



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Seventy-fourth session

#### Summary record of the 2178th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 25 January 2017, at 10 a.m.

*Chair:* Mr. Mezmur

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*Fourth periodic report of Georgia*

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)**

*Fourth periodic report of Georgia (CRC/C/GEO/4; CRC/C/GEO/Q/4 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Georgia took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Totladze** (Georgia), introducing her country's fourth periodic report, highlighted some of the State party's recent advances in the field of human rights, including its accession to the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure and its decision to ratify the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence. An inclusive national reporting process had been developed with the active engagement of all relevant stakeholders, and State reports had been submitted on the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Georgia had issued a standing invitation to all United Nations special mandate holders and had recently hosted a visit by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. Significant policymaking and institutional measures had been undertaken to ensure coordinated State action on human rights, including the introduction of positions such as the Human Rights Advisor to the President and the Assistant to the Prime Minister on Human Rights and Gender Equality Issues.
3. The comprehensive Human Rights Strategy (2014-2020) and subsequent action plans had been adopted in a transparent manner with the active involvement of civil society and international actors. Implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan for 2016-2017, which reflected new commitments to protecting children's rights, were the responsibility of the Human Rights Secretariat and the Human Rights Inter-Agency Council. In December 2016, the Government had established the Inter-Agency Commission for Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which served as a coordination mechanism to ensure better implementation of obligations related to children's rights among various government agencies at the central and local levels and between the Government and civil society.
4. One of the most important legislative developments had been the adoption of the comprehensive Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in 2014; implementation of the Law was monitored by the Public Defender's Office, whose budget had been increased accordingly. Based on the principles of the Convention, the Child's Rights Centre had been established under that Office, to oversee promotion and protection of children's rights and freedoms. The Juvenile Justice Code, adopted in June 2015, had been drafted in cooperation with a wide range of international and local experts with the objective of fully incorporating into Georgian legal practice such principles as the best interests of the child and imprisonment as a last resort. In 2016, the alternative sanction of home arrest with the use of electronic surveillance bracelets had been introduced for juvenile offenders. As part of the Government's efforts to ensure an effective and child-oriented juvenile justice system, the Ministry of Corrections ensured unrestricted access to general education for children in conflict with the law. An individual sentence planning mechanism was applied to all convicted juvenile offenders, with a risks and needs assessment carried out by a multidisciplinary board. The establishment for juvenile inmates had been renovated and could now host various educational and psychosocial rehabilitation programmes, and there were plans to build a modern rehabilitation facility for young offenders.
5. The Universal Health Care Programme, launched in 2013, provided additional services for children and minors, and a rise in State funding for maternal and child health

care had contributed significantly to the decrease in child and maternal mortality rates. Successful reforms had been implemented in the child welfare system, with the main priorities being the closure of large children's institutions, the reintegration of children into their biological families and the development of alternative services, such as foster care and other family-type homes, for children deprived of parental care. The National Action Plan on Combating Human Trafficking 2017-2018 covered issues related to the prevention of trafficking of minors and the provision of tailored services to child victims; the State Fund for the Protection and Assistance of Victims of Human Trafficking provided appropriate accommodation and age-specific education and support programmes for minors.

6. In 2017, the budget of the Ministry of Education had been increased by 15 per cent. The national curriculum had been revised to enhance the quality of education. Since 2012, the number of early childhood and preschool institutions had increased by 20 per cent. The Ministry was implementing programmes to ensure the social inclusion of students with special educational needs. A number of tailored programmes had been carried out for children from ethnic minorities. A programme to address the situation of children living and/or working on the streets had been launched in 2013; children were identified by multidisciplinary mobile teams and referred to the services offered by day-care services and 24-hour shelters, including psychological support and preparation for placement in foster care. In 2016, amendments to several legislative acts had been adopted with the aim of providing free access to identity documents for children in street situations. Also in 2016, the Government had introduced new child protection referral procedures, which had extended the list of entities that had a responsibility to refer cases of child violence, specifically including corporal punishment, to the relevant authorities. Georgia had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2013; a special working group was currently cooperating with relevant NGOs to develop the necessary legal amendments to provide persons with disabilities, including children, with greater guarantees and protection mechanisms.

