



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined second to fifth periodic reports of the Cook Islands*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined second to fifth periodic reports of the Cook Islands (CRC/C/COK/2-5) at its 2467th and 2468th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.2467 and 2468), held on 5 March 2020, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2470th meeting, held on 6 March 2020.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined second to fifth periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/COK/RQ/2-5), 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 high-level and multisectoral delegation of the State party.

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

3. The Committee welcomes the ratification by the State party of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999 (No. 182), of the International Labour Organization (ILO). The Committee notes with appreciation the legislative, institutional and policy measures adopted to implement the Convention, in particular the enactment of the Family Protection and Support Act, 2017, and the *te pito manava o te anau* (national policy framework for children), 2017–2021. It welcomes the progress made in reducing child mortality.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

4. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It 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, insofar as they concern children.**

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

Committee's previous recommendations

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all measures necessary to address the recommendations contained in its previous concluding observations,**

* Adopted by the Committee at its eighty-fourth extraordinary session (2–6 March 2020).



adopted in 2012 (CRC/C/COK/CO/1), that have not been implemented or have been implemented insufficiently, in particular, those related to reservations and declarations (para. 7); comprehensive policy and strategy (para. 12); allocation of resources (para. 16); data collection (para. 18); dissemination, awareness-raising and training (para. 20); the right to privacy (para. 34); and adolescent health (paras. 46, 50 and 52).

Reservations and declarations

6. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 7) that the State party strengthen its efforts concerning the withdrawal of its reservations made to articles 2 and 10 of the Convention and the declaration on article 2 (1) of the Convention, as well as its general declaration on the inapplicability of the Convention in domestic law.

Legislation

7. The Committee welcomes the enactment of the Family Protection and Support Act. It is concerned, however, about the lack of a comprehensive law on children's rights to incorporate the Convention into domestic legislation. It is also concerned about the remaining legal provisions in the statutes that are inconsistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention, including in the Cook Islands Act, 1915, and the Crimes Act, 1969.

8. The Committee recommends that the State party develop a comprehensive law on children's rights and continue to review its existing laws related to children's rights, including the Cook Islands Act and the Crimes Act, to ensure that they are in full compliance with the principles and provisions of the Convention.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

9. The Committee commends the adoption of the *te pito manava o te anau* (national policy framework for children), 2017–2021, as well as the national youth policy, 2015–2020. It recommends that the State party develop strategy based on that policy with the necessary elements for its application, which is supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources.

Coordination

10. While welcoming the establishment of the National Advisory Committee for Children's Rights as the national mechanism to coordinate the implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that it is provided with sufficient human, technical and financial resources to enable it to effectively coordinate, monitor and evaluate national policies and programmes relating to children's rights.

Allocation of resources

11. Recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Increase the budget allocations for the implementation of all legislation, policies, plans and programmes in favour of children, in all relevant sectors, with priority given to the areas of health care, education and social protection;

(b) Use a child rights-based approach in the budgeting processes and include specific indicators and a tracking system to monitor and evaluate the allocation and use of resources for children;

(c) Ensure transparent and participatory budgeting processes in which civil society, the public and children can participate effectively.

Data collection

12. In the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take effective measures to implement its strategy for the development of statistics, 2015–2025, and create an integrated and comprehensive data-collection and management system, covering all areas of the Convention, with data disaggregated by relevant factors, in order to facilitate analysis on the situation of all children;

(b) Ensure that the data and indicators are shared among the ministries, civil society organizations and development partners;

(c) Ensure that the data are used effectively for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the implementation of the Convention;

(d) Strengthen its technical cooperation with, among others, the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and development partners and take into account the guidelines of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), entitled *Human Rights Indicators: A Guide to Measurement and Implementation*, when defining, collecting and disseminating statistical information.

Independent monitoring

13. The Committee notes with concern that the State party has not yet established a national human rights institution with an explicit mandate to regularly monitor and evaluate progress in the fulfilment of children’s rights under the Convention, including a mandate to receive, investigate and address complaints by or on behalf of children.

