



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Eighty-eighth session

### Summary record of the 2536th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 6 September 2021, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Otani

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*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Czechia*

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

### **Consideration of reports of States parties**

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Czechia (CRC/C/CZE/5-6; CRC/C/CZE/Q/5-6, CRC/C/CZE/RQ/5-6 and CRC/C/CZE/RQ/5-6/Corr.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Czechia joined the meeting via video link.*

2. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia), introducing her country's combined fifth and sixth periodic reports (CRC/C/CZE/5-6), said that the National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights 2021–2029, and an action plan for its implementation in the period 2021–2024, had been adopted in December 2020. The Government, in fact, was well aware of the problems posed by the currently fragmented nature of the child protection system and the new strategy aimed to rectify that situation through not only multidisciplinary cooperation but also comprehensive legislation and everyday practice. That strategy also envisaged measures to support parents, thereby helping to meet children's needs and keep them safe within their own families. Other measures targeted vulnerable children and socially disadvantaged families. The Strategy placed child participation at the heart of all actions. In that connection, Czechia, alongside other Council of Europe member States, was participating in a project called "CP4 Europe – Strengthening National Child Participation Frameworks and Action in Europe", under which her Government would assess the level of child participation in the country with a view to mainstreaming such participation in all policies that concerned them.

3. Proposed amendments to the Act on Social and Legal Protection of Children envisaged, inter alia, a minimum age limit of 3 years for placement in institutional care and a substantial increase in the foster care allowance offered to foster parents. The amendments had recently been approved by the lower house of Parliament and were due to be considered by the upper house later in September 2021. In 2020, Parliament had also considered a bill regarding a children's ombudsman; unfortunately, however, the reading had had to be suspended and would not be resumed until after the forthcoming parliamentary elections. In the meantime, most of the responsibilities to be taken on by the ombudsman were already carried out by the Public Defender of Rights.

4. Children's rights in Czechia were regulated by the Government's own Committee on the Rights of the Child, which included representatives from the State and from civil society. An advisory body, the Committee acted as a multidisciplinary platform for in-depth discussions and put forward recommendations to the Government that served as the basis for systemic changes to the national child protection system. The Committee had, for example, promoted the training of judges and the use of child-friendly measures such as special interview rooms. It had also made a number of recommendations regarding the protection of children's rights during the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

5. In the field of education, pupils with mild intellectual disabilities were no longer taught according to the annex to the Framework Education Programme for Primary Education governing children with such disabilities, which had been deleted and incorporated into an inclusive curriculum in 2016. Beginning in September 2021, a new system for first language teaching for foreign pupils was being rolled out. The system, which envisaged between 100 and 200 hours of lessons over 10 months, was to be available in at least one designated school in each municipality as well as in all schools where more than 5 per cent of the student body was made up of foreign pupils. Distance education would be provided for children unable to attend in person and, where possible, Czech pupils with a different first language would also be able to participate.

6. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice were finalizing a centralized system of early intervention for children in conflict with the law. The system, which had been successfully piloted and was already operating in a number of municipalities, included national guidelines, a centralized database administered by child protection authorities and multidisciplinary youth teams at both local and national levels.

7. Judges were being offered training in family law and child custody issues. In addition, the police and the judiciary as well as prison and probation officials had all received training on the principles of restorative justice, which were always applied in cases involving children in conflict with the law. Measures had also been taken to protect child victims in criminal proceedings, who were dealt with by trained professional staff. Over the previous 10 years, the number of rooms specially equipped for interviewing young offenders and victims had increased from 49 to 78, and the number of interviews conducted had more than doubled, from 606 to 1,265.

8. In line with the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, amendments had been introduced to the Criminal Code to make sexual activity with a minor over the age of 15 a criminal offence in cases where the offender was aware that the child had been offered remuneration. Moreover, the Government's new national strategy to tackle human trafficking for the period 2020–2023 included specific provisions on trafficking in children.

9. It was important to note that the COVID-19 pandemic had exacerbated the problems faced by vulnerable children and some of the planned systemic changes had had to be suspended. However, the Government had risen to the challenge and trusted that the country would soon overcome the impact of the pandemic altogether.

10. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** (Coordinator, Country Task Force) said that she commended the Government for having extended its National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights until 2029. However, she wished to know if the State party had undertaken a comprehensive review of all its child-related legislation and acted to ensure the full applicability of the Convention in the domestic legal system, as the Committee had requested in its previous concluding observations ([CRC/C/CZE/CO/3-4](#)).

11. The definition of the best interests of the child in national law, and the apparently non-standardized interpretation of that definition, was a source of concern to the Committee. She would be interested to hear about the current status of a bill that sought to waive all debts incurred by children, which the Committee understood had been drafted and was awaiting approval. She also wished to know the status of a bill on social housing which, despite being supported by the Minister of Labour and Social Affairs, had apparently been rejected. Lastly, she hoped the delegation could inform the Committee whether the constitutionally enshrined Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms directly referenced and incorporated the Convention.

12. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force) said that she was concerned by the fact that the Committee had been raising the same issues over three separate State party reviews. It seemed that successive Governments were unwilling to enter into a constructive and open debate and to explain why they were not implementing the Committee's recommendations. She hoped the Government would consider withdrawing its declaration on article 7 (1) of the Convention, which had been made at the moment of ratification some 30 years previously and had since been overtaken by developments in domestic legislation. In fact, the Civil Code required adoptive parents to inform their children that they had been adopted by the time they reached compulsory school age and children had the right to review court files regarding their adoption. Furthermore, the claim made in the declaration that there were "irrevocable adoptions" contradicted the statement in the State party report that adoptions could in fact be reversed by the courts on application from an adoptive parent or adoptee. Why, then, did the State party insist on adhering to a declaration that had come to be at odds with its own legislation?

13. She would be interested to hear more about the National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights. Had the objectives that had not been achieved in the first period of that strategy (2008–2018) been incorporated into the period 2021–2029? She wished to know what steps were being taken to ensure effective coordination between the three ministries responsible for implementing the new strategy – the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Health – particularly as various sources had suggested persistent disagreements had arisen that had blocked work on legislation.

14. In the light of the failure of the bill on the children's ombudsman, she wished to reiterate the Committee's longstanding concern about the inability of the State party to

establish an independent body to monitor children's rights. It was not clear exactly what obstacles were standing in the way of the creation of such a body. She would be interested to learn more about the involvement of civil society organizations in training and awareness-raising activities and in implementing and monitoring children's rights policies. The Committee had heard that, although civil society groups had been invited to participate in drafting the national strategy, they had not been given enough time to make their views properly known. Lastly, she wished to know if children themselves had been consulted as part of the process of drafting the State party report.

15. **Mr. Chophel** said that he wished to know whether the Government would consider removing all age-related restrictions on children's right to freedom of expression and whether it would take steps to ensure that children's views were given due consideration in all matters concerning them, especially when they directly exercised that right in a hearing. He wondered whether the prior and informed consent of pregnant girls was always sought before they underwent an abortion and whether their right to privacy was always respected. The Committee would welcome further explanation of why the Government had decided not to establish a national action plan to combat racism and why it believed that the various measures, programmes and policies cited in the State party report (CRC/C/CZE/5-6, para. 30) would constitute a sufficiently effective alternative to such a plan.

16. Noting that parents were permitted to take proportionate disciplinary measures against their children, he said that he wished to know how the term "proportionate" was defined and whether the Government would consider abolishing all forms of corporal punishment in all settings. It would be interesting to learn when Czechia would ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), which it had signed in May 2016.

17. **Ms. Kiladze** said that she wished to know why children under 18 years of age were permitted to participate in assemblies but were not permitted to convene and organize them. The delegation might indicate whether broadcasters and Internet service providers were punished if they distributed content unsuitable for children and, if so, how many convictions for that offence had been secured in 2020. The Committee would be interested to hear about any measures being taken to tackle the spread of disinformation, including in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic. It would also be grateful to learn more about the Government's views on "baby boxes" and the steps taken to address the various issues that arose from their use.

18. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** said that the Committee was concerned to note that the number of reports of child sexual abuse registered in Czechia, considered in relation to the child population, was much smaller than the figures reported in other European countries. As the statistics suggested that awareness of child sexual abuse was relatively low in Czechia, he asked what measures were being taken to remedy that lack of awareness among professionals and the general public. He wondered whether it was mandatory for allegations of child sexual abuse to be reported to the authorities and, if so, which authorities were responsible for receiving such reports. He would be interested to learn whether the State party had established confidential, accessible helplines for children to report sexual abuse, including in children's institutions.

19. Given that only a fraction of reports of child sexual abuse resulted in a criminal investigation, it would be interesting to know whether steps would be taken to enable the civil and criminal authorities to conduct joint investigations into such cases so that children were not interviewed or medically examined multiple times by different professionals in different settings. He wondered whether steps would be taken to ensure that child victims of sexual abuse were interviewed in child-friendly settings rather than in police stations, which were associated in children's minds with criminality and might therefore exacerbate the feelings of guilt that victims often harboured.

20. The Committee would be interested to hear whether police interviewers of child victims received training in the appropriate interview protocols, which was crucial if the child's disclosure of abuse was to be upheld in court, as such disclosure was often the only available evidence in criminal proceedings. It would also like to learn whether medical examinations of victims were carried out in child-friendly settings, whether victims were

given access to trauma-focused therapy and whether there were medical professionals trained in the investigation of past sexual abuse that had occurred weeks, months and even years previously. Lastly, he wished to know what was being done to prevent the online sexual exploitation of children and to address the fact that a large number of websites containing images of child sexual abuse were hosted in the State party.

*The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.*

21. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that the new National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights had been designed in collaboration with a broad range of professionals and representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The new strategy incorporated most of the objectives contained in the Government's previous strategy, some of which had not been fulfilled. It was intended to harmonize approaches to child protection across all relevant agencies and raise the public's awareness about child protection issues. Following an evaluation of the effectiveness of the former strategy, the Government had established new mechanisms for enhancing cooperation between the relevant agencies. In particular, it had established a coordination group on child protection that included representatives of government ministries, local authorities and NGOs, including child advocacy groups.

22. **Mr. Sosna** (Czechia) said that in 2021 legislative amendments had been made to prevent children from accumulating debt or being chased for debt by creditors. Under the amended law, parents could become the guarantors of their children's debts in certain situations and debts incurred by children could be recovered only from property that they had acquired before they attained full legal capacity. The amended laws also prevented contractual penalties from being applied to children under 15 years of age, restricted the tort liability of children under 13 years of age and prevented payment orders and default judgments from being issued against children. The new rules applied retroactively to young adults aged up to 21 years.

23. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia) said that, in the discussions surrounding the bill on the introduction of a children's ombudsman, the Public Defender of Rights had expressed concern about the amount of responsibility that would be transferred from his agency to the new agency. Following those discussions, the bill had been amended to provide for a different division of responsibilities between the prospective children's ombudsman and the Public Defender of Rights. The bill was expected to become law following the legislative elections that were due to take place in October 2021. In the meantime, the Public Defender of Rights had established a website containing child-friendly information and online mechanisms for the submission of complaints by or on behalf of children.

24. **Ms. Šmídová** (Czechia) said that the Government's Committee on the Rights of the Child had been in operation for the last 20 years and was composed of 22 members, including 8 representatives of public authorities.

25. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that government agencies took a coordinated and unified approach to resolving child protection issues and ensuring that vulnerable children and families received the appropriate support in a timely manner. In considering the best interests of the child, the Government used the Committee's general comment No. 14 (2013) as its main frame of reference. The Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs had taken steps to raise professionals' awareness of the best interests of the child by producing a publication on that subject and distributing it among them. Child-friendly information on the same subject had been published online and was discussed with children in the relevant forums.

26. **Ms. Hlaváčová** (Czechia) said that the Health Care Services Act of 2012 attached great importance to ensuring respect for children's views. The intellectual and psychological maturity associated with a child's age was also taken into account. In the case of abortion, the consent of parents or legal guardians was required for minors up to the age of 16 years. However, only parental notification was required for minors over the age of 16.

27. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia) said that coercive abortion had been defined as a criminal offence in an amendment to the law adopted by Parliament in June 2021.

28. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that amendments to the legislation adopted in 2013 enshrined children's right to be heard and to have their views respected. Training activities had been organized for professionals with the same end in view. In addition, children and young people had been involved in working groups of the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs aimed at developing innovative approaches and had participated in international conferences.

29. The National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights sought to promote child participation and to raise the awareness of the general public and professionals of children's right to be heard and to express their views. The CP4 Europe project of the Council of Europe was also designed to ensure their participation in all areas, including legislative and administrative procedures. Her Government planned to fully implement the Child Participation Assessment Tool provided for under the project in 2022.

30. **Mr. Černý** (Czechia) said that, according to the Czech School Inspectorate, 41 per cent of elementary schools and 53 per cent of secondary schools had school parliaments that participated in school governance. Students' views on school regulations, activities, the environment and other issues were taken into account. The number of parliaments was steadily increasing, and they were supported by the National Parliament of Children and Youth. A school participatory budgeting project had been launched in 2020. Schoolchildren voted for the best budget proposal, which was then implemented with the support of the school administration and the municipal authorities responsible for school funding.

31. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia) said that children had expressed strong support for the bill on the children's ombudsman in letters to the Government and through visits to Parliament.

32. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that a campaign had been launched under the National Strategy on the Protection of Children's Rights to support the principle of positive parenting and to raise public awareness of the negative impact of corporal punishment. Social service providers sought to improve parental skills and offered advice on stress management, for example when parents were confronted with housing, financial and other problems. Steps were taken to identify factors that were conducive to family violence and to raise children's awareness of how they could protect themselves from such violence.

33. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia) said that public opinion on the abolition of corporal punishment was divided, and some political parties opposed any amendment to the law with that end in view.

34. **Mr. Sosna** (Czechia) said that the existing legislation stated clearly that all means of upbringing must be appropriate to the circumstances. Corporal punishment had been discussed by the Committee of Experts for the Execution of Judgments of the European Court of Human Rights and the Implementation of the European Convention on European Rights. The Committee, which issued recommendations to the authorities concerning the implementation of the Court's judgments, was composed of representatives of all ministries, both chambers of Parliament, the highest courts, public prosecutors' offices and other bodies. Several training events on the issue of corporal punishment had also been held in the Judicial Academy.

35. **Ms. Válková** (Czechia) said that corporal punishment was a difficult topic in the pre-election period, since it might be abused for electoral purposes.

36. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that the Czech Committee on the Rights of the Child and representatives of various ministries were developing identification cards containing a set of indicators of cases of child sexual exploitation or abuse. The cards would be used by teachers, physicians, social workers and other professionals working with children to identify such cases and report them to the social and legal child protection authorities and the police. Special services were provided, mostly by NGOs, for endangered children or child victims. Furthermore, a number of relevant ministries were involved in training courses for the implementation of programmes concerning specialized care centres for child victims. Steps were also being taken to develop methodologies for addressing new risk categories for children and families, especially online and cybercrime risks, and to establish a network of specialized services to provide professional assistance to child victims.

37. **Mr. Pepřík** (Czechia) said that the Istanbul Convention had been signed on 2 May 2016 but had not yet been ratified. However, the provisions of the Criminal Code concerning sexual violence complied with the Istanbul Convention.

38. The interviews of child victims during pretrial proceedings were conducted by a trained person except in urgent circumstances. The questioning of particularly vulnerable victims was conducted in a manner designed to ensure that such questioning need not be repeated.

39. With regard to child offenders, he drew attention to the 2019 amendment to the Juvenile Justice Act, which provided that video and audio recordings of the interviews of children were admissible in legal proceedings if they were appropriate to the circumstances of the case. It was essential in all cases to take the interests of the children into account.

40. **Ms. Petrovičová** (Czechia) said that the Czech police had a comprehensive training system for dealing in a sensitive manner with child victims, witnesses and offenders. Special rooms were reserved for interviews of child victims and witnesses. Crisis intervention teams provided psychological assistance at crime scenes.

