



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
19 September 2018

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-ninth session

Summary record (partial)* of the 2311th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 17 September 2018, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Ms. Winter

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Opening of the session

1. **The Chair** declared open the seventy-ninth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Statement by the representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

2. **Mr. Nowosad** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that children continued to be left behind, and indeed tormented in ways that demonstrated the dark side of humanity. Trends that had appeared positive, such as the improving situation with regard to hunger, were being reversed: according to the 2018 report on the State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World, the number of hungry people in the world had increased for the third consecutive year, accounting for one in nine people. Stunting continued to affect 22 per cent of the under-5s and, according to Save the Children, more than half a million infants in conflict zones could die of malnutrition by the end of the year if they did not receive treatment. The failure to reduce world hunger was closely associated with the increase in conflict and the impact of climate change, which it seemed impossible to get to grips with.

3. Inequality and discrimination continued to affect children. Paying a tribute to the late Mr. Kofi Annan, former Secretary-General of the United Nations, and to his family, he noted that Mr. Annan had written in the introduction to his end-of-decade review of the follow-up to the World Summit for Children, *We the Children: Meeting the promises of the World Summit for Children*: “We were all children once. And we all share the desire for the well-being of our children, which has always been and will continue to be the most universally cherished aspiration of humankind.” That should not be only an aspiration: no child should be left behind.

4. Not everything was negative for children’s rights, however. As the Convention on the Rights of the Child approached its thirtieth anniversary, children around the world were becoming increasingly aware of their rights, as attested by the 20-member children’s advisory team that was supporting the Committee in organizing, and would assist in moderating, the forthcoming day of general discussion on protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders.

5. The day of general discussion would mark the launch of a long-term project to promote a global movement of children human rights defenders that would link into broader initiatives at the national, regional and international levels. In that regard, he commended the ground-breaking work done by Child Rights Connect and expressed his gratitude for the support provided by the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights defenders.

6. With the United Nations paying increasing attention to children and young people — their human rights concerns were spotlighted in the OHCHR Management Plan for 2018–2021, for example — children were also becoming increasingly involved in its work. The publication of the Committee’s Working methods for the participation of children in the days of general discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child was therefore very timely.

7. He welcomed the presence of representatives of various specialized agencies, whose cooperation, along with that of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and other competent bodies, was vital to the Committee’s work.

8. At their recent annual meeting, the Chairs of the treaty bodies had focused on the alignment of working methods, for example through a common approach to follow-up to concluding observations, decisions and views, and further alignment of the simplified reporting procedure. A workshop on the simplified reporting procedure was to be run in November by the Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights. He thanked the Academy, and also the Government of Germany, which had provided financial support for the event.

9. As could be seen from the latest report of the Secretary-General on the status of the human rights treaty body system, the allocation of staff resources did not match the treaty bodies' workload in respect of the review of reports and individual communications. Moreover, there was no provision at all for other mandated activities such as urgent actions, enquiries, follow-up and in situ visits. That would hinder the United Nations in its efforts to support Member States in meeting their treaty obligations. Those were challenges that would need to be addressed in the 2020 review of the treaty body system.

Submission of reports by States parties

10. **Ms. Franchetti** (Secretary of the Committee) said that 6 reports had been received since the previous session, bringing the number of reports pending consideration to 43. Afghanistan, Belarus, Cambodia, Cyprus, Czechia and Rwanda had submitted reports on the implementation of the Convention. The initial reports of Somalia, South Sudan and the State of Palestine were overdue. The number of States that had ratified the Convention remained unchanged at 196.

11. The number of ratifications of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography remained unchanged at 167 and 174, respectively. Two States, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Slovenia, had ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, bringing the total number of ratifications to 39.

Cooperation with other United Nations bodies, specialized agencies and other competent bodies

12. **Ms. Andrees** (International Labour Organization (ILO)) said that, according to the latest ILO report on Global Estimates of Child Labour, 152 million children were still in child labour, 73 million of them doing hazardous work. Most child labour was in agriculture and largely comprised unpaid family labour. Integrated responses were needed to ensure that parents had access to decent work and that small family enterprises could operate without child labour.

13. Even given the significant decline in child labour between 2002 and 2016, at the current pace the target of elimination of all forms of child labour by 2025 under the Sustainable Development Goals would not be met. Two particular concerns were the 5–11 age group, where progress had virtually ground to a halt, and the African region. Africa had not only the highest prevalence of child labour but the highest numbers in absolute terms, so a breakthrough was critical: the dramatic progress made in Asia showed that it was possible.

14. A robust legislative framework was essential to addressing the issues and she was pleased to report that the ILO Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182) had now been ratified by all but five of the ILO member States. In Bolivia, the Constitutional Court had declared a law setting a minimum working age of 10 unconstitutional, a major step towards bringing that country's legislation into compliance with international law. She also drew attention to the Buenos Aires Declaration adopted at the fourth Global Conference on the Sustained Eradication of Child Labour, which set forth key policy measures of the sort that had been decisive in achieving reductions.