14. Recalling its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent human rights institutions in the promotion and protection of the rights of the child, and its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 14), the Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously establish a national human rights institution in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles) to monitor children’s rights and to receive, investigate and address complaints by or on behalf of children in a child-friendly and child-sensitive manner. The Committee encourages the State party to continue to seek technical assistance from, among others, OHCHR and the United Nations Development Programme.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

15. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 20) and recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, and efforts to ensure that the provisions and principles of the Convention are widely recognized and understood and ensure that children, parents, island communities, traditional, religious and community leaders and civil society play a key role in such initiatives throughout the country, including in the outer islands;

(b) Continue to provide adequate and systematic training on children’s rights and the Convention to the professionals working for and with children, including those working in the areas of education, health, social protection and justice.

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

16. Noting that the Family Protection and Support Act, the Education Act and the *te pito manava o te anau* (national policy framework for children), 2017–2021, provide for a definition of the child as a person under 18 years of age, the Committee is concerned that the draft marriage amendment bill has yet to be adopted and that, consequently, the minimum age of marriage remains 16 years of age – or even younger, if the consent of the child’s parent or guardian is provided.

17. The Committee recommends that the State party expeditiously revise its legislation in order to ensure that the minimum age of marriage is established as 18 years of age for both girls and boys with no exceptions.

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

Non-discrimination

18. The Committee is concerned about the prevalence of discriminatory legislation, in particular the Crimes Act, in which consensual sexual activity between boys is criminalized, as well as the Cook Islands Act, in relation to the rights of adopted children.

19. **Taking note of target 10.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party repeal the discriminatory provisions in its legislation to ensure respect for the rights set forth in the Convention.**

Best interests of the child

20. While welcoming the recognition of the principle of the best interests of the child in the Family Protection and Support Act, the Committee is concerned that the principle is not sufficiently incorporated into all relevant legislation, policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children and is not consistently implemented in decisions affecting children, including in the family, schools and the community or in administrative and judicial proceedings.

21. **Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is incorporated into all legislation, policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children and is consistently applied in the family, schools and the community, as well as in administrative and judicial proceedings, and that it develop procedures and criteria to ensure that the best interests of the child are properly assessed when a decision is made regarding a child.**

Respect for the views of the child

22. The Committee commends the fact that the Family Protection and Support Act provides children with the opportunity to express their views in judicial proceedings that affect them. While noting the opportunities for children to express their views and participate in the making of decisions in schools, it remains concerned that children cannot effectively participate in the making of decisions that affect them within the family and the community, including owing to the prevalence of traditional societal attitudes, which hinder respect for the views of the child.

23. **Recalling its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 30) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen systematic training to professionals working with and for children, especially in administrative and judicial proceedings, and develop operational procedures or protocols for such professionals to ensure that due weight is given to the views of children in those proceedings;**

(b) **Conduct programmes and awareness-raising activities to combat negative societal attitudes, which hinder children's right to be heard, and promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family and the community.**

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

Right to privacy

24. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 34) and urges the State party to enact and implement legislation to provide children with the legal protection of the right to privacy. It also recommends that the State party establish confidential counselling services and reporting channels and undertake awareness-raising programmes for professionals working with and for children, to ensure respect for children's privacy.

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

Corporal punishment

25. While noting that the Education Act prohibits corporal punishment in schools, the Committee is seriously concerned that such punishment remains legal in other settings, including in the home, alternative care settings, some forms of day-care settings and penal institutions. The Committee is concerned in particular that section 32 of the draft crimes bill elaborated in 2017 provides for the so-called “lawful correction of a child”, as does the Crimes Act.

