



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child

### Concluding observations the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Albania, adopted by the Committee at its sixty-first session (17 September–5 October 2012)

1. The Committee considered the combined second to fourth periodic reports of Albania (CRC/C/ALB/2-4) at its 1738th and 1739th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.1738 and CRC/C/SR.1739) held on 25 September 2012, and adopted, at its 1754th meeting, held on 5 October 2012, the following concluding observations.

#### I. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's combined second to fourth periodic reports and the written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/ALB/Q/2-4/Add.1), which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children in the State party. However, while taking note of the additional information provided by the State party after the dialogue, the Committee regrets the absence of representatives from the Ministry of Justice in the State party's delegation, which impeded the dialogue on several issues and in particular those related to judicial matters.

3. The Committee reminds the State party that the present concluding observations should be read in conjunction with its concluding observations adopted on the State party's initial reports under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (CRC/C/OPAC/ALB/CO/1) and under the Optional Protocol on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC/CO/OPSC/ALB/CO/1).

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

4. The Committee notes the adoption of the following legislative measures:
- (a) The Law No. 10347 on the Protection of the Rights of the Child in November 2010;
  - (b) The Law No. 10221 on the Protection against Discrimination in February 2010; and
  - (c) The Law No. 9669 on Measures against Violence in Family Relations in December 2006.

5. The Committee welcomes the ratification of or accession to:
  - (a) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict in December 2008;
  - (b) The Optional Protocol to the Convention on sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in February 2008;
  - (c) The Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance in November 2007;
  - (d) The First and Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights in October 2007;
  - (e) The Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrants Workers and Members of Their Families in June 2007; and
  - (f) The Hague Convention No. 23 on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions relating to Maintenance Obligations and No. 24 on the Law applicable to Maintenance Obligations in August 2011.
6. The Committee also welcomes the following institutional and policy measures:
  - (a) The National Strategy for Gender Equality and Reduction of Gender Based Violence and Domestic Violence 2011-2015, adopted in June 2011;
  - (b) The appointment of the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination, in May 2010;
  - (c) The National Strategy for the Fight against Child Trafficking and the Protection of Trafficked Children, adopted in July 2008; and
  - (d) The establishment of Child Protection Units in 28 municipalities and communes.

### III. Main areas of concerns and recommendations

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

##### The Committee's previous recommendations

7. The Committee, while welcoming the State party's efforts to implement the concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.249, 2005) to its previous report, notes with regret that some of the recommendations contained therein have not been fully addressed.

8. **The Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures to address those recommendations from the concluding observations of the initial report under the Convention that have not been sufficiently implemented, particularly those related to non-discrimination, abuse and neglect, children deprived of a family environment, children with disabilities and juvenile justice.**

##### Legislation

9. The Committee notes the adoption of numerous child-related laws over the reporting period and in particular the adoption of the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child on 4 November 2010. The Committee is concerned, however, that the promulgation of new laws, including the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child, was not followed up with the review of the existing legal provisions and, as such, there remain inconsistencies

between the new law and previous laws. The Committee is further concerned about the generally weak capacity of the State party to effectively implement child-related laws.

10. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure that the Law on the Protection of the Rights of the Child supersedes all legislation and provide children with appropriate means of redress. The Committee also urges the State party to establish adequate mechanisms, frameworks and systems for an effective implementation of child-related laws at State, provincial and municipal levels.**

#### **Comprehensive policy and strategies**

11. While welcoming the adoption in March 2012 of the Action Plan for Children 2012–2015, the Committee notes with concern that this action plan does not form part of a comprehensive policy on children and or have a specific budget allocated to its realization. The Committee is also concerned about the limited results achieved through the National Children’s Strategy 2005–2010, due mainly to the little attention it received from ministries and local governments and the insufficient resources allocated for its implementation.