41. **Ms. Bělohávková** (Czechia) said that the Government provided substantial financial support for three helplines: a helpline for victims of crime and domestic violence; a family and school helpline; and a safety helpline. Children could report sexual abuse or exploitation and request assistance. The helpline staff were required by law to inform the police of such reports.

42. **Ms. Todorova** said she wished to know whether the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was the department responsible for the new strategy and policy on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

43. She understood that most projects implemented in the field of institutionalization and reform of the childcare and child protection system had been financed by European Union and other donors. It was unclear whether the project outcomes had been integrated into governmental policies. She would therefore welcome information on action taken to ensure the sustainability of such initiatives.

44. She wondered how the policy of teaching children to protect themselves against corporal punishment actually worked in the home. With regard to political resistance to measures to ban corporal punishment, the Committee advised the State party to render such punishment illegal.

45. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that special rooms were reserved for interviews of child victims and witnesses in the justice system. She wished to know whether such rooms existed in all courts.

46. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** said he understood that the statements made by children in child-friendly facilities were recorded and cited during legal proceedings. He wished to know whether the children were required to appear in court for cross-examination and, if not, how due process for the defence was guaranteed.

47. **Mr. Machačka** (Czechia) said that the right to freedom of assembly was not subject to prior authorization, but a person over 18 years of age was required to provide notification about the assembly. However, if assemblies held without such notification, for instance by schoolchildren outside the Ministry of Education, did not break the law, they were not dispersed.

48. **Ms. Jůzová Kotalová** (Czechia) said that the Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs was indeed the coordinating body for follow-up to the recommendations of the Committee. It was endeavouring to overcome the still fragmented child protection system in the country.

49. The Committee should not be left with the impression that children were left to protect themselves against corporal punishment and abuse at home. The Government carried out campaigns in collaboration with NGOs to inform children about what constituted corporal punishment and make it clear to them that such punishment or other forms of violence against them, including sexual abuse, was unacceptable. Alongside the active steps taken to identify

victims and to offer them social assistance, children were taught to recognize abuse and encouraged to ask for help.

50. As for the question raised about the funding for and sustainability of various projects to deinstitutionalize children and reform the child protection system, such projects continued to be carried out in a number of the country's regions, where significant transformation was taking place. It was perhaps easier at the regional level to overcome barriers to change and adopt different approaches to helping children, and the regional authorities were encouraged to share good practice developed in that area. At the national level, an amendment to the Child Protection Act setting a minimum age at which children could be placed into institutional care was pending approval by the upper house of Parliament. There was likely to be sufficient support for the amendment to pass.

51. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** said that he wished to know what specific steps had been taken to reduce the high rate of institutionalization of children. He wondered whether, for example, any national action plan was currently in place in that regard and whether sufficient resources had been allocated for the implementation of such a plan. Given that the decentralized approach taken by the State party might present system-wide obstacles to efforts to find alternatives to institutionalization, it would be useful to hear whether the State party had embarked on any structural reforms to bring responsibility for the placement of children in institutions under a single government ministry. He would be interested to learn whether the new legislative proposal to prohibit the placement of children under 3 years of age in institutions applied equally to all children, including those from Roma communities and children with disabilities. As he understood it, the law would result in the closure of infant care centres. If so, how long would it take to close all such centres? He asked whether other reforms were in the pipeline to improve and promote foster care, such as training for prospective foster parents and support for those caring for children with special needs.

52. He wondered whether the Government had a strategy to ensure that children were not taken into care solely on grounds of disability or poverty. It would be particularly helpful to know whether the State party had introduced effective "gatekeeping" to ensure appropriate care referral arrangements, adequate financial and social support for parents, and family reunification and reintegration programmes. Lastly, he wished to know how the Government ensured that the rights of children in residential and other care institutions were respected.

53. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he would be interested to learn what assistance was available to parents of children with disabilities who were unable to afford respite, healthcare, day-care and other support services. He wished to know whether those services were also open to children with disabilities living in rural areas and what measures had been taken to ensure that parents were aware of and had access to available support.

