



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Austria\*

#### I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Austria (CRC/C/AUT/5-6) at its 2448th and 2449th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.2448 and 2449), held on 30 and 31 January 2020, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2460th meeting, held on 7 February 2020.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/AUT/RQ/5-6), which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the multisectoral delegation of the State party.

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

3. The Committee welcomes the decision by the State party to withdraw its reservations in respect of articles 13, 15 and 17 and the declarations relating to article 38 of the Convention, which took effect on 28 September 2015. The Committee further welcomes the progress achieved by the State party in various areas, including the ratification of or accession to international instruments, in particular the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment in 2012. The Committee notes with appreciation the legislative, institutional and policy measures adopted to implement the Convention, in particular the adoption of the Federal Child and Youth Welfare Act in 2013, the reform of the Juvenile Courts Act in 2015 and the establishment of the Children's Rights Board (established as the "Children's Rights Monitoring Board in 2012 and renamed in 2017). It welcomes the standardization in 2019 of the federal states' youth protection laws prohibiting the sale of alcoholic beverages to and the possession or consumption of such beverages by children under 16 years old, and the amendment to the law on protection against violence in 2019, which, inter alia, introduced "a mobile protection zone" whereby perpetrators of domestic violence were prohibited from coming within 100 metres of the victims.

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\* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-third session (20 January–7 February 2020).



### III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

4. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: legislation (para. 7), non-discrimination (para. 17), family environment and alternative care (para. 29), children with disabilities (para. 31), mental health (para. 34) and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children (para. 40).

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It also urges the State party to ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children.**

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

##### Legislation

6. The Committee notes the constitutional amendment in 2018, which transferred exclusive competence over child and youth welfare protection to the Länder. However, the Committee is concerned that the shift in competence may result in differentiated application of the legislation, fragmentation and inconsistencies in the implementation of children's rights across the State party. The conclusion of agreements between the federal Government and the Länder governments does not change this view.

7. **The Committee recommends that the State party guarantee that the standards in the Convention are implemented consistently and in a non-discriminatory manner throughout its territory, irrespective of the decision to transfer competence for child and youth welfare protection to the Länder level.**

##### Comprehensive policy and strategy

8. While the Committee notes the existence of various action plans and strategies related to children, it is concerned that there is no comprehensive policy and strategy. Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/AUT/CO/3-4, para. 13), the Committee recommends that the State party adopt an up-to-date, comprehensive policy on children that encompasses all areas covered by the Convention, and that it develop a strategy, supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources, to implement it.

##### Coordination

9. While the Committee notes the information that coordination and uniformity of standards is maintained through permanent coordination bodies and through agreements between the federal Government and the Länder governments pursuant to article 15a of the Federal Constitution Act, it is the Committee's view that a variety of coordination bodies and agreements cannot replace a single permanent coordination body. The Committee urges the State party to establish an appropriate body at a high level with a clear mandate and sufficient authority to coordinate all activities related to the implementation of the Convention at the cross-sectoral, national, Länder and local levels. The State party should ensure that the coordinating body is provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for its effective operation.

### Allocation of resources

10. With reference to its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party incorporate a child rights perspective into its budgeting process, with clear allocations to children in the relevant sectors and agencies and with specific indicators and a tracking system to monitor and evaluate the adequacy, efficacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated for implementation of the Convention, including by:

(a) Setting performance targets linking child-related programme goals to budget allocations and actual expenditure, to allow monitoring of the outcomes and of the impacts on children, including those in vulnerable situations;

(b) Developing detailed budget lines and codes for all planned, enacted, revised and actual expenditure that directly affects children;

(c) Using budget classification systems that allow expenditure related to the rights of the child to be reported, tracked and analysed;

(d) Ensuring that fluctuations or reductions in budget allocations for the delivery of services do not reduce the existing level of enjoyment of children's rights;

(e) Strengthening audits to increase transparency and accountability with regard to public expenditure across all sectors, in order to mobilize the maximum available resources for the implementation of the rights of the child.