12. **The Committee encourages the State party to integrate its Action Plan for Children 2012–2015 into a comprehensive policy on children which will embrace all the other sectoral and regional plan of actions relating to children. The Committee also urges the State party to provide all the necessary human, technical and financial resources for an effective implementation of the Action Plan for Children 2012–2015 and to ensure regular and broad consultations to assess the effectiveness of its implementation.**

#### **Coordination**

13. The Committee reiterates its concern (CRC/C/15/Add.249 para. 8, 2005) about the multitude of actors involved in the implementation of the Convention at the national and local levels and the limited capacity of the State Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights to effectively ensure coordination among those multiple bodies. Furthermore, the Committee notes with concern the lack of coherence between the existing child rights institutions which negatively impact the effective coordination of programmes and strategies for the implementation of the Convention.

14. **The Committee urges the State party to reinforce the coordination role of the State Agency for the Protection of Children’s Rights by ensuring that the Agency has high status, sufficient authority and adequate human, technical and financial resources to effectively coordinate actions for children’s rights across different sectors and from the national to the local levels. The Committee also urges the State party to rationalize the work of the various child rights bodies and provide them with the necessary human and financial resources to carry out their role with efficiency.**

#### **Allocation of resources**

15. The Committee is concerned that the proportion of the budget allocated to areas of direct relevance to children has decreased over the reporting period and that the State party relies excessively on civil society and international donors in this regard. The Committee is also particularly concerned that:

(a) The State party does not define specific budgetary allocations for the provision of critical social services to children, including those in most vulnerable situations;

(b) The decentralization of services has not been accompanied by adequate financial transfers to local communities and the reluctance of some local governments to

establish functional services for families in vulnerable situations has led to a deterioration of the situation of children in the least developed regions;

(c) The State party does not conduct assessments of the impact on children of budgetary decisions; and

(d) The high level of corruption in the State party contributes to divert resources that could enhance the implementation of the rights of the child.

16. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Conduct a comprehensive assessment of budget needs of children and allocate adequate budgetary resources in accordance with article 4 of the Convention for the implementation of the rights of children and in particular to increase the budget allocated to social sectors, including to the education sector, and address the disparities on the basis of indicators related to children's rights;**

(b) **Utilize a child-rights approach in the elaboration of the State budget by implementing a tracking system for the allocation and the use of resources for children throughout the budget, thus providing visibility to the investment on children and use this tracking system for impact assessments on how investments in any sector may serve "the best interests of the child", while ensuring that the differential impact of such investment on girls and boys is measured;**

(c) **Ensure transparent and participatory budgeting through public dialogue, especially with children and for proper accountability by local authorities;**

(d) **Define strategic budgetary lines for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations that may require affirmative social measures and make sure that those budgetary lines are protected even in situations of economic crisis, natural disasters or other emergencies;**

(e) **Take immediate measures to combat corruption and strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect, investigate and prosecute corruption; and**

(f) **Take into account the recommendations during the day of general discussion in 2007 on resources for the rights of the child - responsibility of States.**

#### **Data collection**

17. While noting the collection of data on children by the National Statistics Institute (INSTAT), the Committee is concerned that INSTAT has not established a comprehensive data-collection system covering all areas of the Convention and that data collection remains insufficient as regards – notably – children at risk of being trafficked, abused and neglected children, abandoned children, children belonging to minority groups and children with disabilities.

18. **The Committee encourages the State party to strengthen its efforts to set up a comprehensive data collection system with the support of its partners and analyse the data collected as a basis for assessing progress achieved in the realization of child rights and helping design policies and programmes to implement the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto. Data should include all children up to the age of 18 years and be disaggregated, inter alia, by age, sex, urban/rural area, ethnicity and socioeconomic background to facilitate analysis on the situation of all children.**

#### **Independent monitoring**

19. The Committee expresses concern that the position of the People's Advocate (Ombudsperson) has remained vacant for more than a year and that the Children's

Department created in 2004 within the Ombudsperson's Office has been inactive in the recent past. The Committee also reiterates its concern (CRC/C/15/Add.249 para. 13, 2005) that the level of awareness among children and adults alike of the services of the Office of the People's Advocate remains limited. It is further concerned that resources allocated to monitoring mechanisms have remained insufficient and resulted in the closure of local offices in Korca and Shkodra in 2008.

