



**United Nations**

# **Report of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**

**Seventy-eighth session  
(14 May–1 June 2018)**

**Seventy-ninth session  
(17 September–5 October 2018)**

**Eightieth session  
(14 January–1 February 2019)**

**Eighty-first session  
(13–31 May 2019)**

**Eighty-second session  
(9–27 September 2019)**

**Eighty-third session  
(20 January–7 February 2020)**

**Extraordinary eighty-fourth session  
(2–6 March 2020)**

**General Assembly**

**Official Records**

**Seventy-fifth Session**

**Supplement No. 41**





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*Note*

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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## **I. Organizational and other matters**

### **A. States parties to the Convention**

1. As at 6 March 2020, the closing date of the extraordinary eighty-fourth session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, there were 196 States parties to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. This makes it the most widely ratified human rights instrument, with only one ratification left to reach universal ratification, namely that of the United States of America. An updated list of States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the Convention can be consulted at <http://treaties.un.org>.

2. As at the same date, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict had been ratified or acceded to by 170 States parties, 3 more than at the time of the previous report to the General Assembly (A/73/41), and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been ratified or acceded to by 176 States parties, 2 more than at the time of the previous report.

3. The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, as at 6 March 2020, had been ratified or acceded to by 46 States, 9 more than at the time of the previous report to the General Assembly. An updated list of States that have signed, ratified or acceded to the three Optional Protocols can be consulted at <http://treaties.un.org>.

### **B. Sessions of the Committee**

4. The Committee held seven sessions in the reporting period (3 February 2018 to 6 March 2020): the seventy-eighth session (14 May–1 June 2018), the seventy-ninth session (17 September–5 October 2018), the eightieth session (14 January–1 February 2019), the eighty-first session (13–31 May 2019), the eighty-second session (9–27 September 2019), the eighty-third session (20 January–7 February 2020) and the extraordinary eighty-fourth session (2–6 March 2020). The first six sessions were held in Geneva.

5. In accordance with the Committee's decision No. 14 (see para. 51), the extraordinary eighty-fourth session, the first session of any human rights treaty body held at the regional level outside Geneva or New York, took place in Samoa. The session was made possible through the financial and logistical support provided by the Regional Rights Resource Team of the Pacific Community and its donors – Australia, the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, New Zealand and Sweden – and the Government of Samoa, as well as the Office of the United Nations Resident Coordinator in Samoa and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Pacific office.

6. Subsequent to each session, the Committee makes public all concluding observations adopted, as well as any decisions and recommendations (including those arising from a day of general discussion) and general comments adopted.

### **C. Membership and officers of the Committee**

7. From the seventy-eighth to the eightieth session, the Committee retained the same members and officers noted in its previous report to the General Assembly (A/73/41), with Renate Winter as the Chair (see A/73/41, annex I).

8. In accordance with article 43 of the Convention, the seventeenth meeting of States parties to the Convention was convened on 29 June 2018, at United Nations Headquarters. The following nine members of the Committee were elected or re-elected for a term of four years beginning on 1 March 2019: Suzanne Aho Assouma, Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi, Bragi Gudbrandsson, Philip Jaffé, Gehad Madi, Faith Marshall-Harris, Clarence Nelson, José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes and Aïssatou Alassane Sidikou.

9. The list of the members of the Committee, with an indication of their term of office, appears in annex I to the present report. Annex I also indicates the officers elected at the eighty-first session of the Committee, including the new Chair, Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna.

#### D. Adoption of the report

10. At its 2470th meeting, held on 6 March 2020, the Committee unanimously adopted its fifteenth biennial report to the General Assembly, covering its activities between the end of the seventy-seventh session and the end of the extraordinary eighty-fourth session.

## II. Reports submitted by States parties under article 44 of the Convention, article 8 of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and article 12 of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

#### A. Submission of reports

11. The status of submission of reports and the adoption of related concluding observations can be found at: [http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/\\_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx](http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/TreatyBodyExternal/Countries.aspx).

12. During the reporting period, the Committee received 48 new reports: 40 periodic and 4 initial reports under the Convention; 1 initial report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 3 initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. In total, the Committee had received 597 reports pursuant to article 44 of the Convention, including 202 initial and 395 periodic reports, as well as 116 initial reports and 2 periodic reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 114 initial reports and 2 periodic reports under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. As at 6 March 2020, the backlog of reports to be considered by the Committee stood at 41 reports: 37 under the Convention, 1 under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 3 under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

#### B. Consideration of reports

13. During the period under review, the Committee considered a total of 48 reports: 2 initial and 32 periodic reports under the Convention, 6 initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and 8 initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

14. The following table indicates, by session, the reports of States parties considered by the Committee during the period covered by the present report, including their respective document symbols. It further provides the document symbol of the concluding observations. The State party reports and the Committee's concluding observations can be found on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>).

	<i>State party report</i>	<i>Concluding observations</i>
<b>Seventy-eighth session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Angola	CRC/C/AGO/5-7	CRC/C/AGO/CO/5-7



	<i>State party report</i>	<i>Concluding observations</i>
Argentina	<a href="#">CRC/C/ARG/5-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/ARG/CO/5-6</a>
Lesotho	<a href="#">CRC/C/LSO/2</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/LSO/CO/2</a>
Montenegro	<a href="#">CRC/C/MNE/2-3</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/MNE/CO/2-3</a>
Norway	<a href="#">CRC/C/NOR/5-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/NOR/CO/5-6</a>
<i>Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict</i>		
Algeria	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/DZA/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/DZA/CO/1</a>
Angola	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/AGO/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/AGO/CO/1</a>
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>		
Angola	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/AGO/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/AGO/CO/1</a>
Russian Federation	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/RUS/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/RUS/CO/1</a>
<b>Seventy-ninth session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
El Salvador	<a href="#">CRC/C/SLV/5-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/SLV/CO/5-6</a> and <a href="#">Corr.1</a>
Lao People's Democratic Republic	<a href="#">CRC/C/LAO/3-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/LAO/CO/3-6</a>
Mauritania	<a href="#">CRC/C/MRT/3-5</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/MRT/CO/3-5</a>
Niger	<a href="#">CRC/C/NER/3-5</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/NER/CO/3-5</a>
<i>Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict</i>		
Benin	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/BEN/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/BEN/CO/1</a>
Saudi Arabia	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/SAU/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPAC/SAU/CO/1</a>
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>		
Benin	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/BEN/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/BEN/CO/1</a>
Niger	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/NER/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/NER/CO/1</a>
Saudi Arabia	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/SAU/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/SAU/CO/1</a>
<b>Eightieth session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Bahrain	<a href="#">CRC/C/BHR/4-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/BHR/CO/4-6</a>
Belgium	<a href="#">CRC/C/BEL/5-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/BEL/CO/5-6</a>
Guinea	<a href="#">CRC/C/GIN/3-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/GIN/CO/3-6</a>
Italy	<a href="#">CRC/C/ITA/5-6</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/ITA/CO/5-6</a>
Japan	<a href="#">CRC/C/JPN/4-5</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/JPN/CO/4-5</a>
Syrian Arab Republic	<a href="#">CRC/C/SYR/5</a> and <a href="#">Corr.1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/SYR/CO/5</a>
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>		
Czechia	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/CZE/1</a>	<a href="#">CRC/C/OPSC/CZE/CO/1</a>