### Data collection

11. With reference to its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously improve its data-collection system. The data should cover all areas of the Convention and should be disaggregated by land, age, sex, disability, geographic location, national and ethnic origin and socioeconomic background in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability. The State party should also ensure that the data and indicators are shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention.

### Independent monitoring

12. While welcoming measures introduced to strengthen the national human rights institution, the Committee notes that the Austrian Ombudsman Board does not have a specific mandate relating to children's rights. The Committee recommends that the State party take measures to ensure full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles).

### International cooperation

13. With reference to target 17.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee encourages the State party to adhere to its commitment to meet the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income for official development assistance. The Committee recommends that the State party adopt a child rights-based approach in respect of its trade agreements and development aid policy and programmes, with the rights of children and their engagement included in programme design, delivery and evaluation.

### Children's rights and the business sector

14. With reference to its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights and to the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt and implement

regulations to ensure that the business sector complies with international and national human rights, labour, environmental and other standards, particularly with regard to children's rights.

## **B. Definition of the child (art. 1)**

15. The Committee welcomes the information provided by the delegation that the State party plans to amend its legislation to remove all exceptions to the minimum age of 18 years for marriage, and recommends that the State party expedite the process to ensure that marriage may be concluded by persons over the age of 18 years only.

## **C. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)**

### **Non-discrimination**

16. The Committee welcomes measures taken by the State party to combat hate speech and manifestations of neo-Nazism, racism, xenophobia and associated intolerance, such as the establishment of specialized units in the public prosecution offices for the investigation of incitement to hatred, and the inclusion of the issues of racism, xenophobia and associated intolerance in the syllabuses of the Austrian school system. However, the Committee remains concerned about reports of persistent direct and indirect discrimination against children on the grounds of race, disability, religion, national origin and socioeconomic status.

17. Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/AUT/CO/3-4, para. 25), the Committee recommends that the State party continue its efforts to raise awareness among the public, those working with and for children, civil servants and law enforcement officials about the importance of cultural diversity and inter-ethnic understanding, in order to combat stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination against, inter alia, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities, children belonging to ethnic, religious or racial minorities, including Roma and Muslim children, and children living in poverty.

### **Best interests of the child**

18. While noting the amendment in 2013 to section 138 of the Austrian Civil Code, in particular the inclusion of a twelve-point checklist with statutory criteria for safeguarding the best interests of the child, and the establishment of a monitoring board (the Children's Rights Board), the Committee urges the State party to carry out impact assessments of proposed laws in a consistent manner in all legislative processes, and to establish compulsory processes for ex ante and ex post impact assessments of all laws and policies relevant to children on the realization of the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration.

### **Respect for the views of the child**

19. With reference to its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take further measures to ensure the effective implementation of legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal and administrative proceedings;

(b) Consider making the appointment of a legal guardian mandatory in all legal and administrative proceedings on parental disputes when the parents have failed to reach an agreement and when children have witnessed violence against one of the caregivers;

(c) Consider extending the system of advocacy by a trusted person to all children in public institutions, including institutions for children with disabilities, children in residential homes or boarding schools, children in psychiatric institutions,

children in institutions for asylum seekers and children deprived of their liberty in criminal cases;

(d) Promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, communities and schools and include children in decision-making in all matters related to them, in particular by strengthening the Austrian National Youth Council.

#### **D. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8 and 13–17)**

##### **Right to identity**

20. While welcoming the information that the possibility of anonymous births has led to a significant decrease in the number of newborns left in “baby hatches” and to a reduction in the number of infanticides, the Committee urges the State party to completely abolish the practice of anonymous abandonment of infants.

##### **Nationality**

21. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Expand the scope of the Austrian Citizenship Act in order to automatically grant nationality at birth to children born on Austrian territory who would otherwise be stateless or, as a minimum, bring article 14 (1) (5) of the Act in line with the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness to extend the period during which stateless persons may apply for nationality from two years to three years;

(b) Given the information provided by the delegation regarding a simplified procedure for the acquisition of Austrian nationality by children born out of wedlock to Austrian fathers, amend article 7 of the Austrian Citizenship Act to ensure that such children acquire Austrian nationality retroactively upon establishment of fatherhood.