20. **The Committee urges the State party, by drawing attention to its general comment No. 2 (CRC/GC/2002/2), to ensure that the People's Advocate Office and in particular its Children's Department function with efficiency and without interruption, notably by ensuring that it is provided with the necessary human, financial and technical resources. The Committee also urges the State party to take all the necessary measures to conduct awareness-raising programmes, particularly for children, including those living in remote areas, on the possibility of submitting complaints to the Children's Department.**

#### **Dissemination and awareness-raising**

21. The Committee notes with concern the limited measures taken by the State party to promote awareness of the Convention and the fact that the State party's report was not shared with the media and/or the public at large. The Committee is also concerned at the low level of awareness on the Convention and the general lack of knowledge of children's rights in the State party, especially among children.

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party take more active measures to systematically disseminate and promote the Convention in order to raise awareness of the Convention and the rights of the child among the public at large and children in particular.**

#### **Training**

23. While welcoming that some training on child rights is provided to medical staff and teachers, the Committee regrets that such training does not reach all professionals working with or for children.

24. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all professional groups working for and with children, in particular law enforcement officials, social workers and personnel working in childcare institutions, are adequately and systematically trained. In this regard, the Committee recommends that human rights education be included in the official curriculum at all levels of education and in training activities.**

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

25. The Committee reiterates its concern (CRC/C/15/Add.249 para. 21, 2005) about the lack of clarity related to the status of children between 14 and 18 years (e.g. in the areas of sexual abuse or exploitation and juvenile justice) and is concerned that children of this age group may not be accorded the special protection or the rights they are entitled to in accordance with the Convention. Furthermore, the Committee is deeply concerned that, under articles 100 and 101 of the Criminal Code, girls are treated as adults from the age of puberty. The Committee also expresses particular concern that children deprived of a family environment have to leave care institutions at the age of 15 and are left without any protection and financial support by the State party.

26. **The Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures to clarify the definition of the child in Albania and review existing legislation to ensure that all**

children up to the age of 18 years of age receive the protection they need, as provided for in the Convention. In that regard, the Committee urges the State party to modify articles 100 and 101 of its Criminal Code. The Committee also urges the State party to take urgent measures to ensure that children above 15 years who are deprived of a family environment fully enjoy their rights under the Convention and are provided with necessary care, protection, housing and support, including financial support.

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

#### **Non-discrimination**

27. While welcoming the enactment of Law No. 10221 of 4 February 2010 on the Protection against Discrimination and the appointment of the Commissioner for the Protection against Discrimination in May 2010 and other efforts undertaken to counter discrimination, especially against minorities in the State party, the Committee is concerned that, inter alia, girls, children belonging to minority groups, particularly Roma, children living in rural areas and children with disabilities continue to be the victims of serious discrimination, in particular in their access to education, social protection, health and adequate housing.

28. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure that its programmes address as a matter of priority the situation of discrimination against girls, children belonging to minority groups, children living in rural areas and children with disabilities. The Committee further urges the State party to include information in its next periodic report on measures and programmes relevant to the Convention and, in particular, the situation of Roma children undertaken by the State party in follow-up to the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the 2001 World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, as well as the outcome document adopted at the 2009 Durban Review Conference.**

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

29. While noting the full incorporation of the best interest principles in the Family Code, the Committee expresses concern that major pieces of legislation, namely the Penal Code, the Code of Penal Procedure and the Code of Administrative Procedures do not uphold the best interests principle. The Committee is also concerned about disregard of the best interests of the child in adoption procedures and in dealing with children in conflict with the law.

30. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Strengthen its efforts in order to ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings as well as in all policies, programmes and projects relevant to and with an impact on children;**

(b) **Provide judges with clear instructions on the application of the best interests principle in adoption procedures and ensure that decisions are effectively taken in a timely manner so that children do no longer remain for long periods of time in institutions; and**

(c) **Develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance for determining the best interests of the child in every area, and disseminate them to the public and private social welfare institutions, courts of law, administrative authorities and legislative bodies. The legal reasoning of all judicial and administrative judgments and decisions should also be based on this principle.**

### **Right to life, survival and development**

31. The Committee is deeply concerned about the persistence of “blood feuds” resulting from the application of customary law known as “Kanun” and, in particular, the killing of children and the confinement of a large number of children for fear of being killed, especially in the northern areas of the State party. In that regard, the Committee expresses deep concern that in May 2012, a 14-year-old girl was killed in a “blood feud”.