	<i>State party report</i>	<i>Concluding observations</i>
<b>Eighty-first session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Botswana	CRC/C/BWA/2-3	CRC/C/BWA/CO/2-3
Cabo Verde	CRC/C/CPV/2	CRC/C/CPV/CO/2
Malta	CRC/C/MLT/3-6	CRC/C/MLT/CO/3-6
Singapore	CRC/C/SGP/4-5	CRC/C/SGP/CO/4-5
Tonga	CRC/C/TON/1	CRC/C/TON/CO/1
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>		
Sri Lanka	CRC/C/OPSC/LKA/1	CRC/C/OPSC/LKA/CO/1
<b>Eighty-second session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Australia	CRC/C/AUS/5-6	CRC/C/AUS/CO/5-6
Bosnia and Herzegovina	CRC/C/BIH/5-6	CRC/C/BIH/CO/5-6
Mozambique	CRC/C/MOZ/3-4	CRC/C/MOZ/CO/3-4
Portugal	CRC/C/PRT/5-6	CRC/C/PRT/CO/5-6
Republic of Korea	CRC/C/KOR/5-6	CRC/C/KOR/CO/5-6
<i>Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict</i>		
Georgia	CRC/C/OPAC/GEO/1	CRC/C/OPAC/GEO/CO/1
Panama	CRC/C/OPAC/PAN/1	CRC/C/OPAC/PAN/CO/1
<i>Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography</i>		
Georgia	CRC/C/OPSC/GEO/1	CRC/C/OPSC/GEO/CO/1
<b>Eighty-third session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Austria	CRC/C/AUT/5-6	CRC/C/AUT/CO/5-6
Belarus	CRC/C/BLR/5-6	CRC/C/BLR/CO/5-6
Costa Rica	CRC/C/CRI/5-6	CRC/C/CRI/CO/5-6
Hungary	CRC/C/HUN/6	CRC/C/HUN/CO/6
Rwanda	CRC/C/RWA/5-6	CRC/C/RWA/CO/5-6
State of Palestine	CRC/C/PSE/1	CRC/C/PSE/CO/1
<b>Extraordinary eighty-fourth session</b>		
<i>Convention on the Rights of the Child</i>		
Cook Islands	CRC/C/COK/2-5	CRC/C/COK/CO/2-5
Micronesia (Federated States of)	CRC/C/FSM/2	CRC/C/FSM/CO/2
Tuvalu	CRC/C/TUV/2-5	CRC/C/TUV/CO/2-5

15. During the period under consideration, the Committee did not receive any comments from States parties on concluding observations.

## C. Progress achieved: trends and challenges of the implementation process

16. In accordance with its practice regarding its biennial reports, in the present section the Committee assesses achievements and challenges, as well as current trends in children's rights. In particular, the Committee dedicates a subsection to children's rights in the child justice system.

### 1. Progress achieved in general

17. With the reports of Somalia, South Sudan, the State of Palestine and Tonga having been received, there are currently no overdue initial reports. The Committee also received its first two reports under the simplified reporting procedure: one from Hungary and one from Luxembourg.

18. During the period under review, the Committee adopted decisions on 31 individual communications under article 5 of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. It adopted, at its seventy-eighth session, its first inquiry report under article 13 of the same Optional Protocol.

19. During its eighty-first session, the Committee issued its first revision of a general comment. General comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system replaced general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice (see paras. 24–27 below). During the same session, it adopted guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC/C/156) in order to improve the quality of the reporting by States parties, United Nations entities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and others on the implementation of the Optional Protocol, as well as to support and facilitate the task of the Committee in monitoring the implementation.

20. The Committee continued its work on the process of strengthening the treaty body system by making the simplified reporting procedure available to States parties whose periodic reports were due from 1 September 2019 onwards. As at 6 March 2020, 80 States had received an invitation and 18 had decided to avail themselves of the procedure. At its eighty-third session, following an evaluation of its first State party review under the procedure, the Committee decided to make the simplified reporting procedure available to States parties with overdue reports that would be interested in reporting under the procedure.

21. There was a notable increase in child participation in the work of the Committee, thanks to the momentum created by the 2018 day of general discussion, on the theme "Protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders" (see para. 77). Following that day of general discussion, children and adolescents played key roles as speakers and in moderating discussions in all of the Committee's activities. They were central in the celebrations marking the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention in 2019 and the thematic meetings during the extraordinary eighty-fourth session.

22. At its historic first regional session, in Samoa, the Committee reviewed the situation of children's rights in the Cook Islands, Micronesia (Federated States of) and Tuvalu, and held a preparatory meeting for a future review of Kiribati. It also met with children in the formal session, and with young people, United Nations entities, national human rights institutions and civil society from the Pacific region to hold thematic discussions on climate change, the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and human rights issues that were important for children in the region. Participants expressed great appreciation of the regional session, as it allowed interaction with the Committee by actors, such as children and civil society actors, who normally would not be able to go to Geneva. State delegations and the Committee were able to have a constructive and productive dialogue in person, and interact and share experiences in a manner that would not have been possible through video link. The 90 child participants stated their appreciation for the opportunity to express their views on an equal footing with adults, and said the session had empowered them to speak up for their rights.

23. Between sessions, the Committee members were personally engaged in numerous activities. Those included participating in several meetings, conferences, seminars, lectures

and courses, as well as working intersessionally on individual communications, inquiries, general comments, the organization of days of general discussion and celebrations to mark the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention. Additionally, many Committee members were involved in the follow-up to the concluding observations of the Committee in a number of countries upon invitation from States, civil society organizations and UNICEF. That work remains indispensable to guarantee a better application of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto.

## **2. Children's rights in the child justice system**

24. In the English version of general comment No. 24 (see para. 19 above), the Committee used the term "child justice" in place of "juvenile justice" as a reminder that all persons under the age of 18 years are children in terms of the Convention and should be dealt with in systems specially designed for children. The purpose of that general comment is to guide States towards a holistic implementation of child justice systems that promote and protect children's rights with a focus on prevention and early intervention. In the general comment, the Committee encourages States to scale up the diversion of children away from formal justice processes and to effective programmes, and to expand the use of non-custodial measures to ensure that detention of children is a measure of last resort.

