lists of prospective foster parents.

40. **Ms. Aldoseri**, noting that, according to some reports, the prohibition on corporal punishment was not applied equally in all settings and all locations, asked whether the prohibition established in correctional facilities was applicable in other similar settings and was applied uniformly in all provinces.

41. **Ms. Winter** asked how many children had made complaints about corporal punishment in schools or other institutions; how many of their complaints had been admitted; what the outcomes had been; what kind of restitution had been provided, if any; whether the children had had to move school; and what had happened to the perpetrators.

42. **Mr. Jaffé** said that, because the Republic of Korea had a long tradition of educational corporal punishment, a comprehensive review of parenting styles was needed. Given that the State party was already canvassing public opinion on the issue, he asked whether a deadline had been set for collection of the necessary information; what strategies would be used to combat corporal punishment; and whether the Civil Act, and particularly article 915, which seemed to permit educational chastisement, would be amended accordingly.

43. **Mr. Mezmur** said that the Committee had raised the issue of withdrawal of the State party's reservations to the Convention as far back as 1996 yet, 23 years later, was engaged in the same conversation. He was encouraged to note, however, that, according to the State party report, legal advice indicated that withdrawal of the reservations would be possible. Accordingly, he urged the State party to set a time frame for the corresponding legislative reforms. Noting that there were no members of the National Human Rights Commission present at the meeting, although the State party had previously indicated that there would be, he asked what the State party was doing to ensure the Commission's independence.

44. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that information about the content of the State party's campaigns to eliminate corporal punishment would be appreciated. He would also like to know whether it had a road map for enacting an outright ban.

45. **Mr. Kim Gang Lip** (Republic of Korea) said that legal and institutional action towards withdrawal of the State party's reservations had been taken but that he was not in a position to confirm a timeline since that was the mandate of the National Assembly and prior awareness-raising was necessary.

46. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea), drawing attention to the breakdown of the child- and juvenile-related budget provided in the report, said that a 3 per cent share of gross domestic product (GDP) was comparable with the average for Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries. Public social expenditure had been equal to 11.1 per cent of GDP in 2018, which was well below the 19 per cent average for the same group of countries, but that figure had risen from just 2.7 per cent in 1990, considerably outpacing the growth rates seen in OECD countries between 2005 and 2015. The Government had been making efforts to expand the child-related budget and its share in GDP was expected to increase in 2019 thanks to the introduction of universal child benefit and self-reliance subsidies for children discharged from care facilities.

47. **Mr. Kim Jiyun** (Republic of Korea) said that the Government had introduced standard guidelines for the installation of closed-circuit television in 2014 and provided annual guidance to schools to protect confidentiality and give students the right to have personal information deleted. The Government would ensure adherence with the guidelines.

48. **Ms. Choi Eunju** (Republic of Korea) said that the Government had continually expanded childcare and housing support for single mothers and low-income single-parent families. As of 2019, the maximum age up to which families were eligible to claim support for their children had been raised to 18 years and the amount of the support available had been increased to ₩200,000. In 2019, the budget for supporting single-parent families had more than doubled.

49. **Mr. Kim Gang Lip** (Republic of Korea) said that the Republic of Korea had the second highest suicide rate among OECD countries. Several ministries were working to tackle child suicide and the Ministry of Health and Welfare had a unit devoted specifically to addressing the related issues.

50. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea) said that the one-stop support service for families who had lost a family member to suicide would be piloted in the second half of 2019. The Ministry of Health and Welfare was cooperating with the police and other ministries in efforts to monitor and prevent the spread of suicide-inducing information online and had asked the media to exercise caution when covering the deaths of celebrities who had committed suicide so as to avoid glamourizing such events. A suicide prevention policy committee chaired by the Prime Minister would be set up in 2019 to further bolster government efforts to reduce suicide rates.

51. **Mr. Lumina**, pointing out that social expenditure in the State party remained low compared to the average among OECD countries, said that he would like to know what specific measures were being taken to increase child-related public expenditure as a share of GDP.

52. **Mr. Kim Gang Lip** (Republic of Korea) said that the need to increase social expenditure had been raised repeatedly at ministerial meetings on the national budget. Unfortunately, rapid population ageing was putting pressure on public resources. The Government was aware that it needed to create a positive environment for childbirth and child-rearing in order to increase the fertility rate and took that need into account when planning the national budget.

53. **Mr. Ko Deuk Yung** (Republic of Korea), acknowledging that, compared to the average among OECD countries, the amount spent on child benefits in the Republic of Korea remained relatively low, said that the Government would focus on addressing that issue, including by raising the maximum age for receipt of child benefits.

54. **Ms. Kim Young Joo** (Republic of Korea) said that persons who reported child abuse were covered by the law on the protection of persons who reported specific crimes, which stipulated that personal information should be omitted from the corresponding written records and provided for various personal protection measures. Unfortunately, the disadvantageous treatment of such persons remained a source of concern. The Government would strive to promote effective implementation of the protective measures provided for by law and would consider whether additional action could be taken in that area.