32. **The Committee urges the State party to take vigorous measures to end “blood feuds” and the self-isolation of families and children, and in particular to conduct outreach to those families and facilitate more effective forms of reconciliation by community leaders of stature, as recommended by the Special Rapporteur on extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary executions (A/HRC/17/28/Add.3, para. 70, 2011). Furthermore, the Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures in order to investigate cases of blood feuds and ensure proper prosecution of perpetrators.**

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

33. The Committee welcomes the creation of Youth Parliaments in twelve prefectures and the National Youth Strategy 2007–2013, which have led to a strengthening of the role played by children in certain decision-making processes, mostly at municipal level. The Committee is however concerned that the overall participation in these parliaments remains limited to certain categories of children and generally excludes minority children, children from rural areas and children with disabilities. The Committee is also concerned that:

(a) The right to be heard is not recognized for children in administrative procedures affecting them and can only be exercised in criminal proceedings through children’s legal representatives;

(b) Although article 6 of the Family Code provides for the right of the child to be heard in all proceedings, this right is in fact rarely respected; and

(c) Certain traditional and cultural attitudes might limit the full implementation of article 12 of the Convention and that children generally feel that their views are not taken into account in schools in alternative care institutions and at home.

34. **In light of its general comment No. 12 (CRC/C/GC/12, 2009), the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Amend its legislation in order to ensure that the right of the child to be heard applies to any judicial, including civil and penal matters, and in administrative proceedings affecting them and that due weight is given to those views in accordance with the age and maturity of the child;**

(b) **Strengthen efforts to ensure that children have the right to express their views freely in all matters affecting them and have those views given due weight in schools and other educational institutions, as well as in the family, and reduce the disparities in the opportunities for the participation of students from different backgrounds and various regions; and**

(c) **Actively combat attitudes which impede the full realization of the child’s right to be heard through public education programmes and campaigns, involving opinion leaders and the media, and pay special attention to the particularly disadvantaged situation of minority children, children living in rural areas and children with disabilities.**

**D. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, 13–17, 19 and 37 (a) of the Convention)****Birth registration**

35. While welcoming the adoption in May 2009 of the Law on the Civil Registration Offices, which notably eliminates the judicial procedure engaged in case of late registration, the Committee notes with concern that insufficient awareness-raising about this new law has been conducted for its effective implementation. The Committee is also concerned that:

(a) Although the law provides for financial incentives for those who register their children, birth registration is not free of charge for families;

(b) Registration of all children immediately after birth is still not ensured and Roma and poor children and children born abroad, outside maternity homes and of early marriages are the ones most affected by the lack of birth registration; and

(c) Children without birth certificates might still be refused access to schools in spite of the measures taken to avoid such a situation.

**36. The Committee urges the State party to continue and strengthen, as a matter of priority, its efforts to establish a system ensuring the registration of all children born within its territory and that registration is free of charge. The Committee also urges the State party to take proactive measures targeting categories of children whose birth registration remains problematic. The State should also urgently issue clear instructions to all schools throughout the territory that all children, irrespective of their registration status, should be enrolled into public schools and that failure to enroll these children might lead to administrative sanctions.**

**Access to appropriate information**

37. The Committee is concerned that inappropriate movies are routinely broadcasted during hours when children can be expected to watch television, whereas quality educative programmes are rare.

**38. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to protect children from harmful information, in particular from television programmes, to guarantee access to appropriate information and promote quality educative programmes in which children and youth can be directly involved.**

**E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 37 (a), 34 and 39 of the Convention)****Torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment**

39. The Committee reiterates its deep concern (CRC/C/15/Add.249 para. 40, 2005) about ill-treatment and improper use of force, in particular against children, both by public officials and the police, in pretrial detention centres, prisons and other institutions in which children are in the care of the State. The Committee is also deeply concerned about information on ill-treatment of juveniles in detention in relation to the arrests following the opposition's demonstration on 21 January 2011.