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

##### **Corporal punishment and mental violence**

22. While the Committee notes with appreciation that the abolition of corporal punishment has generated a shift in public attitudes on violence against children, it remains concerned that the legal prohibition of certain forms of violence is still unknown to a considerable part of the population. It is further concerned about reports that mental violence is increasing. With reference to its general comment No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment, the Committee recommends that the State party increase its efforts to raise awareness among children, parents, caregivers, teachers and staff working with and for children about the existence, content and sanctions contained in the legal ban on violence, including mental violence.

##### **Abuse and neglect**

23. With reference to its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, and to target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Further strengthen its collection of data on cases of abuse and neglect, including by undertaking a comprehensive study of the extent and causes of abuse and neglect and the nature of interventions in child welfare cases;

(b) Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes – including campaigns – with the involvement of children, in order to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating child abuse and neglect.

### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

24. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure a child-friendly and multisectoral response to child sexual abuse with the aim of avoiding retraumatization of the child victim as a consequence of numerous interviews during the investigation and prosecution, and ensuring appropriate therapeutic intervention;

(b) Collect disaggregated data related to cases of sexual abuse against children, including in the family and involving the clergy and representatives of sports associations, and provide in its next periodic report detailed information on reports of such abuse and associated investigations, prosecutions and convictions.

### **Cyberbullying and grooming**

25. Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/AUT/CO/3-4, para. 32), the Committee urges the State party:

(a) To establish mechanisms, procedures and guidelines related to cyberbullying and grooming to ensure the speedy and effective investigation of such cases and prosecution of perpetrators;

(b) To provide systematic training to law enforcement officials, social workers and prosecutors on how to investigate and prosecute complaints of cyberbullying and grooming in a child- and gender-sensitive manner that respects the privacy of the victim;

(c) To ensure that the Criminal Code covers all forms of cyberbullying against children, including offences committed on a single occasion;

(d) To effectively monitor the implementation of agreements with social media platforms to ensure the speedy removal of hate postings.

### **Helplines**

26. Recalling its previous recommendation (CRC/C/15/Add.251, para. 28) the Committee urges the State party to ensure sustainable funding for the emergency helpline “147 Rat auf Draht”.

### **Harmful practices**

27. With reference 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, and recalling the concluding observations of the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/AUT/CO/6, para. 45) the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Prohibit the performance of unnecessary medical or surgical treatment on intersex children where those procedures may be safely deferred until children are able to provide their informed consent;

(b) Gather data with a view to understanding the extent of instances of unnecessary medical or surgical treatment performed on intersex children, which constitute a harmful practice, so that children at risk can be more easily identified and their abuse prevented;

(c) Continue to take preventive and protection measures to address female genital mutilation, including the provision of social, psychological, medical and rehabilitative services and training of relevant professionals and awareness-raising programmes.

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

28. Regarding children deprived of a family environment, while the Committee welcomes improvements in data collection on children in alternative care and steps taken to increase harmonization of child welfare standards between the Länder, it remains seriously concerned that:

(a) The number of children living in institutions has significantly increased and that there is still a high number of children under the age of 3 years and children with disabilities living in institutions;

(b) Data is still lacking in important areas related to alternative care, in particular for children with disabilities;

(c) The State party has not established any national quality standards regarding children in alternative care, and the shift in competence from the federal to the state level may jeopardize the harmonization of standards that has been achieved;

(d) Prevention is not sufficiently prioritized, and counselling centres, school social work and early intervention capability are not available in all Länder;

(e) Unaccompanied child refugees over the age of 14 years are not offered the same support as Austrian children and the daily fee for care is lower than for Austrian children, leading to larger groups, lower quality of care and a lack of monitoring by child and youth welfare services in such institutions.