25. The general comment includes new guidance, based on developmental science and recent trends, encouraging States to increase the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age. The Committee calls on States to set minimum duration periods for deprivation of liberty and encourages States to set an age limit below which children may not legally be deprived of their liberty, such as 16 years. The Committee reminds States parties that the imposition of capital punishment and life imprisonment without parole on persons who were under 18 years of age at the time of the offence is prohibited under the Convention and strongly recommends that States abolish all forms of life imprisonment for such persons. It also notes that disciplinary measures in violation of article 37 of the Convention must be strictly forbidden, including corporal punishment, placement in a dark cell and solitary confinement.

26. The general comment contains guidance related to children involved with non-State armed groups and charged in counter-terrorism contexts. The Committee stresses the need for States to establish procedures for the rapid handover of these children to relevant civilian child protection actors, and emphasizes that they should be treated primarily as victims of violations of international law. For these children, non-judicial measures and social reintegration should be considered as alternatives to prosecution and detention. If children are charged with offences in those contexts, they should be dealt with under the provisions of articles 37 and 40 of the Convention.

27. In the general comment, the Committee also recognizes the importance of justice systems that operate parallel to or on the margins of the formal justice system, including customary, tribal or indigenous justice systems, particularly the restorative nature of such processes. It notes that there is an emerging consensus that reforms of justice sector programmes should be attentive to such processes, while ensuring that children's rights are upheld in all systems.

## **3. Trends and challenges**

28. The thirtieth anniversary of the Convention was marked in November 2019. During the past three decades, children at last became full holders of rights and not mere objects of charity. Almost all States parties throughout the world have developed legislation, policies and practices dedicated to children's rights, including legislation aimed at eliminating violence against children. The global under-5 mortality rate has fallen by about 60 per cent over the past three decades. Access to education at both primary and secondary levels continued to improve. Fewer girls are married before the age of 18 and the rate of those who undergo female genital mutilation is constantly declining. Rates of birth registration worldwide are improving.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> UNICEF, *For Every Child, Every Right: The Convention on the Rights of the Child at a Crossroads*

29. The Committee also notes with satisfaction that in the past few years there has been progress on child participation worldwide. More and more children and adolescents are taking into their hands the promotion and protection of all human rights, in particular those affecting their life and development, such as climate change, in order to have a better world in which to grow and live. It is important that States listen to them and take their views into account.

30. Despite all these advancements, more is needed with regard to implementation. Too many children, especially those in vulnerable situations, are left behind. It is regrettable that concerns expressed in previous biennial reports, in particular about non-discrimination and violence against children, continue to be a serious concern affecting children in all settings and in all regions of the world. For instance, despite the Committee's recommendations to all States to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in law in all settings, during the reporting period the proportion of the global child population fully protected in law from corporal punishment in all settings grew only slightly, to 12 per cent, up from 10 per cent. While welcoming that, as at February 2020, 59 States had achieved prohibition in all settings, including the home, the Committee is still concerned that approximately 70 per cent of all States still allow corporal punishment at home and in other settings.<sup>2</sup> Additionally, measures to implement legal provisions to eliminate corporal punishment and enhance positive parenting strategies are often insufficient. Sufficient infrastructure to address child abuse and neglect is noticeably lacking in many regions of the world, including reporting mechanisms, established intervention procedures and appropriate therapeutic and social support for children and their caregivers. All community leaders, including political, social and religious leaders, must coalesce to stop these practices, which have long-term damaging effects on children that carry into their adult lives.

31. Fighting child sexual abuse and sexual exploitation should be a priority of States in all regions. Although child sexual abuse in the circle of trust, including the family and religious communities, remains the greatest challenge in safeguarding children from sexual violence, the Committee is seriously concerned about the alarming trends with regard to sexual abuse and sexual exploitation through the use of information and communication technologies, including the use of real-time video streaming of sexual abuse. Children and adolescents are now more exposed to online grooming, "sexting" and "sextortion". Safeguarding children from sexual abuse and exploitation requires preventive measures, such as awareness-raising among parents, professionals and society at large, as well as a child-friendly and multisectoral response system to enhance the evidential value of children's disclosures, avoid re-traumatization of child victims and ensure psychological and social support.

32. The Committee is also addressing new trends and challenges linked to children's rights in relation to the digital environment. Access to digital technologies is important for the empowerment of children and the realization of their rights, including to education, participation, access to appropriate information and freedom of expression. At the same time, the Committee has highlighted to States parties its concerns regarding access to the Internet and information and communications technologies, ensuring online safety and promoting digital literacy among children, parents and relevant professionals. The recent increase in online sexual abuse and exploitation highlights the importance of strengthening international collaboration among child professionals, law enforcement agencies and policymakers, as set out in the guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, which has significantly increased the use of digital technologies by children, has further revealed the urgency of legislative, policy and other appropriate measures to ensure compliance with the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

33. The Committee remains concerned about violations of the rights of children with disabilities that persist, despite its previous recommendations. Such violations include widespread institutionalization and misinterpretations of the concept of inclusive education

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(New York, 2019), pp. 5–7.

<sup>2</sup> See <http://endcorporalpunishment.org/wp-content/uploads/legality-tables/Global-progress-table-commitment.pdf>.

that leave many children with disabilities out of school or relegated to special education institutions. In light of the work done by the joint working group of the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, established in 2018, the Committee on the Rights of the Child agreed that although the Convention on the Rights of the Child included a specific provision devoted to children with disabilities (art. 23), the rights of children with disabilities were not limited to the rights listed in that provision but rather extended to all the rights, guarantees and protection mechanisms under the Convention and formed part of a human rights-based approach to disability. The Committee further took a decision to have a separate paragraph on children with disabilities in the dialogue structure, as well as in the concluding observations, and to no longer include this area under “health care”.

34. The Committee notes with concern that the situation regarding immunization of children exposed to vaccine-preventable diseases worsened during the reporting period. In particular, it notes the resurgence of measles in both developing and developed countries, due mainly to misinformation about vaccines on social media. The Committee urges States to increase the proportion of the budget allocated to health and invest more in routine immunization campaigns without relying entirely on funding from international cooperation; to address the inadequacy of human resources in the health sector; to detect the main bottlenecks and identify appropriate approaches to solutions; and to develop strategies and various programmes in order to reach all children, particularly those in vulnerable situations and living in remote areas. Appropriate information about the importance and safety of immunization should be disseminated to improve parents’ and caregivers’ knowledge and trust in the importance of child immunization.

35. The Committee is deeply concerned about the continuing violations of the rights of a significant number of children in the context of armed conflict. These include a reported increase in the denial of or unlawful restrictions on humanitarian access; arrest, detention and, in some instances, torture and ill-treatment of children and adolescents who are accused of associations with groups designated as terrorist organizations; the targeting of very young girls and boys for sexual violence; and ostracism within communities of mothers and their children born of wartime rape.