55. **Mr. Mezmur** asked whether foreign and migrant children had access to childcare services. Noting that only 12.4 per cent of male workers had taken paternity leave in 2017, he wondered why that figure was so low and how it could be increased. He would also like to know whether additional visiting centres for children with divorced parents would be set up; what would be done to address regional disparities in access to local foster care support centres; and what progress had been made in tackling the root causes that led to children being deprived of their family environment.

56. He wondered whether the State party had considered ratifying the Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption; why so many adoptions were disrupted; and what monitoring mechanisms were in place to eliminate disruptions. Concerns had also been raised about the transparency of adoption procedures. He would be interested to hear how the Republic of Korea engaged with countries that were not parties to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, with a view to promoting the best interests of the child when dealing with cases of parental child abduction. Lastly, he would like to know why the decision as to whether a child could live with his or her parent at a correctional facility fell to the prison warden and whether there were guidelines to ensure that the best interests of the child were taken into account in such cases.

57. **Mr. Lumina** said that he would welcome more information on the content of the comprehensive plan for persons with disabilities as it related to children with disabilities, the budget allocated to the plan, and the progress made in its implementation. He wondered what measures had been taken to ensure that appropriate welfare and medical support was provided to all children with disabilities, including asylum seekers and migrants, and to combat the stigmatization of such children. He would like to know what steps had been taken to ensure universal access to the national health insurance scheme, including for migrant children and children in economically disadvantaged situations, and to increase access to vaccines for migrant children.

58. He would appreciate more information on the support services available to adolescents during and after pregnancy and childbirth. He wondered what measures had been taken to mitigate the impacts of climate change resulting from reliance on fossil fuels; to protect mothers and children from the pollution caused by coal-fired power plants; and to support children who had been affected by pollution of that kind or by humidifier disinfectants and asbestos. He would like clarification as to whether child benefits were available to foreign and migrant children. Regarding the Government's intention to develop a plan to support children living in poverty, he wondered what progress had been made and whether the plan would cover migrant and asylum-seeking children. Lastly, he would like to know whether the Government had assessed the impact of corruption on the availability, quality and accessibility of public services that supported the realization of child rights.

59. **Ms. Aldoseri** asked whether the Government was planning to reduce the competitiveness of the education system in order to protect children's mental health. Noting that school dropout at the higher secondary level was increasing, she asked what had been done to address that problem and whether research into the root causes of school dropout had been conducted. She also enquired whether the exam-free semester system was open to children who had dropped out of school and whether children had a say in the career exploration opportunities that were available under that system.

60. Noting that the State party was looking into reducing the cost of private education and drawing attention to its obligation under the Convention to provide free quality education to all children, she asked what reform measures were being taken to make the public education system more attractive. She would also like to know whether public and

private education system compliance with the Special Act on the Promotion of Public Education Normalization and the Regulation of Pre-Curriculum Learning was systematically monitored; how it was possible that some schools were operating without the necessary accreditation from the Ministry of Education; and when schools would be banned from using high academic achievement as a prerequisite for participation in certain school activities.

61. Since the number of children with disabilities eligible for special education had increased steadily since 2011, she wondered what measures had been taken to address overcrowding in special schools. She also wished to know how the Framework Act on Education, which stipulated that the right to compulsory education was granted to nationals only, was compatible with the revised decree implementing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, which stated that foreign nationals could enrol in elementary and middle school without having to prove their migratory status. She further enquired what was being done to end the practice of deporting undocumented migrant children or denying them access to higher education after their graduation from secondary school; and what steps would be taken to facilitate access to education subsidies for undocumented migrant children.

62. She would appreciate information on the measures being taken in schools to combat bullying, including cyberbullying, and on the content of the reproductive health curriculum taught. Did the school curriculum cover issues relating to sexual orientation and gender identity?

63. **Ms. Winter** said that she was concerned to note there were no shelters for migrant children who had been subjected to child abuse and that such children were not granted the right to stay in the State party while their case was being investigated. In addition, migrant children in general did not receive any facility-based benefits and could be denied access to certain services, including education, as a result. She would like to know what was being done to remedy that situation and to tackle xenophobic attitudes towards migrants.

64. She wondered what sports policy changes would be made in order to better protect child athletes from violence, including sexual violence. With regard to juvenile justice, she would like to know how the relevant legislation was enforced in order to ensure that child suspects were not interrogated unless they were accompanied by a person of trust. Noting that the minimum age for detention in juvenile classification review centres had been reduced to 10 years old, she asked whether the Government would consider reversing that decision and establishing 14 years old as the minimum age for detention in those centres. Referring to legislative provisions which stated that children could be subject to a protective order if they had an inclination to engage in certain activities, she said she wished to point out that the word “inclination” was very ambiguous and asked whether the Government would consider repealing the provisions in question.

65. She urged the State party to respond to the Committee’s previously expressed concerns regarding the early identification of asylum-seeking children from conflict areas and the criminalization of the compulsory recruitment of children and their involvement in hostilities. She would like to know what measures had been taken to support the recovery of victims of child sex trafficking and to bring domestic legislation into line with the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Lastly, she wondered whether there were any data attesting to the impact of placing child victims of sex trafficking in closed institutions as a protective measure and whether any alternatives to that practice had been introduced.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.