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

(a) **Fully investigate all allegations of ill-treatment of children and ensure that such acts are given an appropriate response through judicial processes, in order to avoid impunity for perpetrators;**

**(b) Ensure that all children deprived of liberty, including children placed in institutions, have access to a complaints mechanism, where they can file a complaint related to their deprivation of liberty, conditions of detention/internment and treatment;**

**(c) Ensure that child victims of ill-treatment are provided with care and rehabilitation programmes; and**

**(d) Provide specific guidance and supervision to police, security forces and prison guards on the care and protection of children under their responsibility.**

#### **Corporal punishment**

41. While welcoming that corporal punishment is explicitly prohibited in all settings, the Committee is concerned that various forms of corporal punishment are widely practiced at home, in schools and in institutions. Furthermore, the Committee, while noting that the Law on Pre-University Education prohibits corporal punishment, regrets that it does not specify the necessary legal mechanisms for prevention of violence and protection of children in the school premises, nor does it provide for sanctions against teachers who use violence, or for procedures to identify and report violence.

**42. In the light of its general comment No. 8 (CRC/C/GC/8, 2006), the Committee urges the State party to:**

**(a) Ensure that laws prohibiting corporal punishment are effectively implemented and that legal proceedings are systematically initiated against persons subjecting children to corporal punishment;**

**(b) Improve the law on Pre-University Education, especially by introducing legal mechanisms for prevention of violence and protection of children in the school premises, sanctions against teachers who use violence and procedures to identify and report violence;**

**(c) Introduce continuous public education, awareness-raising and social mobilization programmes, involving children and their families, community leaders and the media in the process, on harmful physical and psychological effects of corporal punishment, with a view to changing the general attitude towards this practice; and**

**(d) Promote positive non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing, and alternative forms of discipline and education.**

#### **Abuse and neglect**

43. The Committee expresses its deepest concern that, in spite of the adoption of Law No. 9669 of 2006 on Measures Against Domestic Violence, the National Strategy on Gender Equality and Domestic Violence (2007–2010) and the recently adopted Strategy of Gender Equality and Reduction of Gender-based Violence and Domestic Violence 2011–2015, domestic violence has still not been explicitly prohibited by law and continues to be widely accepted and practiced as part of normal life. The Committee is particularly concerned that:

**(a) Half of children are routinely subjected to violence in the home or witness violence against their mothers. In 2008, 18 children reportedly committed suicide as a result of the violence to which they were subjected in the home;**

**(b) Violence-related provisions of the Penal Code do not appropriately define and protect children from violence, especially psychological and emotional violence and articles**

124 and 125 of the Penal Code contain a restrictive definition of neglect which relates only to providing living means;

(c) Due to the lack of an identification, referral and treatment system for cases of violence against children and the absence of accountability for professionals involved in identifying these children, the vast majority of children do not seek help when they suffer abuse and violence;

(d) Most of the perpetrators of domestic violence enjoy impunity; relatively few complaints of domestic violence lead to criminal prosecutions and when violence is considered as “light”, prosecutors are not required to initiate prosecution; and

(e) Victims of domestic violence rarely obtain the assistance they are entitled to receive under the 2006 Law and are often left without housing solutions, due to the dearth of shelters to accommodate them and the lack of specific programmes to combat domestic violence and assist victims.

**44. In the light of its general comment No. 13 (CRC/C/GC/13, 2011) the Committee urges the State party to prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children, by paying particular attention to gender. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:**

**(a) Adopting as a matter of priority a law criminalizing all forms of domestic violence, including marital rape and revising its definition of neglect contained in the Penal Code to cover all forms of child neglect and ensure accountability for violence against children;**

**(b) Establishing an efficient multi-sectoral child protection system to ensure prevention of violence against children and protection and reintegration of children victims of any forms of violence; and**

**(c) Define procedures and mechanisms for the identification, reporting, referral, investigation, treatment and coordination of cases of children victims of violence and provide practical information to children on how to seek help.**

#### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

45. The Committee is deeply concerned that sexual abuse against children is defined in article 108 of the Penal Code as “shameful acts carried out with minor children who have not attained 14 years of age” and that children between the age of 14 and 18 years are only protected if there is violence and girls only up to the age of puberty. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of effective measures to prevent and combat child sexual exploitation and abuse and about the absence of services to provide sexually abused and exploited children with psychosocial support, recovery and reintegration.