36. The Committee continues to be seriously concerned about the negative impact of climate change and environmental harm on the enjoyment of children’s rights. This impact affects the implementation of a very long list of provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocols. During the reporting period, the Committee’s engagement on the issue has increased, in the context of its reviews of State party reports as well as a result of the extraordinary eighty-fourth session in Samoa. The Committee provided comments to the Special Rapporteur on the issue of human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment for his report on the relationship between children’s rights and environmental protection ([A/HRC/37/58](#)). In 2019, 16 children submitted a complaint to the Committee within the framework of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure alleging the absence of government measures on climate change in 12 countries, which reconfirmed the important role of child human rights defenders. There is increasing evidence that States parties must double their efforts to respect, protect and fulfil the rights of children in relation to climate change and environmental harm. As the Committee stated in a press release issued on 27 September 2019, children are the most affected by the actions or inactions of leaders today.

37. In the context of the spread of COVID-19, the Committee is concerned about possible violations of children’s rights, especially in those States that have declared states of emergency and mandatory quarantines. States should consider the health, social, educational, economic and recreational impacts of the pandemic on children when putting in place such restrictions. In particular, the Committee notes that confinement measures might increase the psychological harm experienced by children and the risk of violence and child abuse. States should ensure that children have access to mental health care and that child social protection services remain functioning and available, including home visits, when necessary, and strengthened reporting and referral mechanisms through phone and online channels. Additionally, States should enable children to engage in outdoor activities,

under adult supervision, at least once a day, complying with physical distance protocols and other hygiene standards.

38. While online learning is a creative alternative to classroom learning, States should be mindful of the special challenges posed for children with limited Internet access and for children with disabilities. In addition, States should provide nutritious food to children who usually benefit from meals in schools. Furthermore, children should have access to information about COVID-19 in languages and formats that are child-friendly and accessible and their views should be heard in any decision-making processes regarding the pandemic.

39. States parties should take specific measures to protect children whose vulnerability might be particularly exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, including with regard to their access to health, education, affordable food, clean water, sanitation facilities and adequate housing. These include children with disabilities; children living in poverty; children in street situations; migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee and internally displaced children; minority and indigenous children; children with underlying health conditions, including HIV/AIDS; children who are deprived of their liberty; and children who are living in institutions. Particularly, children deprived of their liberty, including in migrant detention centres and institutions, should at all times be allowed to maintain regular contact with their families. Whenever possible, such children should be released. The arrest and detention of children for violating the rules relating to COVID-19 should be avoided.

40. In the context of the possible financial and economic crisis that may follow the emergency measures to address the spread of COVID-19, the Committee reminds States parties that in times of economic crisis, regressive measures may only be considered after assessing all other options and ensuring that children are the last to be affected, especially children in vulnerable situations. States parties shall demonstrate that such measures are necessary, reasonable, proportionate, non-discriminatory and temporary and that any rights thus affected will be restored as soon as possible.<sup>3</sup> All measures taken by States parties to address and to follow up on the COVID-19 pandemic should be based on the general principles of the Convention, particularly the right to non-discrimination and the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration.

41. As a final point, regarding the financial and liquidity crisis affecting the United Nations, which could have an impact on the work of the Committee, including the holding of its sessions, the Committee urges States to fulfil their responsibilities arising out of the human rights treaties they have ratified, in order not to put at risk the treaty body system and the rights of all stakeholders, especially victims of violations.

### **III. Activities carried out under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure**

42. Article 16 of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure provides that the Committee is to include in its report submitted every two years to the General Assembly a summary of its activities carried out under the Optional Protocol.

#### **A. Action taken by the Committee in respect of issues arising under article 5 of the Optional Protocol**

43. During the reporting period, the Committee received over 200 individual communications under article 5 of the Optional Protocol, of which 71 were registered. This brought the total number of registered cases to 116 as at 6 March 2020. As at the same date, there was a backlog of 78 cases pending examination by the Committee.

44. The Committee adopted decisions on 32 cases during the reporting period: *M.A.B. v. Spain* (CRC/C/83/D/24/2017), *H.B. v. Spain* (CRC/C/83/D/25/2017), *N.R. v. Paraguay* (CRC/C/83/D/30/2017), *M.H. v. Finland* (CRC/C/83/D/23/2017), *Y.F. v. Panama*

<sup>3</sup> General comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, para. 31.

(CRC/C/83/D/48/2018), *D.C. v. Germany* (CRC/C/83/D/60/2018), *A.D. v. Spain* (CRC/C/83/D/21/2017), *M.D. v. Georgia* (CRC/C/83/D/45/2018), *A.H.A. et al. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/83/D/52/2018), *M.T. v. Spain* (CRC/C/82/D/17/2017), *R.K. v. Spain* (CRC/C/82/D/27/2017), *A.S. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/82/D/36/2017), *K.H. et al. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/82/D/32/2017), *A.P. and K.P. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/82/D/33/2017), *Z.R. and Q.S. et al. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/82/D/43/2018), *M.I.M. v. Spain* (CRC/C/82/D/54/2018), *A.L. v. Spain* (CRC/C/81/D/16/2017), *J.A.B. v. Spain* (CRC/C/81/D/22/2017), *J.G. v. Switzerland* (CRC/C/81/D/47/2018), *Y and Z v. Finland* (CRC/C/81/D/6/2016), *L.H.L. and A.H.L. v. Spain* (CRC/C/81/D/13/2017), *D.N. et al. v. Switzerland* (CRC/C/81/D/61/2018), *Navarro Presentación and Medina Pascual v. Spain* (CRC/C/81/D/19/2017), *D.D. v. Spain* (CRC/C/80/D/4/2016), *A.D. v. Spain* (CRC/C/80/D/14/2017), *D.K.N. v. Spain* (CRC/C/80/D/15/2017), *C.E. v. Belgium* (CRC/C/79/D/12/2017), *N.B.F. v. Spain* (CRC/C/79/D/11/2017), *Z.Y. and J.Y. v. Denmark* (CRC/C/78/D/7/2016), *Y.M. v. Spain* (CRC/C/78/D/8/2016), *K.A.B. v. Germany* (CRC/C/78/D/35/2017) and *M.B. v. Spain* (CRC/C/78/D/39/2017).

45. All the decisions were adopted by consensus. They are available on the Official Document System of the United Nations (<http://documents.un.org/prod/ods.nsf/home.xsp>) and the Committee's web page (<http://juris.ohchr.org/en/search/results?Bodies=5&sortOrder=Date>).

46. The Committee found violations of the Convention in 10 of those cases: 8 against Spain, 1 against Belgium and 1 against Paraguay. It declared 14 cases inadmissible: 6 against Spain, 4 against Denmark, 2 against Finland, 1 against Germany and 1 against Panama. It discontinued 8 cases: 2 against Denmark, 2 against Spain, 2 against Switzerland, 1 against Georgia and 1 against Germany. The majority of the cases dealt with migration-related issues. However, during 2019, the Committee noted a wider variety of rights violations being brought to its attention, as well as communications being brought against a wider range of States parties.