26. **Recalling 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 urges the State party to:**

(a) **Repeal laws that permit the corporal punishment of children and enact legislation to explicitly prohibit such punishment in all settings;**

(b) **Intensify efforts to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline, including by strengthening awareness-raising programmes and campaigns targeting children, parents, teachers and traditional, religious and community leaders.**

Abuse and neglect

27. While welcoming that, under the Family Protection and Support Act, school administration and teachers are obliged to report incidents of the abuse of children, the Committee is concerned about the underreporting of the abuse and neglect of children, including in the home, schools and the community. It is also concerned about the insufficient capacity of law enforcement and judicial officials to handle cases of abuse, neglect and domestic violence.

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

(a) **Develop a comprehensive policy and strategy for preventing and combating child abuse, neglect and domestic violence and undertake awareness-raising and education programmes and campaigns, with the involvement of children;**

(b) **Collect data on children who are victims of abuse, neglect and domestic violence in the State party and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of such violence;**

(c) **Ensure access to reporting mechanisms and clear reporting procedures in response to cases of abuse, neglect and domestic violence for children, parents and professionals working with and for children and ensure access for children to child-friendly support and services, including rehabilitation and reintegration;**

(d) **Provide systematic training to judges, prosecutors, police officers and social workers on how to prevent and monitor cases of child abuse, neglect and domestic violence;**

(e) **Encourage community-based programmes aimed at preventing and addressing child abuse, neglect and domestic violence, including by involving former victims, volunteers and community members and providing training support to them.**

Sexual exploitation and abuse

29. The Committee is seriously concerned about the prevalence of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, including in school and in the family, and the significant underreporting of such cases owing to the fear of stigma and lack of confidential and child-friendly reporting procedures.

30. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that the law provides all children, boys and girls, under 18 years of age, with protection from all forms of sexual exploitation and abuse;**

(b) **Clearly set the age for sexual consent and ensure that adolescents engaging in sexual acts with each other are not criminalized;**

(c) **Penalize child sexual abuse material online, commercial sexual exploitation of children and online solicitation of children;**

(d) **Conduct a comprehensive study on the scope and root causes of the vulnerability of children to sexual exploitation and abuse, including in the family and religious institutions, and apply the findings in the development of a national action plan to prevent and combat the phenomenon;**

(e) **Ensure the mandatory reporting of suspicion of sexual abuse and exploitation, child-friendly and multi-sectoral investigation and prosecution and that adult perpetrators are duly prosecuted and punished with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of their crimes;**

(f) **Combat the stigmatization of children who are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and establish accessible, confidential, child-friendly and specialized support for children who are victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, including psychological counselling and rehabilitation and social integration assistance.**

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

Family environment

31. While noting that the Employment Relations Act, 2012, provides for maternity leave for working mothers, the Committee is concerned that the maternity leave is for only six weeks, which is significantly shorter than the international standards established by ILO. It is also concerned that, despite the Committee's previous recommendations, the State party has not ensured access to day-care facilities for children younger than schooling age.

32. **Recalling its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 38), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Consider extending maternity leave to an internationally acceptable period, in accordance with the Committee's general comment No. 7 (2005) on implementing child rights in early childhood;**

(b) **Provide access to day-care facilities for children younger than schooling age;**

(c) **Strengthen efforts to raise awareness among parents and caregivers of the best forms of child-rearing practices and the equal parental responsibilities of fathers and mothers.**

Children deprived of a family environment

33. Noting that children deprived of a family environment are traditionally placed in the care of the extended family, the Committee is concerned about the limited support provided to the caregiver relatives.

34. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all forms of alternative care arrangements, including informal care by extended family members, are provided with adequate support.**

Adoption

35. The Committee remains concerned about the absence of legislation, policies and mechanisms governing both domestic and international adoptions.

36. **The Committee recalls its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, para. 42) and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Adopt legislation, policies and mechanisms governing domestic and international adoptions that protect the rights and best interests of the child in line with the principles and provisions of the Convention;**

(b) **Establish monitoring and evaluation procedures with respect to both domestic and international adoptions.**

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

37. The Committee commends the State party for having increased the provision of child grants for children with disabilities from the previous upper limit of 12 years of age to 16 years of age. It also commends the steps taken to facilitate access for children with disabilities to inclusive education, including by providing them with individualized support in mainstream schools and by improving the accessibility of school buildings. However, the Committee is concerned about the gaps in the implementation of the State party's laws and policies concerning children with disabilities.