**46. The Committee urges the State party to revise its legislation to ensure that all children up to the age of 18 are protected against sexual abuse and exploitation. The Committee also recommends that State party adopt programmes and policies for the prevention, recovery and reintegration of child victims of sexual abuse and exploitation in accordance with the outcome documents adopted at the 1996, 2001 and 2008 World Congresses against Sexual Exploitation of Children held respectively in Stockholm, Yokohama and Rio de Janeiro.**

#### **Harmful practices**

47. The Committee, while noting that the minimum legal age of marriage is set at 18 years, expresses concern about the persistent practice of early and forced marriages, especially in the Roma community.

48. **The Committee recommends that the State party fully enforce the minimum legal age of marriage and take all the necessary measures to curb the harmful practice of early and forced marriage, including the development of sensitization programmes and campaigns involving community leaders, society at large and children themselves on the negative impact of early and forced marriages.**

#### **Freedom of the child from all forms of violence**

49. **Recalling the recommendations of the United Nations study on violence against children (A/61/299), the Committee recommends that the State party prioritize the elimination of all forms of violence against children. The Committee further recommends that the State party take into account general comment No. 13 (CRC/C/GC/13, 2011) and in particular:**

- (a) Develop a comprehensive national strategy to prevent and address all forms of violence against children;**
- (b) Adopt a national coordinating framework to address all forms of violence against children;**
- (c) Pay particular attention to the gender dimension of violence; and**
- (d) Cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and other relevant United Nations institutions.**

#### **Helplines**

50. **The Committee welcomes the creation of the Albanian National Child Helpline (“ALO 116”), which is operational seven days a week and is staffed by licensed professionals. However, the Committee is concerned that the Child Helpline does not cover all areas of the Convention and its Optional Protocols and that it receives no support from the State party.**

51. **The Committee recommends that the State party work in cooperation with “ALO 116”, by inter alia providing financial and technical support. It also recommends that the State party recognize this helpline as a source of information and data for policy and legislation on children’s rights, and as a tool for early intervention and prevention and ensure that children are aware of and can access this helpline, and provide the adequate follow-up.**

### **F. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 18 (paras. 1–2), 9–11, 19–21, 25, 27 (para. 4) and 39 of the Convention)**

#### **Family environment**

52. **In spite of the ratification in 2005 of the Convention on Jurisdiction, Applicable Law, Recognition, Enforcement and Co-operation in respect of Parental Responsibility and Measures for the Protection of Children, the Committee notes with concern:**

- (a) The lack of parent-counselling programmes to support parents in caring for their children, especially parents with disabilities and parents of children with disabilities and to prevent domestic violence;**
- (b) The fact that in the northern areas of the country, mothers are not allowed to maintain contact with their children when they live on their own or go back to their original families following divorce or death of their spouse due to the application of the “Kanun”;**

(c) The absence of a parenting plan to ensure that children maintain relations with both their parents after divorce; and

(d) The insufficient enforcement of maintenance decisions, in particular with regard to the lack of implementation of judicial decisions to pay maintenance allowance, when the parent has emigrated abroad and the absence of legal provision supporting the periodic judicial review of the maintenance allowance in the light of changing costs of living.

53. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Set up programmes to support parents and caregivers to understand and adopt good child-rearing practices based on knowledge of child rights, child development and techniques for positive discipline in order to support families' capacity to provide children with care and a safe environment;**

(b) **Launch an awareness-raising campaign to prevent children from being deprived of their mothers due to the application of the "Kanun" and ensure that the best interests principle is applied in all cases concerning custody and contact;**

(c) **Set up a structure and system to facilitate relations between the child and both parents after divorce and ensure that responsibilities of parents for upbringing and development of their children are clearly established considering under all circumstances the best interests of the child; and**

(d) **Take all necessary measures to ensure that alimony decisions are enforced, consider ratifying the Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions relating to the Maintenance Obligations and the Convention on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations and ensure by law that the amount of the maintenance allowance can be reviewed in accordance with the child's evolving need, his best interests and the situation of her/his parents.**