47. In the framework of the follow-up procedure established under article 11 of the Optional Protocol and rule 28 of the rules of procedure under the Optional Protocol, at its eighty-second session, the Committee assessed the measures taken to implement the Views and recommendations concerning three individual communications submitted under the Optional Protocol. The follow-up procedure for two of the three cases included in the first follow-up report were successfully closed in light of the positive implementation by Belgium and Denmark of the respective Views and recommendations issued by the Committee.

48. At its eightieth session, the Committee adopted guidelines on interim measures under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure,<sup>4</sup> with a view to clarifying the procedure it uses for granting interim measures under article 6 (1) of the Optional Protocol. At its eighty-first session, the Committee decided to include, as of that session, its reasoning in the discontinuance decisions. At its eighty-third session, the Committee adopted guidelines on third-party interventions under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.<sup>5</sup> With the support of some States, including Germany, Slovakia and Slovenia, UNICEF, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children and civil society partners the Committee organized and participated in a number of events and informal consultations aimed at promoting its work under the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

## **B. Action taken by the Committee in respect of issues arising under article 13 of the Optional Protocol**

49. During the reporting period, the Committee received one request to open an inquiry. In relation to the submission received on 28 May 2019 and registered as case No. 2019/1, the Committee requested additional information from the respective State party.

<sup>4</sup> Available at the Committee's web page ([www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx)).

<sup>5</sup> Available at the Committee's web page ([www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/en/hrbodies/crc/pages/crcindex.aspx)).



50. During its seventy-ninth session, with reference to case No. 2015/1, the Committee decided not to designate members to conduct an inquiry under article 13 (2) of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

51. With reference to case No. 2016/1, during its seventy-eighth session, the Committee decided to adopt the report on its inquiry to Chile ([CRC/CHL/IR/1](#)), which was sent to the State party on 30 May 2018. The State party sent its replies on 4 December 2018. On 8 February 2019, at its eightieth session, the Committee decided to send a letter in follow-up to the State party's replies. The State party provided more information on 13 December 2019 and the Committee sent a second follow-up letter on 18 February 2020. The Committee is grateful to the Government of Chile for the continuous support provided throughout the inquiry procedure.

## **IV. Overview of the other activities of the Committee**

### **A. Decision adopted by the Committee**

52. The Committee adopted the following decision on 27 September 2019, at its eighty-second session:

#### **Decision No. 14**

At its 2430th meeting, pursuant to article 43 (10) of the Convention, which provides that the meetings of the Committee are normally to be held at United Nations Headquarters or at any other convenient place as determined by the Committee, the Committee, taking note of the position paper of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies on the future of the treaty body system ([A/74/256](#), annex III), decided to look at the possibility of holding a session of the Committee in the Pacific region.

### **B. Methods of work**

#### **1. New rules of procedure and working methods**

53. At its seventy-eighth session, the Committee adopted working methods for the participation of children in the days of general discussion of the Committee on the Rights of the Child ([CRC/C/155](#)). They are aimed at facilitating and promoting the meaningful participation of all children, particularly those in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations, in days of general discussion. While specific to the participation of children in the days of general discussion of the Committee, the working methods contain principles and guidelines that can be used by Governments, United Nations bodies, including other treaty bodies, specialized agencies, NGOs, national human rights institutions, the business sector and other relevant stakeholders for the organization of other meetings with the participation of children at the regional and international levels.

54. At its seventy-ninth session, the Committee decided by consensus to adopt amendments to its rules of procedure (rules 16 to 19, 23 and 25 of the previous version). The number of the members of the Bureau was reduced from six to five, in alignment with the Bureaus of the other Committees.

#### **2. General comments**

55. At its eighty-first session, the Committee adopted general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system. Nineteen States provided comments on the draft text.

56. At its eighty-second session, the Committee started work on its next general comment, focused on children's rights and the digital environment.

57. With regard to 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 (2019) on harmful practices,<sup>6</sup> the two Committees decided to delete all references to exceptions permitting marriage at 16 years in exceptional circumstances contained in paragraphs 20 and 55 (f) of the joint general comment. States parties should therefore ensure that the minimum legal age of marriage for girls and boys is established at 18 years without exception.

### **3. Informal meetings with States**

58. At its eightieth session, on 31 January 2019, the Committee held its eleventh informal meeting with States at the Palais des Nations, Geneva. Nearly 70 States attended. The Committee discussed a range of issues, including the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention, the slow pace of ratification of the three Optional Protocols and the Committee's work on general comments. Experts also spoke about the successful day of general discussion held in September 2018, and the 2020 review of treaty bodies, stressing that the Committee was seriously considering how to increase the efficiency of its work and its visibility. Thirteen States took the floor in the subsequent discussion.

59. At its eighty-third session, on 6 February 2020, the Committee held its twelfth informal meeting with States, attended by almost 50 States. Issues discussed included the Committee's upcoming session in Samoa, its next general comment, on children's rights in the digital environment, and its next day of general discussion, on children in alternative care. Among the progress made in the previous year, the Committee mentioned the first review of a State party under the simplified reporting procedure and the raising of the age of criminal responsibility to 14 in general comment No. 24. Eleven States took the floor in the following discussion.

### **4. Press releases**

60. During the reporting period, the Committee issued 17 press releases, 9 alone and 8 jointly with other treaty bodies, including the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families, and/or special procedure mandate holders, including the Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions, the Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of the right to freedom of opinion and expression and the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities. Press releases were issued to mark Universal Children's Day (20 November), the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention and the fifth anniversary of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. Other press releases focused on specific situations related to children's rights in Iran (Islamic Republic of), Saudi Arabia, Venezuela (Bolivarian Republic of) and Yemen and in the European Union. A number of press releases dealt with the topics of detention of children in the context of migration, climate change and the extraordinary eighty-fourth session in Samoa. All press releases issued by the Committee are available from [www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/newssearch.aspx?MID=Committ\\_Rights\\_Child](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/newssearch.aspx?MID=Committ_Rights_Child).

### **5. Introduction meeting for new members**

61. Because of the shortage of resources, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) was not able to hold an orientation meeting for the four newly elected members on the Friday before the eighty-first session. Orientation sessions with members of the Committee and staff of OHCHR were held during the eighty-first session outside of formal meeting time.

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<sup>6</sup> This joint general recommendation/general comment was initially adopted in 2014. It was subsequently revised in 2019 by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at its seventy-second session and by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at its eightieth session.