38. **Recalling its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recommends that the State party, with the full and effective participation of children with disabilities:**

(a) **Prioritize infrastructure adaptation to improve access to public buildings and spaces, including schools;**

(b) **Continue to provide individualized support to children with disabilities to ensure their full participation in inclusive education in mainstream schools, including by training and appointing a sufficient number of suitable teacher's aides;**

(c) **Continue to provide support and services in the community to enable families to care for children with disabilities;**

(d) **Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public, traditional, religious and community leaders and families to promote a positive image of children with disabilities, with a view to ensuring their full inclusion in society.**

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

Health and health-care services

39. The Committee welcomes the specific measures taken to provide health-care services to patients in the outer islands, such as the "flying doctors" programme, the use of communications technology for medical counselling and the transfer of patients to Rarotonga or overseas when necessary. While welcoming the decline in the neonatal and infant mortality rates and the mortality rate among children under 5 years of age, the Committee remains concerned about the prevailing disparities within the country in access to health-care services, including primary and preventive health care, and that the neonatal and infant mortality rates and the mortality rate among children under 5 years of age are higher in the outer islands compared with Rarotonga.

40. **Recalling its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, and taking note of target 3.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen measures to improve access to quality health-care services across the country, including in the outer islands, and allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to that effect;**

(b) **Strengthen measures to eliminate preventable mortality among infants and children under 5 years of age, especially in the outer islands, and apply the OHCHR technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to reduce and eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 years of age (A/HRC/27/31).**

Mental health

41. The Committee is concerned about the growing number of children who have been assessed to have mental health problems, with 16.1 per cent of students reportedly having attempted suicide at least once, according to the survey conducted by the State party in 2015.

42. **Taking note of target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party develop a national strategy, based on the findings of the survey it conducted, to effectively prevent suicide among children and to address the root causes, through psychological, educational and social measures and therapies for children, families and the public at large.**

Adolescent health

43. **Recalling its previous recommendations (CRC/C/COK/CO/1, paras. 46, 50 and 52), its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention and its general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Use the process of revising the Crimes Act to decriminalize abortion at least in cases of rape, incest and risk to the life and health of the mother, continue to progressively decriminalize abortion in all circumstances and provide clear guidance to health-care practitioners and information to adolescents on safe abortion and post-abortion care, while ensuring that the views of pregnant girls are heard and given due consideration in all abortion decisions;**

(b) **Strengthen measures to facilitate effective access for all adolescents to confidential reproductive health and counselling services and information, as well as to modern forms of contraception, including free emergency contraception;**

(c) **Continue to implement programmes on sexual and reproductive health education and expand them across the country, targeting adolescent girls and boys, with special attention given to preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;**

(d) **Continue to take measures to address the problem of children being overweight, including by raising public awareness of nutrition issues and healthy eating habits;**

(e) **Take the measures necessary to address the incidence of alcohol and drug use among children and adolescents by, inter alia, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information on the harmful effects of alcohol, drug and substance abuse, as well as life skills education on preventing substance abuse, including tobacco and alcohol dependence, and develop accessible and youth-friendly substance abuse treatment and harm reduction services;**

(f) **Effectively implement the Narcotics and Misuse of Drugs Act, 2004, and take all measures necessary to curb drug trafficking.**

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

44. While noting the measures taken to strengthen climate change adaptation and resilience, including disaster risk reduction, the Committee is deeply concerned about the following:

(a) The increasingly adverse impact of global climate change and natural disasters on the rights of the child in the Cook Islands, including the rights to life, survival and development, non-discrimination, education, health, adequate housing and safe drinking water and sanitation;

(b) The insufficient inclusion of the rights and needs of children, including children with disabilities, in policies and programmes on climate action, including climate-related disaster risk reduction, preparedness, response and recovery;

(c) The lack of opportunities for children to effectively participate in discussions and decision-making related to climate action.