7. The Government spared no effort to ensure decent living conditions for internally displaced persons, including children. However, the only durable solution for them was a voluntary, safe and dignified return, in line with United Nations General Assembly resolutions on the status of internally displaced persons and refugees from Abkhazia, Georgia, and the Tskhinvali region/South Ossetia, Georgia. Efforts in that area included enhancing relevant legislation, guaranteeing durable housing solutions and supporting integration programmes. Steps had also been taken to enhance the asylum system and facilitate the integration of refugees. Asylum applications from unaccompanied minors were prioritized, and their best interests were respected at all times.

8. The Georgian regions of Abkhazia and Tskhinvali/South Ossetia remained under the occupation of the Russian Federation, which placed undue restrictions on the local population, particularly ethnic Georgians. Children were one of the most vulnerable groups, and their rights continued to be systematically abused. Freedom of movement across occupation lines had been further curtailed in 2016, and the restrictions directly affected the right of children to access health-care services, resulting in the death of a 12-year-old child in 2015 and an infant in 2016. Children's right to receive education in their native language was also restricted; learning in all kindergartens in the Gali district of the occupied Abkhazia region was currently in Russian. Ethnic Georgian children were frequently prevented from crossing the occupation line to attend schools in the territory controlled by the central Government, and children were frequently detained for "illegal border crossing" and released only after paying illegal fines. The Georgian Government was committed to protecting human rights and freedoms throughout its entire territory, including the occupied regions. Residents of the occupied regions were entitled to free medical treatment in any medical institution in Georgia, and the Georgian Government also regularly delivered medicine and medical equipment to the Abkhazia region. The Government also provided

students residing in the occupied territories with the opportunity to enrol in universities across Georgia via simplified procedures and to receive scholarships and participate in international academic programmes.

9. **Mr. Kotrane** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee welcomed the progress made by the State party in a number of areas, including the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the adoption of legislative and institutional measures, notably the Juvenile Justice Code. He wondered whether the Government had any plans to introduce a general children's code, which would explicitly prohibit corporal punishment and provide for intervention mechanisms for the prevention of violence against children. Although, under the Constitution, duly ratified international treaties prevailed over national law, the Committee was concerned at the lack of examples of direct application of the Convention by the national courts. He asked what measures the State party intended to adopt to enhance the visibility of the Convention and its Optional Protocols and ensure that they were incorporated into training for judges, prosecutors and lawyers. He wished to know what steps the State party intended to take to give effect to the Committee's previous recommendation to allocate principal responsibility for the coordination and evaluation of implementation of the Convention to a single mechanism, and to provide it with regular and adequate financial and human resources so that it comprehensively coordinated children's rights.

10. Noting that public spending on social rehabilitation and protection programmes for children had decreased in recent years, he would appreciate information on the measures that the State party planned to take to introduce a children's rights perspective into its budgeting process, with specific allocations for children in various sectors, and including indicators and a follow-up system to evaluate the effectiveness and equity of the distribution of resources allocated to implementation of the Convention, in line with the Committee's general comment No. 19 on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights (CRC/C/GC/19). Welcoming the establishment of the Child's Rights Centre, he requested additional information on its monitoring of faith-based children's institutions and enquired whether it had access to all such institutions. He wished to know what measures the State party planned to take to ensure that the Centre had sufficient human, technical and financial resources. The Committee shared the concerns expressed by the Human Rights Committee in July 2014 about the number of cases of early marriage and the practice of selective abortion of female fetuses, and it would be interested to know what measures were being taken to combat those practices.