## C. International cooperation and solidarity for the implementation of the Convention

### 1. Cooperation with United Nations entities and other competent bodies

62. During the period covered by the present report, the Committee pursued its active cooperation with United Nations entities and specialized agencies and other competent bodies. Since its seventy-ninth session, United Nations entities and other competent bodies have been invited to deliver statements during the opening meeting on their work related to children's rights. As at the end of the reporting period, the following bodies had delivered statements: the International Labour Organization, the International Organization for Migration, the World Health Organization (WHO), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization and UNICEF, as well as Child Rights Connect and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

63. The Committee engaged with United Nations entities as described below:

(a) On 5 February 2020, the Committee held its seventh biennial meeting with UNICEF, in which representatives from UNICEF headquarters and Deputy Regional Directors participated, to seek ways to enhance the existing cooperation between the Committee and UNICEF (eighty-third session);

(b) The Committee held regular meetings with OHCHR to discuss the outcome of the treaty body strengthening process. It also received briefings on children's rights and the environment and corruption, as well as updates regarding the Human Rights Council, the meetings of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies and issues related to children's rights;

(c) A briefing was held with WHO on opportunities and ways forward to strengthen WHO support for the Committee's reporting process (eighty-second session);

(d) WHO and UNICEF, together with the Lancet Commission, gave a presentation on commercial harm to children (eighty-third session);

(e) In a submission dated 15 March 2019, the Committee encouraged the high-level political forum on sustainable development to explore synergies between the recommendations made by the Committee and other human rights mechanisms and the Sustainable Development Goals, including in the voluntary national review processes.

64. The Committee met with the following other competent bodies and representatives:

- Child Rights Connect, for a presentation of its annual workplan (eightieth and eighty-third sessions). Several meetings related to the participation of children in the work of the Committee were also held, including a lunchtime briefing on child participation in the work of the Committee, facilitated by Laura Lundy, Queen's University Belfast (eighty-third session).
- Child Soldiers International (seventy-eighth session).
- Juvenile Justice Advocates International (seventy-eighth session).
- Terre des hommes fédération internationale and FIAN International, for a presentation on the right to food and nutrition (seventy-eighth session).
- Child Rights International Network (seventy-eighth, seventy-ninth, eightieth, eighty-first, eighty-second and eighty-third sessions).
- Plan International, for a presentation on girls' rights (seventy-eighth session).
- International Social Service and SOS Children's Villages, for a presentation on the tenth anniversary of the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (seventy-eighth session).
- Ending Clergy Abuse, for a presentation on justice for child victims of abuses by clergy (seventy-eighth session).

- All Survivors Project, for a presentation on victims/survivors of sexual violence, including boys in situations of armed conflict and forced displacement (seventy-eighth session).
  - 5Rights Foundation, for a presentation on the process regarding the draft general comment on digital environment (seventy-ninth session).
  - Consortium for Street Children (seventy-ninth session).
  - International and Canadian Child Rights Partnership, for a presentation on child participation in relation to child protection (seventy-ninth session).
  - International Society for Social Pediatrics and Child Health, for a presentation on global health and the well-being of children (seventy-ninth session).
  - European Union Agency for Fundamental Rights, for a presentation on the Sustainable Development Goals (eightieth session).
  - Danish Institute for Human Rights, for a presentation on the Sustainable Development Goals and human rights (eightieth session).
  - Terre des hommes fédération internationale and OHCHR, for a presentation on children's rights and the environment (eightieth session).
  - International Social Service, Katherine Wade and Katarina Trimmings, for a presentation on surrogacy (eightieth session).
  - Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights, for a presentation on its work (eighty-first session).
  - Center for Reproductive Rights, for a presentation on surrogacy (eighty-first session).
  - University of Strathclyde and the Department of Foreign Affairs of Switzerland, for a presentation on the online course on caring for children moving alone (eighty-first session).
  - Geneva Academy of International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights and OHCHR, for a presentation on human rights and corruption (eighty-first session).
  - African Child Policy Forum, for a presentation on the African report on child well-being (eighty-first session).
  - Defence for Children International, for a briefing on the call for action on justice for children (eighty-second session).
  - Institute on Statelessness and Inclusion, for a joint briefing for the Committee on the Rights of the Child and the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families on the right to nationality (eighty-second session).
  - GlobalChild, for a presentation on children's rights indicators (eighty-second session).
  - Child moderators and child reporters, who attended the Committee's event commemorating the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention (eighty-second session).
  - United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization Chair at the Institute of Technology Tralee, for a briefing on leveraging sport for development and peace through the Committee on the Rights of the Child framework (eighty-second session).
  - Shaheed Fatima, for a presentation on the Inquiry on Children and Armed Conflict (eighty-second session).
  - International Social Service, for a briefing on the draft principles for the protection of the rights of the child in the context of surrogacy (eighty-second session).
65. With respect to cooperation with other United Nations human rights mechanisms and special procedure mandate holders, in the framework of the above-mentioned joint

working group (see para. 33), the Committee worked with the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities with a view to aligning the working methods of both Committees, which also falls within the framework of General Assembly resolution 68/268. Following a one-day seminar in September 2019, supported by UNICEF, the members of the joint working group prepared an analysis of the doctrine and work of the two Committees on the rights of children with disabilities.

66. At its eighty-third session, on 4 February 2020, the Committee signed a framework of cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict. The aim of the agreement is to strengthen work on promoting the implementation at the national level of the rights of children affected by conflict-related sexual violence, including children born of rape.

67. On 21 February 2020, the Committee submitted comments on the Human Rights Committee's revised draft general comment No. 37 on the right of peaceful assembly.

68. Additionally, the Committee held meetings with the following experts:

- Independent Expert leading the global study on children deprived of their liberty (seventy-eighth session)
- Special Rapporteur on the sale and sexual exploitation of children, including child prostitution, child pornography and other child sexual abuse material (seventy-eighth session)
- Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (seventy-ninth session)
- Representatives from the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict (eightieth session)
- Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy (eighty-second session)

69. The extraordinary eighty-fourth session reflected a successful collaborative effort between the Committee and the Government of Samoa, the Regional Rights Resource Team of the Pacific Community, the United Nations Resident Coordinator Office in Samoa, the United Nations Development Programme in Samoa, the UNICEF Pacific office, and the OHCHR Regional Office for the Pacific. Additionally, those organizations, together with other actors, including the Ombudsman of Samoa, the Asian Development Bank and Child Rights Connect, organized 15 side events throughout the week. Nearly 50 NGO representatives from 11 countries in the region, as well as some 100 children, participated in the session and were able to interact with the Committee. Financial support for the session provided by the Governments of Australia, New Zealand, Sweden and the United Kingdom, through the Pacific Community, was deeply appreciated.<sup>7</sup>

70. The above-mentioned support also extended to follow-up visits, organized by the Regional Rights Resource Team and the Governments of Fiji and Vanuatu, conducted by one member of the Committee to each State, with the aim of further enhancing the mutual understanding of the Pacific region with regard to the work of the Committee. The visits included meetings with government representatives, United Nations and regional bodies, national human rights institutions and civil society organizations, as well as the delivery of public lectures at universities on the rights of the child.