#### **Children deprived of a family environment**

54. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Sectoral Strategy of Social Protection of 2008 which aims to establish family-oriented alternative care services for children without parental care, the de-institutionalization of children, the recognition of foster families as beneficiaries of the 2010 Economic Aid Law and the development of manuals for foster families and social workers. The Committee is however concerned that most of the children in institutions have been placed there because of poverty and the lack of appropriate support provided to their families. The Committee is particularly concerned by:

(a) The organization of institutions by age groups, which results in frequent moves of children, the disruption of their relations with staff and children and the separation from their own siblings;

(b) The situation of children who have to leave institutions at the age of 15 years and are left with no support from the State party and are living in poverty, marginalized and exposed to abuse and exploitation;

(c) The insufficient number of staff to care for children in institutions and the lack of training they receive; and

(d) The situation of children in the centre of Poliçan who survive thanks to the donations of the local community.

55. **The Committee urges the State party to take all necessary measures to ensure that children from the most marginalized families can be raised with their biological parents and, to this end, increase financial allocations to families in need and combine**

them with social services appropriate for them. The Committee also urges the State Party to:

- (a) Amend Decree No. 209 of 12 April 2006 with a view to prohibiting the placement of children into institutions on economic grounds;
- (b) Further prioritize family-type care settings over institutional placements, by inter alia raising public awareness about the negative impact of institutionalization on a child's development;
- (c) Take all the necessary measures to reduce children's length of stay in institutions by the regular review of placement as required under article 25 of the Convention;
- (d) Ensure that children are no longer separated from their siblings and that they are cared for in a stable environment that favours the creation and maintenance of positive relationships with adults and children;
- (e) Abide by its commitment made during the universal periodic review process to extend the age of leaving care from 15 to 18 years and ensure that children leaving institutions are provided with appropriate support;
- (f) Ensure that alternative care institutions are provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for the proper care of children; and
- (g) Harmonize its legislation with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children.

#### **Adoption**

56. The Committee expresses concern about disrespect of the provisions of the Law No. 9695 on Adoption Procedures and the Albanian Adoption Committee, adopted in March 2007, concerning periodic reporting on the situation of children in institutions. The Committee is particularly concerned by the considerable delays by the institutions in declaring a child abandoned and by the judges in conducting adoption proceedings, as a result of which children are kept for years in orphanages although biological parents have released the child and new parents have been found. The Committee is also concerned that:

- (a) The views of children who have not attained 10 years are not given due weight;
- (b) There is no legal obligation in the Family Code to inform and provide counsel to biological parents;
- (c) The definition of "evident lack of interest on the part of parents" contained in article 250 of the Family Code – which is used to determine the adoptability of a child – remains vaguely defined; and
- (d) Procedures to be followed by the Albanian Adoption Committee have not yet been established.

57. **The Committee urges the State party to review adoption rules and procedures in order to:**

- (a) Ensure that abandoned children under the age of 10 years have the right to be heard in adoption proceedings and that their views are given due weight in accordance with their age and maturity;
- (b) Clearly establish the right of biological parents to be properly informed and counselled;

(c) Provide clear legal definition of the concept of “evident lack of interest” contained in article 250 of the Family Code;

(d) Define procedures to be followed by the Albanian Adoption Committee and clarify the sharing of responsibilities between that Committee and the institutions regarding, notably, declarations of abandonment; and

(e) Ensure that judges take decisions relating to adoption procedures within a reasonable time and can be held accountable for the failure to fulfil their responsibilities with due diligence.

**G. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (para. 3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (paras. 1–3) of the Convention)**

**Children with disabilities**

58. The Committee is concerned about the situation of children with disabilities in the State party, most of them being totally excluded from mainstream society, kept isolated in their homes and living in situations of poverty at high risk of being ill-treated. The Committee notes with particular concern the poor implementation of the National Strategy on Disabled People and the absence of effective measures and strategies for children with disabilities to enjoy de facto their rights. The Committee is also concerned that:

(a) Early identification and early intervention services are lacking, a situation which has detrimental impact on the lives of children with disabilities and undermines their chances of inclusion in the society;

(b) Only children with the most serious disabilities receive financial support while children with mental, hearing and speech disabilities receive no support at all and that families having several children with disabilities receive financial support for only one of their children; and

(c) Most children with disabilities are deprived of their right to education.