15. Alliance 8.7, a highly diverse group set up by ILO to work towards the eradication of forced labour in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 8.7, was identifying pathfinder countries to lead the effort at the national level, and had set up action groups to deal with various aspects of the issue. Two business networks also contributed to its goals: the Child Labour Platform, of which the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) was a member, and the ILO Global Business Network on Forced Labour. ILO also supported national child labour surveys and, at the request of the Group of 20 (G-20) countries, was working on new research with UNICEF on child labour and forced labour in global supply chains.

16. **Mr. Daher** (Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)) said that the Human Rights Council's next annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child was due to take place in March 2019. It would focus on empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, particularly through inclusive education. That theme would also be the subject of the Council's next resolution on children's rights and of the forthcoming report of OHCHR to the Council. Consultations on that report were under way with UNICEF, civil society, Member States and children themselves.

17. His Office had recently submitted a thematic report on the prevention of newborn and child mortality that presented the conclusions of an expert meeting hosted in partnership with the World Health Organization (WHO), and another on the realization of the right to birth registration for those children most at risk, marginalized and living in situations of vulnerability.

18. The Human Rights Council had requested OHCHR to provide input from a rights of the child perspective to the 2019 high-level political forum on sustainable development, which would focus on Sustainable Development Goals in areas including education, eliminating child labour and ending all forms of violence against children; to that end, OHCHR would be carrying out consultations and would welcome input from the Committee. A United Nations strategy in the area of youth would shortly be launched, which would emphasize the need for the Organization to engage with young people and encourage them to participate in all its activities. Under the strategy, young people's rights would be mainstreamed through the work of treaty bodies and other human rights mechanisms. OHCHR had also recently submitted a thematic report to the Human Rights Council on the discrimination faced by young people in claiming their rights, underlining the intersectionality between age and other forms of discrimination. OHCHR continued to support the development of a global study on children deprived of their liberty, which would be presented to the United Nations General Assembly in October 2019. OHCHR also looked forward to building on the outcomes of the Committee's day of general discussion on children's rights and the environment and taking forward work on the issues to be raised in the Committee's timely comment in the area of digital media and children's rights.

19. **Ms. Grandjean** (United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)) said that work was under way at UNICEF — the results of which would be shared widely — to document how engagement with human rights mechanisms had changed children's lives, and how lessons learned could improve strategy in that regard. In connection with those efforts, some sections of internal UNICEF online guidance for reporting to the Committee were being revised in order to strengthen linkage with reporting on Sustainable Development Goals; make increased use of the rich data generated by the monitoring and reporting mechanism on children and armed conflict under Security Council resolution 1612 (2005); and improve reporting on issues affecting a range of child rights such as climate change and migration.

20. UNICEF, in conjunction with other actors, had started to prepare for the 2019 Human Rights Council's annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child on empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education, and for the corresponding resolution. Given the focus on empowerment, UNICEF would be promoting the active participation of children with disabilities both at the event itself and during the lead-up to it, and would welcome the Committee's involvement in the meeting and the resolution, as a way to strengthen the linkage between the Committee and child-rights related debates at the Human Rights Council.

21. UNICEF was carrying out preparatory work with a view to calling for a world summit for children to be held in 2019 to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. The summit would seek the renewed commitment of world leaders to the Convention on the Rights of the Child in a negotiated outcome document and would explicitly link the Convention to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals. The summit could consist of two parts: a physical summit followed by an innovative "virtual summit" using digital technology to connect national events around the world. The suggested theme of the summit was "the future of childhood", reflecting the new threats to their rights that children faced as well as the new opportunities for realizing them. Working closely with

partners, UNICEF would produce original data analysis to document the past, present and future of childhood and child rights in a fast-changing world. Children would be given multiple opportunities to influence the agenda and participate directly in advocacy.

22. **Mr. Stahlhofer** (World Health Organization (WHO)) said that WHO was carrying out various activities in the area of child and adolescent health, in support of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. He was pleased to see the attention being paid by the Human Rights Council to the health and development of newborns, infants and children under the age of 5; indeed, the death of close to 6 million children under the age of 5 was not just a public health emergency but also a human rights violation, especially since the majority of the causes of death were treatable or preventable. Some 13 years after the adoption of the Committee's general comment No. 7 on implementing child rights in early childhood, over 40 per cent of children in low- and middle-income countries — approximately 250 million children — were still at risk of not attaining their full potential. The Sustainable Development Goals and the Global Strategy for Women's, Children's and Adolescents' Health (2016–2030) had embraced young children's development, seeing it as central to the transformation that was sought by 2030. Indeed one of the targets was to ensure that all girls and boys had access to quality early childhood development, in line with Sustainable Development Goal target 4.2. To facilitate equitable access to high-quality early childhood development programmes and efforts, the World Health Organization, in collaboration with UNICEF, the World Bank, and many other partners, had established the Nurturing Care Framework for Early Childhood Development, which had been adopted at the World Health Assembly in May 2018. The Nurturing Care Framework was built upon principles of equity and human rights, including child rights, and explicitly recognized the Convention on the Rights of the Child as a foundation for implementing the Framework's five strategic actions.