## 2. Participation in United Nations and other relevant meetings

71. In 2018, then Vice-Chair of the Committee, Olga A. Khazova, participated in the thirtieth meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, in New York. In 2019, the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Pedernera Reyna, represented the Committee at the thirty-first meeting of the Chairs of the human rights treaty bodies, in New York.

72. In 2018, then Chair of the Committee, Ms. Winter, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 72/245, held an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee on 13

<sup>7</sup> Webcasts of the meetings of the inaugural regional session are available at <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/human-rights-treaty-bodies/committee-on-the-rights-of-the-child/6138328960001>.

October. On 8 October 2019, pursuant to resolution 73/155, the Chair of the Committee, Mr. Pedernera Reyna, held an interactive dialogue with the Third Committee.

73. On 20 November 2019, the Chair of the Committee, in accordance with General Assembly resolution 73/301, made a statement at the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention.

74. Members of the Committee participated in a variety of meetings at the international, regional and national levels, where issues relevant to the rights of the child were raised.

### 3. Other related activities

75. The Committee welcomed the report of the Independent Expert leading the global study on children deprived of liberty (A/74/136), submitted and presented to the General Assembly at its seventy-fourth session, on 8 October 2019, and the subsequent publication of the global study on children deprived of their liberty in November 2019. The issuance of the study follows the Committee's recommendation in 2014 that the Secretary-General be requested, through the General Assembly, to conduct an in-depth international study on children deprived of their liberty, in accordance with article 45 (c) of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (A/69/41, annex II). Through the study, the Independent Expert examined the situation of children in the administration of justice, as well as those in prisons with parents, in situations of migration, in institutions and in armed conflict, including non-State armed conflict, and children in counter-terrorism contexts. The Committee noted the findings and recommendations and has already incorporated some of the learning from the study into its work, in particular its concluding observations.

76. In March 2019, the Committee invited the 196 States parties to use the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of the Convention to renew their commitment to the rights of the child. As at 6 March 2020, 62 States had responded, making more than 200 pledges concerning 24 articles of the Convention, including on disseminating and providing training on the Convention, taking legislative and policy measures to implement the Convention, and ensuring that all children have access to education, can express their views and are protected from violence. The pledges will be used as advocacy tools by the Committee, OHCHR and civil society organizations working at the national and local levels to implement the Convention. The pledges were displayed online and at an exhibition at the Palais des Nations and Palais Wilson in Geneva from 16 September to 20 November 2019. On 16 September, alongside the launch of the exhibition, with the financial support of the State of Qatar, the Committee hosted a celebratory event at the Palais des Nations attended by more than 150 participants, including 50 children. The event, supported by UNICEF, Child Rights Connect and the European Union, was designed by and implemented jointly with two children's advisory teams, and children together with adults took stock of the past 30 years of the Convention and debated key issues affecting children's rights today, such as justice, climate change, participation and the digital environment.

77. The Committee was also involved in other activities related to the thirtieth anniversary. During the eighty-first session, the Committee co-sponsored and participated in a related event organized by the Permanent Missions of Austria and Romania to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva. During the same session, the Committee decided to support the official version of the child-friendly version of the Convention, developed by the global children's advisory team set up by Child Rights Connect and UNICEF. A number of members of the Committee participated in a conference marking the 30 years of the Convention held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva, from 18 to 20 November 2019. The conference was the result of a partnership that included the 30 Years of Children's Rights association, the Permanent Mission of Switzerland to the United Nations Office and other international organizations in Geneva, the University of Geneva, the City and the Canton of Geneva, Child Rights Connect, OHCHR and the Committee.

## D. General thematic discussions

78. In accordance with rule 79 of its rules of procedure, the Committee holds biennially a day of general discussion on the second Friday of its September session. At its seventy-ninth session, on 28 September 2018, the thematic discussion was dedicated to protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders. Over 400 participants, including approximately 60 children, attended the general discussion. The live webcast of the event had 800 viewers in 66 countries. The 2018 day of general discussion was the first global discussion focusing on children as human rights defenders and the first time children played a central role in the planning, implementation and follow-up to an event of the Committee. Children took active part during the day, participating as speakers, moderators and audience, alongside adults. A children's advisory team, composed of 21 children from 19 countries, participated in each step of the planning, implementation and follow-up of the day of general discussion. More than 2,695 children from across 53 countries participated in the consultations. For the full text of the recommendations emanating from the day of general discussion, adopted by the Committee at its eightieth session, see annex III. A summary of the discussions and the list of participants can be found on the web page of the Committee ([www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2018.aspx](http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Discussion2018.aspx)).

79. At its eighty-first session, the Committee decided that its next day of general discussion would be dedicated to children in alternative care. In view of the spread of COVID-19, the next day of general discussion, due to be held in September 2020, has been tentatively postponed to September 2021.

## Annex I

### Membership of the Committee on the Rights of the Child

<i>Name of member</i>	<i>Country of nationality</i>
Suzanne <b>Aho Assouma</b> **	Togo
Amal Salman <b>Aldoseri</b> *	Bahrain
Hynd <b>Ayoubi Idrissi</b> **	Morocco
Bragi <b>Gudbrandsson</b> **	Iceland
Philip <b>Jaffé</b> **	Switzerland
Olga A. <b>Khazova</b> *	Russian Federation
Cephas <b>Lumina</b> *	Zambia
Gehad <b>Madi</b> **	Egypt
Faith <b>Marshall-Harris</b> **	Barbados
Benyam Dawit <b>Mezmur</b> *	Ethiopia
Clarence <b>Nelson</b> **	Samoa
<b>Otani</b> Mikiko*	Japan
Luis Ernesto <b>Pedernera Reyna</b> *	Uruguay
José Ángel <b>Rodríguez Reyes</b> **	Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela
Aïssatou Alassane <b>Sidikou</b> **	Niger
Ann Marie <b>Skelton</b> *	South Africa
Velina <b>Todorova</b> *	Bulgaria
Renate <b>Winter</b> *	Austria

#### *Bureau of the Committee on the Rights of the Child 2019–2021*

Chair	Mr. Pedernera Reyna
Vice-Chair/Rapporteur	Ms. Aldoseri
Vice-Chair	Mr. Madi
Vice-Chair	Ms. Todorova
Vice-Chair	Ms. Winter

\* Term expires 28 February 2021.

\*\* Term expires 28 February 2023.



## Annex II

### **Recommendations from the 2018 day of general discussion on protecting and empowering children as human rights defenders**

1. Based on the discussions of the day of general discussion, the Committee endorses the following recommendations, with the goal of providing guidance to States parties and other relevant stakeholders on strengthening the protection and the empowerment of child human rights defenders. While the recommendations are mainly addressed to States as primary duty bearers, the roles of national human rights institutions, the Committee, the United Nations, civil society, media, the private sector and adults in general are also considered.