29. **Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Based on the data collected, study the root causes of placement in institutional care, with a view to phasing out the institutionalization of children and redirecting funds towards families to promote and support care in a family environment;**

(b) **Adopt national standards for the quality of alternative care, including for children of non-Austrian descent, and ensure their application;**

(c) **Harmonize criteria across the Länder for removing and placing children in alternative care, including by adopting national criteria, with a view to providing the highest level of protection;**

(d) **Ensure adequate human, technical and financial resources for child protection services and proper training for those working with and for children in alternative care, and, in particular, enhance preventive measures in order to avoid discrepancies in quality and access to preventive services between children of different backgrounds.**

**G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)**

30. While the Committee welcomes the objectives of the National Action Plan on Disability 2012–2020 to set up inclusive model regions in all Länder by 2020, it remains seriously concerned that:

(a) The State party still lacks a comprehensive plan in all Länder for the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities;

(b) The accessibility of public buildings, public transport and places such as schools and playgrounds remains insufficient;

(c) Service providers disagree regarding responsibility for coverage of costs, with serious impacts on the rights of children with disabilities;

(d) Children with disabilities are at times portrayed in the media as objects of charity rather than as rights holders.

31. **With reference to its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability in implementing the comprehensive national policy for the inclusion of children with disabilities and to:**

(a) **Develop the National Action Plan on Disability 2021–2030 in a participatory way, and formulate as part of it a coherent strategy for the deinstitutionalization and prevention of separation of children with disabilities from their families with a clear time frame and a mechanism for its effective implementation and monitoring;**

(b) **Ensure that children with disabilities have effective access to public services and spaces and improve the physical accessibility of all public and private buildings, spaces and means of transport in all Länder;**

(c) **Consider merging disability and child and youth welfare policies and assistance into one system;**

(d) **Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at the media, government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities and promote a positive image of such children.**

## **H. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33)**

### **Health and health services**

32. **With reference to its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to address obesity in children and actions to promote a healthy lifestyle, including physical activity;**

(b) **Ensure the availability of qualified and specialized health staff in all Länder, particularly paediatricians in rural areas.**

### **Mental health**

33. The Committee is seriously concerned about:

(a) The prevalence of psychological health conditions, such as those related to anxiety, depression, self-injury and attention deficit and eating disorders, among children and adolescents;

(b) The insufficient number of places for children with mental health conditions requiring inpatient care, a situation that sometimes leads to children being placed together with adult patients;

(c) Inadequate outpatient care and inadequate follow-up care for children with mental health conditions;

(d) Reports that parents of children with attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder and other behavioural conditions may not always be properly informed about the negative side effects of psychostimulants and about existing non-medical alternatives, despite the system of e-medication in place since 2019 in the State party, under which the prescription of all medication must be registered electronically.

34. **With reference to target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Continue to increase the availability and accessibility of child and adolescent mental health services and programmes;**

(b) Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to mental health services and programmes to ensure that the number of qualified medical professionals, including child psychologists and psychiatrists, and available beds for inpatient care is sufficient to meet children's needs in all Länder;

(c) Take measures to guarantee that children with behavioural conditions are not overmedicated, including not prescribing psychostimulants when non-medical alternatives are available, and that parents are informed about non-medical alternatives and about the serious negative side effects of such drugs.

#### **Impact of climate change on the rights of the child**

35. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that its climate mitigation policies, in particular those concerning the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions in line with the State party's international commitments, are compatible with the principles of the Convention, including the rights of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and an adequate standard of living, and that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are systematically taken into account throughout the implementation, monitoring and evaluation of these policies;

(b) Conduct an assessment of policies related to the transport sector and the impacts of the resulting atmospheric pollution and greenhouse gas emissions on children's rights as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, and eliminate any subsidies contributing to the promotion of modes of transport that undermine the rights of children to the highest attainable standard of health.

#### **Standard of living**

36. The Committee takes note of the information that child poverty is decreasing in the State party, but is concerned that benefits are regulated differently in the different Länder. Drawing attention to target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt a nationwide, uniform minimum standard of living covering all children in the State party without exception.

