



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined third to fifth periodic reports of Sierra Leone*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of Sierra Leone (CRC/C/SLE/3-5) at its 2136th and 2137th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.2136 and 2137), held on 14 and 15 September 2016, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2160th meeting, held on 30 September 2016.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports of the State party, which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party, and takes note of the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SLE/Q/3-5/Add.1), which were received the day before the dialogue. The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the high-level multisectoral delegation of the State party.

II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State party in various areas, including the ratification of or accession to international human rights instruments and the enactment of the Child Rights Act 2007, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009 and the Sexual Offences Act 2012. It also welcomes the preparation of the Adoption Bill and the adoption of several policies that are relevant to children's rights, in particular the National Child Justice Strategy (2013-2017) and the Child Welfare Policy (2014).

III. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

4. The Committee notes the effects of the Ebola virus disease in the State party, which caused tremendous hardship and had a negative effect on the implementation of the rights enshrined in the Convention.

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-third session (13-30 September 2016).



IV. Main areas of concern and recommendations

5. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: abuse and neglect (para. 19), sexual exploitation and abuse (para. 21), harmful practices (para. 23), children with disabilities (para. 28), adolescent health (para. 32) and education (para. 35).

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

6. **The Committee urges the State party to continue harmonizing all domestic legislation relating to children's rights with the Convention, including by reviewing the Child Rights Act and ensuring that the Act has precedence over all other laws. The State party should ensure that all the gaps that have been identified in other laws that concern children on issues such as trafficking, child marriage and child labour are adequately addressed.**

Comprehensive policy and strategy

7. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Provide support to the National Commission for Children to develop a comprehensive policy and strategy on addressing and monitoring child rights and protection issues;**

(b) **Develop strategies to implement child related policies supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources without relying mainly on donor funding.**

Allocation of resources

8. **In the light of its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Allocate adequate budgetary resources, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, for the implementation of children's rights and, in particular, increase the budget allocated to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to ensure that all line ministries adopt a child-centred budgeting approach;**

(c) **Taking note of target 16.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals on substantially reducing corruption and bribery in all their forms, take immediate measures to combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect and investigate cases of corruption and prosecute the perpetrators, including by putting in place the Public Expenditure Tracking Survey system in order to avoid diverting resources from the implementation of the Convention.**

Data collection

9. **In the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Allocate the necessary human and financial resources to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs for the maintenance and operationalization of the child protection information management system;

(b) Collect data on all areas of the Convention, disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin and socioeconomic background in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability;

(c) Take into account the conceptual and methodological framework set out in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) entitled *Human rights indicators: a guide to measurement and implementation* when defining, collecting and disseminating statistical information.

Independent monitoring

10. In the light of its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Enforce the 2004 Human Rights Commission Act in order to ensure that the Commission monitors the implementation of the Convention and effectively addresses violations of children's rights;

(b) Ensure that the new mechanism for monitoring children's rights is able to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

11. The Committee recommends that the State party continue strengthening its awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns on children's rights, through the existing community-based structures. It also recommends that the State party continue its efforts to translate the Convention into local languages. It further recommends that all professionals working with and for children be systematically trained and that human rights education be included in the official curriculum at all levels of education.

Cooperation with civil society

12. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the capacity of local non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and systematically involve civil society, including NGOs and children's associations, in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes relating to children's rights at the local level.

B. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

13. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Finalize the review of the Constitution and ensure that its provisions on non-discrimination are in full compliance with the Convention;

(b) Intensify its efforts to eliminate discrimination against groups of children in the most vulnerable situations, such as girls, children with disabilities, children living with HIV/AIDS, children orphaned as a result of Ebola and children in rural areas;

(c) Cooperate with the widest range of stakeholders, in particular through its community-based structures such as village development committees and child welfare committees, including children, community and traditional leaders and all sectors of society, to promote social and cultural change and create an enabling environment that promotes equality among children.

Best interests of the child

14. In the light of its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that this right is appropriately integrated and consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children. In this regard, the State party is encouraged to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in authority on determining the best interests of the child in every area and on giving them due weight as a primary consideration. The State party is encouraged to put in place strategies for monitoring the decisions taken.

Respect for the views of the child

15. In the light of its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee encourages the State party to ensure that children's views are given due consideration, in accordance with article 12 of the Convention, particularly at the community level, through established networks such as village development committees and other community-based structures, as well as in the family, at schools and in relevant judicial and administrative procedures concerning children.

C. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8 and 13-17)

Birth registration

16. Taking note of target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue its efforts to register all children, especially those in rural areas;
- (b) Ensure the integration of birth registration into the general civil registration reform programme.