54. He wondered whether it was true that children with disabilities under 3 years of age were routinely placed in institutions rather than in family-based care. He asked whether the so-called early childhood medical care institutions for children with disabilities under 3 took a medical approach to their care and what bodies were responsible for the oversight of such institutions. Were complaints mechanisms available and easily accessible? He would like to know whether there were any plans to abolish large institutions that cared for children with disabilities alongside adults. It would be interesting to hear about measures to tackle discrimination against children with disabilities and to ensure that reasonable accommodation was provided in all aspects of life.

55. He wondered whether it was true that a large proportion of children in institutional care were from Roma communities and what steps had been taken to prevent racial discrimination. He asked how the State party ensured that the predominantly Roma children and their families housed in hostels were not at risk of forced eviction, taking into account the particular difficulties they would face in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

56. It would be useful to know whether there were any plans to evaluate the effectiveness of the Baby-friendly Hospital Initiative and what proportion of hospitals were regarded as baby-friendly. He wondered whether there was a national strategy to promote breastfeeding and a national body to coordinate policy and collect data in that area. He would be interested to learn what training the Government provided to health professionals in the light of the fact that training events were sometimes sponsored by baby food companies. He asked whether



the State party had incorporated all standards under the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes into its national legislation.

57. Noting that accidents were the leading cause of death among children and young adults in Czechia, he would welcome further information about the types of accidents involved and the measures taken to prevent them. It would be useful to know what results the ongoing reform of the mental health-care system for children and efforts at deinstitutionalization had produced and what measures had been adopted to combat suicide among children and adolescents.

58. He would appreciate an outline of the State party's approach towards sex education. He was concerned that too great an emphasis was placed on teaching abstinence, as studies had shown that such a narrow focus on abstinence was doomed to failure. He enquired whether sex education in Czechia also covered issues such as consent, sexual orientation, prevention of sexually transmitted infections and use of contraception.

59. **Ms. Marshall-Harris** said that she wished to know what steps the Government was taking to raise awareness among teachers and parents about the merits of an inclusive education system. It would be useful to have disaggregated data on the enrolment and dropout rate of children with disabilities and Roma and migrant children in order to inform and develop education policy. Were sufficient resources allocated to the inclusive education strategy?

60. She would be interested to hear whether there was a standardized national curriculum and, if so, whether it covered computer skills, children's rights and Czech as a second language for Roma and migrant children. In the light of the digital divide, she asked whether children from poorer backgrounds, those living in rural areas and children with disabilities had adequate access to online classes and resources and whether teachers received suitable training. It would be useful to have information about any steps taken to close the digital divide.

61. She would appreciate a response to her concerns that child asylum seekers were unlawfully being detained while their age was being determined and that the bone scans used to establish an asylum seeker's age were inaccurate and failed to take into account different rates of development owing to ethnicity. She wondered whether the fact that children born to non-nationals were unable to acquire Czech nationality unless one parent had a three-month residence permit might lead to statelessness. She wished to know what action would be taken to address the problem of families being detained while seeking asylum and the fact that children might not receive adequate education or health care as a result. She asked whether the State party would consider alternatives to detention for families with children while their asylum applications were being processed.

62. She would welcome the delegation's comments regarding reports of children under 15 years of age being put on trial despite being below the age of criminal responsibility. The issue was especially serious given that children below the age of 15 did not enjoy certain safeguards such as guaranteed legal representation.

63. **Mr. Chophel** said that he wondered whether the problem of exploitation of child labour existed in the country and, if so, he wished to know how the issue was addressed. It would be interesting to have an explanation of how the laws and guidelines on abortion were applied in cases where girls who had become pregnant as a result of rape or incest.

64. **Ms. Kiladze** asked whether there had been any cases where Czech child soldiers were involved in conflicts abroad.

65. **Ms. Todorova** said that she would be interested to hear what steps had been taken by the State authorities to raise awareness about the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure among children and NGOs. It would be useful to know whether an evaluation had been conducted of legislation designed to ensure children's access to justice. With respect to children in armed conflict, she failed to understand how the State party's laws on human trafficking actually fulfilled the requirements of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict. Likewise, it was not clear how the laws criminalizing child prostitution were sufficient to meet the requirements of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*