45. The Committee, drawing attention to target 13.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals, recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the special vulnerabilities and needs of children, as well as their views, are taken into account in developing policies and programmes addressing the issues of climate change and disaster risk management;

(b) Collect data, disaggregated by relevant factors, identifying the types and levels of risk faced by children to the occurrence of a variety of disasters in order to formulate international, regional and national policies, frameworks and agreements accordingly;

(c) Strengthen measures to increase awareness and preparedness among children for climate change and natural disasters, including by integrating environment and climate change issues into the national curriculum;

(d) Seek bilateral, multilateral, regional and international cooperation in implementing the present recommendations.

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

Education, including vocational training and guidance

46. The Committee welcomes the fact that education is compulsory for children between 5 and 16 years of age and the support provided to pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers to continue their education. While noting with appreciation the information on the high enrolment rates in primary schools and the high level of retention in secondary schools, the Committee remains concerned about the disparities between children in Rarotonga and those in the outer islands, in their access to quality education, especially to early childhood education and vocational training.

47. Taking note of targets 4.2, 4.4, 4.5, 4.7 and 4.c of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Intensify its efforts to combat disparities within the country in access to quality education and encourage equal opportunities in education for children living in the outer islands;

(b) Continue to improve the availability and quality of vocational training to enhance the skills of children and young people, especially those who discontinue their schooling;

(c) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to enhance access to quality early childhood education and care across the country.

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

Children in situations of migration

48. Noting that international migration in the context of climate change and natural disasters may increasingly affect children, the Committee recommends that the State party consider developing legislation, policies and programmes governing the international migration of children that take into account the rights and needs of children.

Administration of child justice

49. The Committee commends the decrease in the number of cases in which children have been formally charged with offences under the Penal Code, mainly owing to conflicts being addressed through community mediation and *te koro akaau*. The Committee, however, remains concerned that:

(a) In the draft crimes bill, as in the Crimes Act, the minimum age for criminal responsibility is set at 10 years of age;

(b) In the Prevention of Juvenile Crime Act, 1968, a child is defined as a person under 16 years of age, and that therefore children between 16 and 18 years of age are treated as adults and not afforded special child justice protection measures;

(c) There is no legal provision to guarantee that the deprivation of liberty of children is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time.

50. **With reference to its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age;**

(b) **Review its legislation to ensure that all children below 18 years of age are treated as children and that those above the minimum age of criminal responsibility are included in the child justice system;**

(c) **Ensure that detention remains a measure of last resort and continues to be used for the shortest possible period of time;**

(d) **Continue to promote, in line with international standards, non-judicial measures, such as diversion, community mediation and counselling, including *Te Koro Akaau*, for children accused of criminal offences;**

(e) **Seek technical assistance from international, regional and bilateral partners, in particular UNICEF and OHCHR.**

Child victims and witnesses of crime

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the child-friendly judicial mechanisms for children who are victims and witnesses of crime, including with regard to investigative interviewing.**

K. Ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention

52. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict, the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.**

L. Ratification of international human rights instruments

53. **The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the following core human rights instruments, to which it is not yet a party:**

(a) **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;**

(b) **International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights;**

(c) **Convention against Torture and Other Cruel Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment;**

(d) **International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;**

(e) **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination;**

(f) **International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.**

M. Cooperation with regional bodies

54. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate, among others, with regional organizations such as the Pacific Community and the Pacific Islands Forum.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

55. 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 second to fifth 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. National mechanism for reporting and follow-up

56. The Committee recommends that the State party establish a standing government structure to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms, and to coordinate and track national follow-up to and implementation of treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from the mechanisms. The Committee emphasizes that such a structure should be adequately and continuously supported by dedicated staff and should have the capacity to consult systematically with civil society.

C. Next report

57. The Committee invites the State party to submit its sixth periodic report by 5 July 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 (see 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.

58. 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.