23. WHO had recently launched a number of global standards for improving quality of maternal and newborn care in health facilities, in terms of both provision of care and experience of care. Using a rights-based approach, including the best interests of the child, parents and children themselves had been involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of the care services provided. In the area of environmental health, it was estimated that reducing environmental risks could prevent more than a quarter of the deaths of the nearly 6 million children under the age of 5. Childhood deaths from key environmental risks ranged from nearly 600,000 preventable deaths annually from air-pollution related diseases to 200,000 deaths from malaria, which were preventable through environmental management. In order to support member States in their efforts to improve environmental health for children, WHO was working to build the capacity of the health sector, to prevent childhood diseases of environmental origin, and the capacity of health professionals, to recognize and prevent childhood diseases related to key environmental risks. Work was also being carried out in the area of monitoring, through the provision of regular inter-agency reports on access to safe water, sanitation and air quality. In addition, field interventions were aimed at reducing exposure, prevention, and decreasing the burden of disease in children, particularly in urban areas. At the end of October 2018, WHO would host the first Global Conference on Air Pollution and Health, to include a session on children's health and air pollution, in which it was planned to involve the Committee.

24. WHO provided support to member States in improving adolescent health care and development through its Global Accelerated Action for the Health of Adolescents (AA-HA!) guidance, adopted at the World Health Assembly in 2016. The guidance encompassed many initiatives, including the development of a handbook to help identify, and overcome, barriers that prevented adolescents from accessing health services. Other initiatives included work to improve the collection of data on children with disabilities, and the development of health intervention packages in the areas of eye care, hearing and rehabilitation, with the aim of improving health outcomes for children. In recent years, WHO had increased the focus on human rights in its work. He had been very pleased that work at the thirty-ninth session of the Human Rights Council on applying a human rights-based approach to address mortality and morbidity among newborns and children under 5 years of age had culminated in a joint statement to that end, signed by over 100 Member States, thereby rewarding the efforts of WHO and OHCHR to have child health recognized as an important human rights issue. The Human Rights Council had also acknowledged the

need for technical guidance in that regard, in which WHO had an important role to play. However, more work needed to be done, for example in the area of capacity building, to make policymakers, legislators and health professionals understand the intricate relationship between child health and respect for protection of their rights. The recently agreed Framework for Cooperation between WHO and OHCHR would provide renewed impetus for WHO to work closely with United Nations human rights mechanisms — including the treaty bodies — in a more systematic fashion.

25. **Ms. Schulter** (Child Rights Connect) said that the Committee was to be commended on its continued commitment to strengthen the right of children to be heard and their meaningful participation in its work, since children's views and participation were invaluable resources for the realization of their rights worldwide. The selection of the theme "protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders" for the 2018 day of general discussion usefully challenged the common perception of children as merely objects of protection rather than holders of human rights. In the framework of its initiative on children as human rights defenders, Child Rights Connect had set up a global children's advisory team, consisting of 21 children from all regions of the world, who had been involved in preparations for the day of general discussion to ensure that it would be a safe and effective space for children to speak up and be heard by the international community. Child Rights Connect had also conducted worldwide consultations involving more than 2,500 children from 53 countries to inform the day of general discussion. The results of the consultations were presented in a child-friendly report drawn up by the Centre for Children's Rights at Queen's University Belfast, the electronic version of which was already available on the Child Rights Connect website. Thanks to the Committee's openness to the views of the children's advisory team, the day of general discussion was expected to be not only child-friendly but engaging for adults too. Child human rights defenders would take key roles as speakers and moderators during the event itself.

26. Child Rights Connect would continue to work on the global movement of child human rights defenders and towards the recognition, protection and empowerment of children who acted as human rights defenders, and looked forward to continued collaboration with the Committee in that regard. Specifically, the organization planned to institutionalize the children's advisory team as a permanent body of the Child Rights Connect global network, in order to continue the high level of children's participation in the ongoing areas of collaboration with the Committee. Child Rights Connect appreciated the ongoing support received from OHCHR in facilitating its work with the United Nations system.

27. A children's rights perspective was crucial in any human rights discourse. In that regard, Child Rights Connect looked forward to collaborating with the Committee and other relevant bodies on updating the Committee's general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, finalizing general comment No. 7 of the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and preparing for the 2019 Human Rights Council's annual full-day meeting on the rights of the child with the theme "empowering children with disabilities for the enjoyment of their human rights, including through inclusive education". Child Rights Connect aimed to ensure that children with disabilities were involved in the planning and implementation of, and follow-up to, the latter event.

Organizational matters

28. **The Chair**, reviewing the items on the agenda, said that the Committee would examine nine reports submitted by six States parties: Benin, El Salvador, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Mauritania, Niger and Saudi Arabia. Discussions would continue on the Committee's methods of work, especially those concerning the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure and the follow-up to the treaty-body strengthening process. Any communications or information received in relation to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure would also be considered. A day of general discussion would be held on 28 September 2018, with the theme "protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders". The Committee would continue to work on the revision of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice and start work in 2019 on a

new general comment, on children's rights and digital media. The Committee's eightieth session would be held from 14 January to 1 February 2019.

Adoption of the agenda (CRC/C/79/1)

29. *The agenda was adopted.*

The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.10 a.m.