11. **Ms. Winter** (Country Rapporteur) said that, while much progress had been made in enacting legislation, challenges remained in the area of implementation, particularly for civil matters, owing in part to a lack of support staff. She asked how the State party intended to overcome the shortage of social workers, especially in fields related to children and families. The Committee welcomed the strength of Georgian civil society and the Government's willingness to work with NGOs. She asked whether there were any diplomatic avenues for improving the protection of children in the occupied regions, or whether mediation might be a possibility. She would be interested to know what plans were in place to ensure that services available in major cities were also provided in remote areas. She wondered whether any awareness-raising activities were conducted to address harmful traditional practices and beliefs in those areas. Georgia, a country traditionally known for its religious tolerance, seemed to have become less tolerant in recent years, and she asked whether any educational campaigns or inter-faith dialogues were being conducted to reverse that trend. What measures were being taken to ensure that all childcare facilities and institutions run by religious bodies were adequately supervised and open to inspection?

12. The provision that children over the age of 10 years had the right to be heard in court was not always respected in civil proceedings, and she wished to know what was being done to address that problem. What measures were being taken to ensure that those responsible for implementing the law on surrogacy were familiar with its provisions and that there were no undue delays in children born to surrogate mothers obtaining nationality? She wished to know what the State party was doing to address the problem of violence against children in all settings, including the family, schools and kindergartens. How many parents, teachers and kindergarten staff had been involved in criminal proceedings for violence against children? Noting that the Committee had previously expressed concern about the problem of corporal punishment, she asked whether there were any plans to adopt legislation explicitly prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings. She would be interested to hear about educational and awareness-raising activities aimed at tackling the problem of early marriage.

13. **Mr. Nelson** said that, while the Committee was grateful for the statistics provided in the State party's replies to the list of issues, further disaggregation by age, ethnic origin and social background was required. He wondered whether there was any mechanism for sharing data among the various ministries and agencies; if not, perhaps the new Inter-Agency Commission responsible for implementing the Convention could look into the matter. The Committee would welcome more educational data, such as school completion rates, particularly as it had come to its attention that there was a high dropout rate among boys and pregnant teenage girls. It would also be grateful for figures on youth unemployment and information on what was being done to address that problem. What measures were being taken to deal with the emerging problem of child prostitution that was accompanying the growth of the country's tourism industry? In that regard, he drew attention to the World Tourism Organization's Global Code of Ethics for Tourism. Noting that the budget of the Public Defender's Office had grown steadily in recent years, he wondered whether there had been a corresponding increase in the budget of the Child's Rights Centre. He would be interested to hear more about how the Centre detected and surveyed cases of violation of children's rights, and to have examples of how it had responded to such violations in practice.

14. **Mr. Guráň** said that the delegation should comment on the State party's plans to harmonize national legislation with article 12 of the Convention on the right of the child to be heard, particularly in the field of education. The fact that there was an age limit for children's views to be heard in court might give rise to discriminatory treatment of children on the basis of their age, which was not in line with the Committee's general comment No. 12 on the right of the child to be heard (CRC/C/GC/12). He would be interested to know whether that general comment had been translated into Georgian, and whether it was included in training for professionals working with children, including teachers, police officers and judges. He would welcome information on children's school and community councils, including the number of such councils, how they were organized and whether they really allowed for the meaningful participation of children. He wondered whether any research had been conducted into respect for the views of the child in the family, society and community, and whether any awareness-raising campaigns were conducted to inform parents and children of that right.