#### **A. States**

##### **1. General recommendations**

2. States should take all appropriate measures to create safe spaces for child human rights defenders, where they can express their views willingly, fully and without any fear, about all matters related to their rights. States should protect child human rights defenders from any form of intimidation or reprisal, or fear of such.

3. States should ensure that the views of child human rights defenders are given due consideration in decision-making processes on all matters affecting them.

4. States should provide support to families of child human rights defenders to fulfil their role in protecting and empowering child human rights defenders.

5. States should ensure that protection measures are not used to reduce the scope of action of child human rights defenders, including in online space.

##### **2. Legislation, policy and implementation**

6. States should develop and adopt comprehensive national laws and policies on protection and empowerment of human rights defenders, including children human rights defenders, integrating a gender- and age-sensitive approach, paying special attention to children in vulnerable situations, including children in humanitarian situations, children in alternative care, indigenous children and children with disabilities. States should ensure that the national legal framework complies with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and allows children to act freely as human rights defenders.

7. National legislation should be built upon and include the views of child human rights defenders. During the drafting of legislation, States should consult and take into account the recommendations and the requests of representative groups of children, child-led organizations and child participation mechanisms such as children's parliaments.

8. States should ensure the effective implementation of legislation and policies for child human rights defenders by allocating the necessary human, technical and financial resources.

##### **3. Freedom of expression and participation in decision-making**

9. States should ensure that child human rights defenders receive specific, comprehensive and appropriate information so that they can express their opinion and take part in decision-making processes. States should ensure free and accessible information for all children by various means, including the Internet.

10. States should ensure that child human rights defenders in vulnerable situations, including children with disabilities, children in humanitarian situations, children in alternative care, children living in poverty and minority and indigenous children, are also

able to freely express their opinion and be provided with gender- and age-appropriate support to facilitate their active participation in all matters concerning them.

11. States should ensure that children's parliaments and any other mechanisms for child participation are provided with a clear and meaningful mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources and are accessible to, and inclusive of, all children without discrimination.

#### **4. Education**

12. States should recognize the role of education in the empowerment of children as human rights defenders and take all appropriate measures to ensure universal, free and quality education.

13. States should ensure that children receive human rights education, including education about children's rights and the Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

14. States should ensure child participation in schools as a crucial component of their learning process, where children learn to express themselves, develop their opinions, listen to others, and become active citizens. School curricula should aim to engage children and to positively shape their lives. School curricula should relate to children's realities and be regularly updated to adapt to the context and the needs of children.

15. States should ensure that education includes conflict-management tools and teaches children to resolve confrontation, such as bullying and harassment, in a non-violent manner. School staff should receive appropriate training to use positive, non-violent and participatory forms of education and discipline, and avoid the exclusive use of punitive measures to address violence among children.

#### **5. Environment**

16. States should provide a safe and empowering context for environmental child human rights defenders working on, and making, recommendations about environmental issues.

17. States should promote a positive narrative about environmental child human rights defenders, including in the media, and facilitate the participation of children and young people in decision-making and the implementation of environmental policies and programmes.

18. States should ensure that environmental child human rights defenders, including those working on land rights, pollution, climate change and access to natural resources, are protected against intimidation, harassment and violence.

19. States should support activities organized by environmental child human rights defenders, such as awareness-raising initiatives, and promote their access to the media.

#### **6. Online access and protection**

20. States should provide a safe and enabling online space for child human rights defenders, including access to safe online platforms, and training on online safety.

21. States should ensure that Internet providers and companies facilitate connectivity and accessibility for all children and that safety settings are clear and accessible, including for children with disabilities.

22. States should encourage information and communications technology businesses to involve children in the development and monitoring of initiatives and tools for the online protection of children.

#### **7. Access to remedial mechanisms**

23. States should ensure that child human rights defenders can access child-friendly complaint mechanisms at the national and international levels to report and file complaints of human rights violations.

24. States should consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure to enable child human rights defenders to submit complaints for violations of their human rights to the Committee and seek effective remedy.

#### **8. Reporting to the Committee**

25. States should provide, in their periodic reports to the Committee, information on the situation of child human rights defenders and the steps taken to protect and empower them.

26. States should encourage and provide opportunities for child human rights defenders to participate freely in the preparation of States parties' reports to the Committee.

27. States should not impede or interfere with the participation of children in the reporting process to the Committee.

### **B. Children's ombudspersons and national human rights institutions**

28. Children's ombudspersons and national human rights institutions should disseminate information about their mandate and the work they do among child human rights defenders.

29. Children's ombudspersons and national human rights institutions are encouraged to work more closely with child human rights defenders.

30. Children's ombudspersons and national human rights institutions should support child human rights defenders in reporting on and seeking redress for human rights violations.

### **C. United Nations**

31. The United Nations should provide child human rights defenders with information on the United Nations to enable them to effectively engage with its human rights system and provide children with age-appropriate and timely information in a language and format they can understand.

32. The United Nations should promote the participation of child human rights defenders in its work related to children's rights, and put in place child-friendly platforms and processes to facilitate children's in-person or virtual engagement.

33. Treaty bodies are encouraged to promote the participation of child human rights defenders in the review of States parties, including through the submission of reports and participation in meetings.

34. Treaty bodies are encouraged to make recommendations to States parties emphasizing the need to adopt legislation for the protection and empowerment of child human rights defenders.

### **D. Civil society**

35. Civil society is encouraged to empower and work with child human rights defenders, support their initiatives and disseminate information on their work.

36. Civil society should facilitate and promote knowledge of children's rights and human rights defenders among a variety of audiences, including in a form accessible to all children.

37. Civil society should contribute to promoting positive attitudes towards child human rights defenders, in particular girls.

38. Civil society should ensure the participation of child human rights defenders in the human rights work of civil society, including monitoring, reporting and advocacy activities.

39. Civil society should support child human rights defenders in reporting and seeking redress for human rights violations.

40. Civil society, when engaged with child human rights defenders, should take all precautions to minimize any negative consequence of these children’s human rights activities. Civil society should also aim at protecting child human rights defenders from any form of intimidation or reprisal, or fear of such.

**E. Media**

41. The media is encouraged to promote a positive image of child human rights defenders, and to report on the human rights activities carried out by children.

**F. Private sector**

42. Businesses and donors should ensure that their activities do not, directly or indirectly, harm child human rights defenders and, when relevant, should promote their human rights work.

43. Businesses and donors should ensure the sustained and meaningful participation of child human rights defenders in the planning and implementation of their activities at the local level.

**G. Parents, family and community members and adults working with or for children**

44. Adults should actively seek information about children’s rights, learn about their obligations in the protection and empowerment of children, and recognize child human rights defenders when they act as such and be inspired by them.

45. Adults should respect and support children who are, or want to become, human rights defenders.

46. Adults should create spaces for child human rights defenders to express their views, promote their participation in decision-making processes, and ensure that their views are taken into due account in matters affecting them.