D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Corporal punishment

17. In the light of its general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the Committee urges the State party to explicitly implement the prohibition of corporal punishment in all settings, as recommended in the Code of Conduct for Teachers and Other Education Personnel (2009), especially at home, in schools and in alternative care settings and detention institutions. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns among parents and relevant professional groups, on alternative methods of discipline, raise awareness of parents and children on the Code of Conduct

and strengthen and enforce sanctions to make teachers and all personnel working with children accountable for violating the Code.

Abuse and neglect

18. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party to address child abuse and neglect, particularly the adoption of relevant legislation, the provision of training support and the setting up of a helpline and the Family Support Units. However, the Committee is seriously concerned at:

- (a) The limited capacity of the Family Support Units at the village level;
- (b) The limited access to services for abused children and the lack of early abuse detection and prevention systems at the community level;
- (c) The high level of impunity enjoyed by perpetrators of child abuse and neglect;
- (d) The lack of comprehensive data on children suffering from ill-treatment, abuse and neglect, domestic violence and sexual abuse.

19. **In the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, and taking note of target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, the Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Strengthen the technical and operational capacities of the Family Support Units to increase their outreach at the village level;**
- (b) **Take the necessary measures to ensure that child victims of violence receive psychological and recovery support and encourage them to report cases of abuse, violence and neglect;**
- (c) **Establish mechanisms for the early detection and prevention of child abuse at the community level by, inter alia, strengthening the capacity of the existing local councils, child welfare committees and other community-based child protection mechanisms;**
- (d) **Ensure that criminal proceedings are systematically brought against the perpetrators of violence against children in order to eliminate impunity and raise awareness among families and community leaders about the negative consequences of the culture of impunity;**
- (e) **Establish a national database on all cases of violence against children, including ill-treatment, sexual abuse, child abuse and neglect and domestic violence.**

Sexual exploitation and abuse

20. The Committee notes that the State party has adopted the Sexual Offences Act 2012 and established the National Referral Protocol on Gender-based Violence. However, it reiterates its previous concerns (see CRC/C/SLE/CO/2, para. 72) and expresses its grave concern at:

- (a) The high incidence of sexual violence, including rape and defilement in all settings, including in the family and in schools;
- (b) The low rate of reporting of sexual abuse and exploitation, especially owing to the reluctance of families and the general public to report such cases and the practice of parents accepting payment instead of reporting cases;

(c) The lack of medical treatment, free examination and compensation for child victims of sexual violence, as guaranteed by the Sexual Offences Act and the National Referral Protocol;

(d) The low rate of convictions for reported incidents of rape and defilement.

21. Drawing attention to target 5.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on eliminating all forms of violence against all women and girls in the public and private spheres, including trafficking and sexual and other types of exploitation, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) **Prioritize and ensure adequate resources for the implementation of the Sexual Offences Act and other relevant legislation and adopt comprehensive measures to address such violence;**

(b) **Ensure the effectiveness of mechanisms, procedures and guidelines for mandatory reporting of cases of sexual abuse and exploitation and ensure accessible, child-friendly and effective reporting channels for such violations;**

(c) **Ensure that all child victims receive psychosocial medical support and access to post-rape health services;**

(d) **Take all necessary measures to investigate reported cases of sexual violence and prosecute and punish the perpetrators without any exception, including by not accepting any out-of-court settlements in such cases;**

(e) **Conduct awareness-raising activities and combat stigmatization of child victims of sexual violence, including incest.**

Harmful practices

22. Despite the huge success of the Government's efforts to include practitioners of female genital mutilation in the fight against submitting children to female genital mutilation, the Committee is seriously concerned that:

(a) Female genital mutilation is still practised and is not prohibited in law for children;

(b) Although the minimum age for marriage is set at 18 years, the Registration of Customary Marriage and Divorce Act 2009 allows for exceptions and child marriage, especially of girls, remains highly prevalent in the State party.

23. In the light of the joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2014) on harmful practices, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) **Continue its fight with the assistance of former female practitioners of female genital mutilation to eradicate the practice of female genital mutilation on children nationwide;**

(b) **Accelerate efforts and programmes to sensitize and assist practitioners of female genital mutilation to find alternative sources of income and encourage them to abandon the practice;**

(c) **Take concrete and consistent measures, including the harmonization of laws, to prevent and eliminate child marriage and undertake comprehensive awareness-raising campaigns on the negative consequences of child marriage on girls.**

E. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18 (1) and (2), 20-21, 25 and 27 (4))

Family environment

24. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the effectiveness of the Trust Fund for Child Welfare by providing it with adequate human, technical and financial resources, as well as implementing the strategic plan (2013-2017) of the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs. It also recommends that the State party disseminate the Child Welfare Policy by training all key stakeholders and recruiting additional social workers to increase coverage at the community level.