15. **Ms. Sandberg** said that there was a widespread view in the country that people should not interfere in a family's internal affairs. Cases of abuse and neglect were thus often not reported, and she asked whether the new mandatory referral mechanism had improved the situation in that respect. She wished to know what was being done to raise public awareness of cases of violence against children and to build capacity among professionals, including teachers and doctors, in identifying and reporting them. Did the reporting obligation also apply to the staff of preschool establishments? She would be interested to hear about the results of the pilot programme started in June 2016 to identify

and prevent violence and behavioural disorders in schools. Expressing concern at the lack of local psychosocial support and rehabilitation for children with behavioural problems and victims of violence, particularly in rural areas, she asked what was being done to remedy the situation. Crucially, were there plans to increase the number of social workers? She wondered what measures were in place to protect children with disabilities against violence. Lastly, she wished to know whether there were plans to harmonize, modernize and raise awareness of the helplines available to children, and whether the staff running them were adequately trained.

*The meeting was suspended at 11 a.m. and resumed at 11.20 a.m.*

16. **Ms. Kiladze** (Georgia) said that work was under way, in cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), on a general framework law for the protection of children's rights. Although there had been a small number of isolated incidents of intolerance in recent years, it certainly could not be said that Georgia was no longer a tolerant country. Georgia had a centuries-long culture of religious harmony, and that was still the case. The relevant ministries were actively seeking to eliminate any manifestations of intolerance. New legislation on social workers was being drafted and the institution would be reformed to remedy any shortcomings.

17. **Mr. Baramidze** (Georgia) said that it was true that the main challenge faced by the State party was effective implementation of legislation, which was not surprising given the many reforms introduced in recent years. In addition to focusing on implementation, efforts were being made to fine-tune certain pieces of legislation, in which compromises had been introduced prior to adoption in the light of strong resistance from certain political and religious groups; one such example was the Law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination. Legislative reform was an ongoing process that required continuous efforts to achieve gradual progress. On the issue of early marriage, sexual intercourse with a minor had been prohibited under criminal law for many years. With regard to marriage as a civil law institution, as of January 2017 there were no more exceptions and the absolute and unconditional minimum age of marriage was 18 years. The Government was committed to implementing the Committee's previous recommendation on corporal punishment and had already done so in part. Under the new referral system, corporal punishment was explicitly included as one of the forms of violence against children that professionals, including teachers, police officers, social workers and local government officers, had a duty to report. Failure to report such violence would entail an administrative penalty. Just the day before, the Cabinet had adopted a new legislative initiative comprising amendments to up to 30 legal acts, including a number of important changes to the Criminal Code such as introduction of the crime of female genital mutilation. Regarding the unwanted consequences of the expansion of the tourist industry, work was currently under way on the criminalization of pimping.

18. **Ms. Jaliashvili** (Georgia) said that the Human Rights Inter-Agency Council, chaired by the Prime Minister, had been established to oversee and coordinate implementation of the successive national human rights action plans. All ministers were members of the Council, even if their ministries were not responsible for any measures under the Action Plan. The Public Defender and representatives of the European Union, the Council of Europe, United Nations agencies and national human rights NGOs had voting rights in the Council. The Inter-Agency Commission responsible for implementing the Convention, a separate specialized task force accountable to the Human Rights Inter-Agency Council, had been set up to mainstream and effectively implement the Convention and was composed of deputy ministers, the Public Defender and representatives of the Child's Rights Centre, UNICEF, and NGOs. As part of the political sphere, the Commission did not have a separate budget but it had sufficient human resources. The budget for implementation of the

Human Rights Action Plan by the various ministries was more than half a billion lari (approximately US\$ 200 million).

19. The Human Rights Inter-Agency Council was accountable to Parliament and reported to it each March on the implementation of the Human Rights Action Plan. Parliament discussed the Council's report before hearing from the Public Defender. The Government allocated the budget for the Public Defender's Office, and had increased the allocation yearly. However, it had no say in how the Office distributed the funds among its various departments; the amount allocated to the Child's Rights Centre was entirely at the Office's discretion.

20. **Mr. Baramidze** (Georgia), replying to the question about the possibility of drafting a general code concerning children, said that the Government, in consultation with representatives of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) in Georgia, had recently formed a working group to identify needed improvements in domestic legislation relating to children's rights. The group would consider, *inter alia*, how best to incorporate into the law principles and concepts such as the best interests of the child and the right of the child to be heard.