### **I. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)**

#### **Education, including vocational training and guidance**

37. Recalling target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take the necessary measures to strengthen access for all children to free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education, regardless of their socioeconomic status;

(b) Strengthen the right to inclusive education in mainstream schools for all children with disabilities, including those with intellectual and psychosocial disabilities;

(c) Set up comprehensive measures to develop inclusive education, including adequately trained teachers and adapted curricula and school materials;

(d) Train and assign specialized teachers and professionals in integrated classes providing individual support and due attention to children with learning difficulties;

(e) Delay the selection process of children with regard to their further schooling;

(f) Expand all-day schooling and other free learning opportunities for children in order to address the increasing prevalence of private extracurricular education;

(g) Consider abolishing the law that bans young girls from wearing headscarves in primary schools, classing them as ideological or religious clothing, which may lead to girls' exclusion from mainstream education.

#### **Rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities**

38. With reference to its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State party, or the Länder if applicable, provide children, including children with disabilities and children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations such as refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant children, with safe, accessible, inclusive and smoke-free spaces for play and socialization and public transport to access such spaces.

### **J. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)–(d) and 38–40)**

#### **Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children**

39. While the Committee welcomes measures taken to provide accommodation for asylum-seeking and unaccompanied children through the establishment of specialized reception facilities and the efforts of some Länder to implement child protection safeguards in all reception facilities under their jurisdiction, the Committee remains seriously concerned that:

(a) Child welfare and protection authorities are not immediately involved when an unaccompanied or separated child over the age of 14 years is identified at the border or elsewhere in the State party;

(b) Legal guardians are appointed only after an unaccompanied or separated child is assigned to a Länder reception facility and the transfer may take time due to age-assessment processes;

(c) The age-assessment procedure does not always respect the dignity and the best interests of the child and, despite possible inaccuracy, it is not possible to appeal the outcome of the procedure separately.

40. With reference to the general comment No. 6 (2005) on treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, the Committee urges the State party immediately:

(a) To ensure that child welfare and protection authorities are actively involved in all cases concerning unaccompanied children as soon as possible, including through legislative amendments;

(b) To ensure that a guardian is appointed to all unaccompanied or separated children without delay upon their arrival in the State party;

(c) To conduct age-assessment procedures in the least invasive way possible, respecting the legal principle of the benefit of the doubt; to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the physical and psychological development of the child; and to ensure that the outcome of such assessments can be challenged separately by the affected party.

#### **Sale, trafficking and abduction**

41. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take further measures to harmonize protection standards for victims of child trafficking throughout its territory;

(b) Refine its data collection to cover all forms of trafficking and sexual exploitation of children;

(c) Increase identification of child victims of sexual exploitation and trafficking, in particular children in vulnerable situations such as unaccompanied asylum-seeking, refugee or migrant children.

#### Administration of child justice

42. While welcoming the reform of the Juvenile Courts Act in 2015, the Committee is concerned that the number of children in detention has increased. With reference to its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Start working towards a time limit of 30 days for children in pretrial detention and ensure that the circumstances under which such a time limit can exceptionally be extended is clearly defined in law;

(b) Continue to promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation and counselling, for children accused of criminal offences and, wherever possible, non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service.

### **K. Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention**

#### Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

43. While welcoming measures taken to strengthen cooperation between responsible authorities in effectively combating the sale of children, and with reference to its 2019 guidelines on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC/C/156), the Committee recommends that the State party bring its legislation into line with articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol.

#### Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

44. While noting the explanations provided by the State party in its report in response to the Committee's recommendations made in 2005 on the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and reiterated in 2012 (CRC/C/AUT/CO/3-4, para. 57), the Committee regrets that the State party has not taken any specific measures to implement its recommendations. The Committee urges the State party to reconsider its position that it will not increase the minimum age for voluntary recruitment to 18 years.

### **L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure**

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

### **M. Ratification of international human rights instruments**

46. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

## **N. Cooperation with regional bodies**

47. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate with the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other Council of Europe member States.

## **V. Implementation and reporting**

### **A. Follow-up and dissemination**

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

### **B. Next report**

49. The Committee invites the State party to submit its seventh periodic report by 4 September 2025 and to include therein information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 31 January 2014 (CRC/C/58/Rev.3) and should not exceed 21,200 words (General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16). In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

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

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