Children deprived of a family environment

25. Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (see General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), the Committee emphasizes that financial and material poverty, or conditions directly and uniquely attributable to such poverty, should never be the sole justification for removing a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care or for preventing a child's social reintegration. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that all possible assistance is given to children orphaned as a result of the Ebola virus, including by conducting awareness-raising campaigns to avoid their stigmatization;

(b) Fully implement the National Alternative Care Policy for Children, particularly with regard to establishing and implementing minimum standards for the operation of residential care homes and regulating informal care (*men pikin*);

(c) Ensure adequate safeguards and clear criteria, based on the needs and best interests of the child, for determining whether a child should be placed in alternative care;

(d) Ensure periodic review of the situation of children placed in foster care and in institutions, and monitor the quality of care therein, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying ill-treatment of children;

(e) Ensure the registration of existing alternative care centres for children and ensure that they operate in accordance with the minimum standards;

(f) Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to alternative care centres and relevant child protection services, in order to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children resident therein to the greatest extent possible.

Adoption

26. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Expeditiously amend and adopt the legislation on adoption, raise awareness about the adoption procedures and regulations and promote and encourage formal domestic adoption;

(b) Implement the recommendations of the Commission of Inquiry on the Help A Needy Child International-Maine Adoption Placement Services adoptions;

(c) Consider ratifying the 1993 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

F. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1)-(3) and 33)

Children with disabilities

27. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Persons with Disabilities Act 2011 and the establishment of the National Commission for Persons with Disabilities. However, the Committee is seriously concerned at:

(a) The lack of information on the adoption of the National Policy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities and on funding for the National Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities, and how those instruments support children with disabilities;

(b) The insufficient measures in place to ensure that children with disabilities fully enjoy their rights, in particular with reference to health and education;

(c) The inadequate number of specialized teachers and the limited number of school facilities and materials adapted to children with disabilities, as well as services and infrastructure available in order to ensure that education is truly inclusive;

(d) The lack of comprehensive data on children with disabilities.

28. **In the light of its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Adopt the National Policy for the Protection of Persons with Disabilities;**

(b) **Set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities;**

(c) **Ensure sufficient funding for the National Development Fund for Persons with Disabilities, in particular to support children with disabilities;**

(d) **Support communities, local councils and NGO partners to build capacity for family and community-based care and support for children with disabilities;**

(e) **Ensure that children with disabilities have access to inclusive early childhood care and education, early development programmes, health care and other services, and ensure that such services receive adequate human, technical and financial resources;**

(f) **Adopt measures towards fully inclusive education;**

(g) **Collect and analyse data on the situation of all children with disabilities, disaggregated by, inter alia, age, sex, type of disability, ethnic and national origin and geographic location.**

Health and health services

29. **In the light of its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and taking note of target 3.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals on reducing maternal mortality, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts to reduce the maternal and under-5 mortality rates, especially by focusing on preventive measures and treatment, improved nutrition and sanitary conditions and the management of preventable diseases, such as cholera and malaria;**

(b) **Strengthen its efforts to allocate appropriate human, technical and financial resources to health care for mothers and children;**

- (c) **Provide adequate human and financial resources for special services for child Ebola survivors;**
- (d) **Strengthen its programmes and policies that promote exclusive breastfeeding for six months and information about the progressive introduction of a safe and appropriate infant diet thereafter;**
- (e) **Strengthen its efforts to improve access to basic health-care services with trained health workers for children and pregnant women, especially in rural areas.**

Mental health

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that accessible mental health and counselling services are available in the country and are sensitive to the needs of children and adolescents. It also recommends that orphans and child survivors of Ebola are provided with psychosocial counselling and support for reintegration into communities without any stigma or discrimination.**

Adolescent health

31. While noting that the State party developed national standards for adolescent and youth-friendly health services in 2011, launched its national strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy in 2013 and established a secretariat dealing with teenage pregnancy, the Committee regrets that the report does not provide details on the implementation of those instruments or the work of the secretariat. The Committee is seriously concerned at:

- (a) The high number of teenage pregnancies;
- (b) The high number of unsafe and illegal abortions;
- (c) The lack of adolescent-sensitive and confidential counselling services, including contraceptive services, and post-rape services;
- (d) The difficulties adolescents, especially boys, encounter in trying to access reproductive health care and information, including on the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases;
- (e) The stigmatization and discrimination of teenage pregnancy;
- (f) The absence of laws prohibiting the sale of alcohol and drugs to children.

32. **In the light of its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention, the Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to the secretariat dealing with teenage pregnancy and to the strategy for the reduction of teenage pregnancy;**
- (b) **Improve adolescent girls' access to reproductive health-care and related services and increase support for reproductive health and family planning services and access to affordable contraceptive methods;**
- (c) **Decriminalize abortion in all circumstances and review its legislation with a view to ensuring children's access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services, and ensure that the views of the child are always heard and respected in abortion decisions;**
- (d) **Take measures to raise awareness of and foster responsible sexual behaviour, particularly among boys and men;**

(e) Ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted at adolescent girls and boys, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections, particularly HIV, and ensure access to confidential counselling;

(f) Protect pregnant girls and adolescent mothers and their children against discrimination;

(g) Address the incidence of drug use by children and adolescents by, *inter alia*, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information, as well as life skills education, on preventing substance abuse, including tobacco and alcohol, and develop accessible and youth-friendly drug-dependence treatment and harm reduction services.