21. **Ms. Kvachadze** (Georgia) said that, under article 6 of the Constitution, international treaties and agreements to which Georgia was a party took precedence over domestic law, unless they conflicted in some way with the Constitution. Judges used such treaties and agreements in reasoning their judgments. Following the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Code, mandatory training courses had been organized for judges, prosecutors, lawyers and other personnel involved in the juvenile justice system. The courses had covered the application of international conventions, optional protocols and other international standards in court decisions. Over 200 judges had completed the training. Judges routinely sought the views of children, including children as young as 10 years of age, in matters affecting them, such as in divorce and abduction cases.

22. **Mr. Dateshidze** (Georgia) said that, by law, children aged 10 years and over could not be adopted or placed in a foster family without their consent, and the views of children under 10 years of age had to be taken into account. Children in State-funded residential facilities were entitled to participate in decision-making about matters that affected their daily lives, such as food choices and the organization of sports and other leisure activities.

23. A major revision of the laws concerning legal capacity and parental rights had marked a big step forward with regard to the elimination of discrimination against persons with disabilities. In the past, persons with mental or psychosocial impairments whom the courts had declared incapable had been deprived of their parental and other civil rights, and their children had been placed in foster care or put up for adoption. Now, under the new laws, such persons must be provided with appropriate support to enable them to bring up their children themselves.

24. Access to social services had improved significantly in recent years. For example, the number of providers of early intervention services had risen from 2 in 2010 to 40 in 2017, while the number of beneficiaries had increased from 80 to 700. Financing for rehabilitation and other services had almost doubled since 2010, as had the numbers of providers and beneficiaries. The Government was aware that there were still gaps in coverage, however, and was working to promote further development of services, especially in rural areas. To ensure the quality of State-funded services, a monitoring division had been set up within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs. It monitored compliance with standards of care in State-funded services and issued recommendations for improvement to providers and government agencies.

25. The Social Service Agency of the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs was responsible for assessing child victims of violence, preparing individual development plans,

placing the children in an appropriate care situation, such as a small group home, and supervising their care. Children received ongoing support services from psychologists and social workers employed by the State Social Service Agency, schools and, in some cases, specialized NGOs. Child victims of violence and of trafficking were entitled to State funds for their protection and assistance, appropriate accommodation, age-specific education and other support tailored to their needs as identified by a social worker through an individual assessment. Funding for services for children as a portion of the total government budget had decreased slightly, but in absolute terms it had increased.

26. The numbers of professional social workers employed by the Social Service Agency had increased in recent years, rising from 96 in 2007 to 197 in 2010 to 239 at present. Salaries for social workers had increased by 25 per cent in 2015. Further development of high-quality social services would not be possible, however, unless more social workers could be hired, and the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs would therefore endeavour to persuade its government counterparts to allocate more resources for that purpose. The Ministry was also working to enhance social workers' qualifications and, to that end, had held a number of training events in the previous three years. In 2016, all social workers employed by the Social Service Agency had received training on violence-related issues affecting children.

27. The Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs operated several hotlines that provided advice and assistance to persons reporting cases of violence, trafficking and emergencies, including children. It planned to expand the violence hotline in 2017 so that it would operate throughout the country and provide services free of charge round the clock every day of the week. The hotline service would be available in several languages.

28. Child poverty remained a serious problem in Georgia. UNICEF research had shown that poverty levels among children were higher than in other population groups. In 2013, the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs had launched an effort, with support from UNICEF and the World Bank, to refine the methodology for identifying the needs of poor children and their families, in order to improve the targeting of its assistance programmes. It had also expanded the coverage of those programmes. As a result, according to recent surveys, child poverty had decreased. The proportion of children living in general poverty (defined as household consumption of under US\$ 2.50 per day) had been 49 per cent in 2009, 28 per cent in 2013 and 21.7 per cent in 2015. The proportion of children living in extreme poverty (household consumption of under US\$ 1.25 per day) had fallen from 6 per cent in 2013 to 2.5 per cent in 2015.

29. **Mr. Kotrane** said that he was pleased to learn that the State party intended to adopt a general law on the rights of children. He also welcomed its Human Rights Strategy and the various bodies set up to monitor the human rights situation in Georgia. However, it would still be advisable to have a specific body to coordinate actions with respect to children's rights in various areas, as it would be difficult for a general human rights body at the ministerial level to coordinate all activities on the ground and to monitor the progress of those activities. He was not sure that a task force on human rights could fulfil that function. He welcomed the increases in the availability of services for children but believed that more needed to be done, and in particular more resources allocated, in order to reach children in all parts of the country.

30. The provisions of article 6 of the Georgian Constitution could be problematic, since judges could potentially block the application of the Convention on the grounds that one of its provisions was in conflict with the Constitution. He would like to know whether any judges had directly applied the Convention in their rulings concerning children's rights.

31. **Ms. Jaliashvili** (Georgia) said that a high-level body might not be an effective coordinating mechanism in all countries, but it was the best approach for Georgia. The

Human Rights Inter-Agency Council was a decision-making body that brought together all interested stakeholders, including NGOs; the latter functioned as “watchdog” organizations and provided valuable information that served as a basis for decision-making and for budgeting. The Council also received information from the Public Defender’s Office and its Child Right’s Centre, which, together with the NGOs and the social workers employed by the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs, carried out monitoring on the ground and made recommendations on how to improve policymaking in respect of human rights. At its next meeting in March 2017, the Council would be examining how to enhance the monitoring functions of the Child’s Rights Centre.

32. **Ms. Kvachadze** (Georgia) said that judges could apply international agreements and treaties in their decisions if the standard set therein was higher than the standard set by domestic legislation. The Supreme Court kept records of all cases in which judges applied international standards in their decisions.

33. **Mr. Khandolishvili** (Georgia) said that the Ministry of Education and Science was carrying out various activities aimed at preventing early marriage. Information on the negative consequences of early marriage had been incorporated into the school curriculum, as had a programme on reproductive health and healthy lifestyles. In addition, awareness-raising activities were being conducted among teachers and parents, especially in the regions where early marriage was most common. Those initiatives had helped to reduce school dropout attributable to early marriage.

34. Ensuring access to education in remote areas was challenging, owing to the country’s geographical location and features. The Government currently provided free school transport for some 63,000 children, which had increased the number of children attending school and reduced absenteeism. However, in mountainous areas, roads often became impassable in the winter, which meant that children were unable to get to school. The Ministry of Education had therefore launched an “out-of-school classes” programme, in which individuals were assigned to give lessons to pupils in villages in remote areas.

35. Much had been done to enhance the inclusion and meet the educational needs of children from ethnic minorities, including the provision of instruction in 10 minority languages. The Government also offered instruction in the Georgian language for both children and adults, including through a professional development and career advancement programme for teachers in ethnic minority communities. The “1 + 4” programme, launched in 2015, enabled ethnic minority students to spend the first year of university improving their command of Georgian through a free Government-sponsored preparatory course.

36. The school curriculum had been amended in 2016 in order to address the issue of violence against children. New content had been introduced with a view to fostering a safe environment at school and developing social and civic competencies among children. Instruction was being provided on children’s rights, democratic citizenship and the elimination of all forms of violence. Seven psychological service centres provided assistance to children affected by violence. In addition, mobile teams offered individual and group therapy for children and their families throughout the country. The Government intended to expand and further improve those services in 2017.

37. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether the delegation could provide specific examples of cases in which judges had applied the Convention directly in their rulings.

38. **Ms. Winter** enquired whether teachers and other staff in kindergartens received training on non-violent education.