HIV/AIDS

33. In the light of its general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, the Committee recommends that the State party step up its efforts to ensure the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, early diagnosis and early initiation of treatment, proper coverage for HIV testing and antiretroviral provision, improve access to quality, age-appropriate HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health services and step up activities to prevent discrimination against and stigmatization of children with HIV/AIDS. The State party should seek technical assistance from, *inter alia*, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

G. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28-31)

Education

34. The Committee reiterates its previous concerns (see CRC/C/SLE/CO/2, para. 64) and expresses serious concern at the discriminatory policy the Ministry of Education instituted in March 2015 of barring "visibly pregnant girls" from attending school and sitting their Basic Education Certificate Examination.

35. In the light of its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education, and taking note of target 4.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals on eliminating gender disparities in education, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Ensure that primary school is genuinely free and remove all other additional costs that are barriers to access in order to ensure the participation of all children;

(b) Immediately lift the discriminatory ban on pregnant girls attending mainstream schools and sitting exams;

(c) Ensure that pregnant girls and adolescent mothers are supported and assisted in continuing their education in mainstream schools;

(d) Take appropriate measures to address charges of sexual abuse in schools and prosecute perpetrators;

(e) Taking note of target 4.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ensuring that all girls and boys have access to quality early childhood development, care and pre-primary education, allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of such services, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and development.

H. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)-(d) and 38-40)

Economic exploitation, including child labour

36. The Committee welcomes the State party's adoption of the Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) of the International Labour Organization and recommends that the State party:

(a) Take steps to implement the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour (2013-2016);

(b) Implement the by-laws developed at the community level on various forms of child labour that are traditionally practised;

(c) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to labour inspection in order to fully, regularly and effectively implement the laws and policies on child labour, including on occupational health and safety, and prosecute any perpetrators of violations relating to child labour.

Children in street situations

37. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Collect data on children in street situations and identify and address the root causes;

(b) Increase and disburse on time the budget allocations to the Ministry of Social Welfare, Gender and Children's Affairs, which is responsible for providing support to children in street situations and their families;

(c) Develop a strategy and take all necessary measures to ensure that children in street situations are provided with adequate food, clothing, housing, health care and educational opportunities;

(d) Provide children in street situations with preventive recovery and reintegration services;

(e) Give parents who send their children to work on the streets before and after school a legal warning of the legal consequences relating to child labour.

Sale, trafficking and abduction

38. The Committee recommends that the State party collect data on trafficking of children and identify and address its root causes, revise the Anti-Human Trafficking Act 2005, provide adequate human, technical and financial support to the police anti-human trafficking unit, and ensure effective investigation into cases of sale, trafficking and abduction of children and the prosecution and sanctioning of the perpetrators.

Administration of juvenile justice

39. In the light of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, the Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations (see CRC/C/SLE/CO/2, para. 77) and recommends that the State party bring its juvenile justice system fully into accordance with the Convention and other relevant standards. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Fully implement the National Child Justice Strategy (2013-2017) by integrating child justice issues in the justice sector and promoting diversion and alternatives to detention;
- (b) Operationalize the age assessment guidelines and make sure that all the relevant stakeholders working with children receive training and copies of the guidelines;
- (c) Step up efforts to establish family courts across the country;
- (d) Ensure that pretrial detention is used as a last resort only and for the shortest possible period of time, not exceeding six months, and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to withdrawing it;
- (e) In cases where detention is not avoidable, ensure that children are not detained together with adults and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services;
- (f) Ensure the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children in conflict with the law at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings.

Child victims and witnesses of crimes

40. The Committee recommends that the State party provide adequate and child-sensitive medical, counselling and legal services for child victims and witnesses. It also recommends that cases involving child victims and witnesses be heard within the shortest possible period of time.

I. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure

41. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.

J. Ratification of international human rights instruments

42. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, aiming at the abolition of the death penalty, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

K. Cooperation with regional bodies

43. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of the African Union on the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other African Union member States.

V. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

44. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented. The Committee also recommends that the combined third, fourth and fifth periodic reports, the written replies to the list of issues and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

B. Next report

45. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined sixth and seventh periodic reports by 1 September 2022 and to include therein information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 31 January 2014 (CRC/C/58/Rev.3) and should not exceed 21,200 words (see General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16). In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

46. The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document, not exceeding 42,400 words, in accordance with the requirements for the common core document contained in the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I) and paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/268.