39. **Ms. Kvachadze** (Georgia) said that judges had applied the Convention in numerous cases. Judicial decisions were analysed every six months to determine how the Convention and other international instruments were being implemented at the national level.

40. **Mr. Khandolishvili** (Georgia) said that more than 300 kindergarten teachers had already received training in human rights and in human rights instruction for children.

41. **Ms. Winter** said that she would like an update on the status of the programme established by the President and First Lady of Georgia to assist asylum seekers, especially Syrian refugees with children. She wished to know what assistance was provided to children of internally displaced persons (IDPs) who were not expected to return to their places of origin in the foreseeable future. She asked what training was provided to police officers with regard to the referral of street children in coastal areas at night when no social workers were available. She would like to know what progress had been made in training investigators on the new Juvenile Justice Code, especially with a view to ending the practice of night-time interrogations and other mistreatment of children. Information on what was being done to improve educational opportunities in penitentiaries would be appreciated, as would details of plans to increase the number of psychologists providing assistance to child victims and witnesses. She asked what steps were envisaged to increase school attendance among girls from ethnic minority groups. Lastly, she would like to know what mechanisms were in place to prevent recruitment of children by Islamic State in Iraq and the Levant and other terrorist groups.

42. **Mr. Kotrane** said that he would appreciate details of the current situation with regard to child labour. Information received by the Committee indicated that 29 per cent of children aged 7 to 14 years worked in Georgia and that children from poor families, especially girls, often left school early in order to work. It appeared that, following the elimination of the Labour Inspection Service in 2006, there was no agency responsible for investigating child labour irregularities. He would like to know what measures the State party intended to take to combat all forms of child labour, particularly in the informal sector, and what steps had been taken or were planned to re-establish the Labour Inspection Service. He also noted that Georgia had not yet ratified the International Labour Organization (ILO) Labour Inspection Convention, 1947 (No. 81).

43. The Committee welcomed the steps taken by the State party to combat trafficking and abduction of children. However, it remained deeply concerned about the abduction and forced marriage of girls. It was not sufficient to outlaw sexual relations with minors; forced and early marriage should also be outlawed. What additional programmes and measures did the State party intend to put in place in order to combat all forms of sexual exploitation, sale and trafficking of children, especially those in situations of vulnerability and marginalization?

44. **Mr. Guráň** said that he would appreciate information on how many children could be placed in each small group home, how many children were in fact routinely housed in such homes and how long (up to what age) they could remain there, the ratio of staff to children in small group homes, the qualification requirements for staff and whether the same standards applied to small group homes operated by the State and those operated by churches or private entities. He also asked whether there were any programmes or counselling services aimed at avoiding repeated removal of children from their families, especially children from poor families. He would be interested to know who was responsible for monitoring and supervision of foster families. Lastly, he would appreciate an answer to his earlier question about school councils.

45. **Mr. Nelson** said that, as social workers played such an important part in the State party's childcare system, it was important to increase salaries and provide other incentives in order to attract a sufficient number. He wondered whether the Human Rights Inter-Agency Council was considering any such measures in order to remedy the shortage of social workers. He would also like to know whether the State party had legislation in place to prevent employers from dismissing or taking other action against women who took maternity leave.

46. **Ms. Khazova** said that she would like more information on the provisions of the draft law on adoption and foster care. In particular, did it provide for any exceptions to the prohibition of direct adoption, did it contain rules on the adoption of siblings aimed at avoiding their separation and would it accelerate the adoption process, which in the past had been very slow? Noting that children could be placed for adoption in cases of parental neglect and that such neglect was most often the result of economic hardship, she asked whether any support or counselling was available to prevent the removal of children from their families. She would also like to know whether the State party had any plans to change its rules regarding the secrecy of adoption, in order to allow adopted children to access information on their biological families.

47. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that there appeared to be a lack of societal awareness regarding the problems faced by children with disabilities, many of whom continued to be abandoned or institutionalized. He would like to know what awareness-raising programmes were being carried out to change societal attitudes and what measures were being taken, including with respect to teacher training, to ensure inclusive education that was adapted to the needs of children with disabilities. The State party report indicated that contraceptives were provided mainly by donor agencies, as no funding for them was included in the State budget. He wondered whether steps were being taken to change that situation, particularly in the light of the high rates of pregnancy and abortion among adolescents. He also wished to know what was being done to promote instruction on reproductive and sexual health among adolescents. He would welcome information on measures to prevent drug use by adolescents and on the outcomes of the mental health programme mentioned in paragraph 154 of the report.

48. **Ms. Aho Assouma** asked whether the State party had a programme to prevent under-5 child mortality and whether the delegation could provide current statistics on maternal and child deaths. She would like to know what results had been achieved through the pilot programme for the regionalization of perinatal care services and whether the programme was being extended to other regions. In that connection, she wondered whether the suspension of services in four perinatal care facilities might have led to more child deaths. She would like to know the current status of the plan to pilot a home visit model for the detection of developmental delays before the age of 3 years. She would also appreciate information on health services and medical products and supplies for children in prison settings, on paediatric psychiatry services for child victims and on routine immunization campaigns, particularly in remote areas.

49. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** said that he wished to know what approaches had been adopted for the dissemination of information on HIV among children and adolescents. He asked whether the State party had a national policy on HIV/AIDS and, if so, what results it had produced. What steps had been taken to improve the quality of health services in order to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV; what had been done to prevent discrimination against and improve tolerance of persons with HIV infection; and to what extent were the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UNICEF collaborating with the State party on HIV/AIDS prevention and control? He would also like to know whether the State party had any holistic, integrated programmes to assist the most vulnerable poor children and reduce inequities. If so, did those programmes provide for access to housing, safe drinking water and sanitation? Were there plans in place for assisting the families of refugees and IDPs, particularly in rural and remote areas? Lastly, he wondered what possibilities existed for imprisoned mothers to receive visits from their adolescent children.

50. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi**, noting that two thirds of 15-year-olds in Georgia suffered from a certain degree of functional illiteracy, that 80 per cent of teachers were not certified, that school dropout rates remained high and that there were difficulties with the use of the

Russian language in schools, asked what steps were being taken to remedy those problems. She would also like to know whether instruction on human rights in general, and on children's rights in particular, was included in the school curriculum and whether teachers had been trained to provide such instruction.

51. **Mr. Gastaud** asked what government oversight mechanisms were in place for private schools and for the development of school curricula by private entities. A recent survey had found 2,500 street children living in Georgia; did the delegation have more recent statistics? The State party's report indicated that in 2012 it had launched an initiative to reintegrate street children into society. He would like clarification of what that meant, how reintegration into society differed from reintegration into a family, and whether the results of that initiative had been assessed. In her opening remarks, the head of delegation had referred to day-care centres for street children, whereas the State party report referred to crisis centres and shelters; he wondered whether they were the same. He also asked what activities children pursued in the day-care centres, instead of attending school, and whether they were able to remain in the centres during the night.

52. **Mr. Madi** said that he understood that the number of stateless persons in Georgia had been reduced from almost 1,100 to 600 in 2015, although that reduction had not been the result of naturalization, but rather of stateless persons leaving the country. He would like to know how many of those 600 stateless persons were children and what the State party was doing to reduce the number of stateless children, particularly in light of the fact that it was a party to both the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

53. **Ms. Khazova**, noting that Georgia was a party to the 1996 Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, asked whether the State party was considering also becoming a party to the 2007 Hague Convention on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, since the 1996 Convention did not provide for the recovery of child support from abroad in the context of cross-border disputes. She recalled that the Convention on the Rights of the Child called upon States parties to take all appropriate measures to secure the recovery of maintenance for children from abroad.

*The meeting rose at 1 p.m.*