59. **In the light of its general comment No. 9 (CRC/C/GC/9, 2006), the Committee recommends that the State party address as a matter of priority the situation of extreme marginalization of children with disabilities in the State party. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Undertake long-term awareness-raising programmes in order to change and combat negative societal attitudes prevailing against children with disabilities;**

(b) **Set up mechanisms for early detection and multidisciplinary intervention services for children with disabilities and their families and take all the necessary measures to increase their access to preschool education;**

(c) **Ensure that all children with disabilities, including children with mental, hearing and speech disabilities receive proper financial support and care from the State and that support to families is no longer restricted to one child per family;**

(d) **Develop a comprehensive national strategy on disability, promoting the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms by all children with disabilities, with special focus on time-bound measures to ensure that children with disabilities access mainstream education; and**

(e) **Consider ratifying the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.**

### Health and health services

60. While welcoming the information provided by the State party during the dialogue on the national programme to reduce child malnutrition and the national awareness campaign launched in March 2012 on “The new and better ways of feeding babies and children in Albania”, the Committee is concerned at the still high infant mortality rate – largely resulting from malnutrition – which affects particularly children living in remote areas. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned by:

- (a) The high proportion of Roma children (almost half of them) that do not have a health card and are therefore deprived access to health services;
- (b) Children’s access to health care being subject to their mother’s membership in the scheme of social insurance;
- (c) The difficulty for children of rural and remote areas to access health-care services;
- (d) The pervasive practice of health workers and doctors asking for informal payments which prevents children from accessing health services;
- (e) The fragmented organization of maternal and child health services and the lack of proper relations between those services and early childhood care institutions;
- (f) The declining rate of exclusive breastfeeding; and
- (g) The impact on children’s health of air pollution (especially in the capital Tirana), contamination of drinking water with pesticides and bacteriological substances and poor food quality.

61. **The Committee urges the State party to prioritize the allocation of financial and human resources to the health sector with a special emphasis on primary health care in order to ensure equal access to quality health services by all children, including children living in remote areas and Roma children. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) Strengthen its efforts to address child malnutrition, focusing primarily on the most disadvantaged categories of children and on nutrition education and access to quality food;**
- (b) Ensure that all Roma children are provided with a health card and have effective and unimpeded access to health services;**
- (c) Ensures that access to basic health care is not conditional upon the mother’s membership in the social security schemes;**
- (d) Take all necessary measures to counter the pervasive practice of health workers and doctors asking for informal payments;**
- (e) Strengthen the link between maternal and child health services, including paediatric institutions and the collaboration of these services and the early childhood care institutions;**
- (f) Strengthen its efforts to promote exclusive breastfeeding until 6 months of age by raising the awareness of health personnel and the public of the importance of exclusive breastfeeding; and**
- (g) Take all the necessary measures to address air pollution and contamination of drinking water.**

### Adolescent health

62. While noting the creation of the National Committee to Coordinate the Fight against Drugs chaired by the Prime Minister, the Committee expresses concern about the relatively high use of ecstasy, cocaine, heroin and steroids, by adolescents even at a very early age and the unavailability of drug prevention services that address the needs of adolescent drug users. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned at the absence of specialized health services for adolescents, including mental health services and the fact that existing counselling services are not used by adolescents.

63. **In the light of its general comment No. 4 (CRC/GC/2003/4), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

**(a) Adopt standards for adolescent-friendly health services, and a comprehensive strategy for the implementation and monitoring of these services;**

**(b) Address the incidence of drug, as well as tobacco and alcohol, use among children by, inter alia, providing children with accurate and objective information about substance use, including tobacco use, and develop specialized and youth-friendly drug-dependence treatment and harm reduction services;**

**(c) Strengthen training, in collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs), of general practitioners, nurses, social workers and other primary-care workers in the field of health promotion, including healthy lifestyles and emotional well-being of adolescents, with a view to improving the capacity and quality of health professionals in the country; and**

**(d) Develop a comprehensive mental health policy, including mental health promotion, outpatient and inpatient services for adolescents with mental health issues and programmes to support families with children at risk.**

### HIV/AIDS

64. The Committee expresses concern that children infected by HIV/AIDS are detected at a very late stage due to the lack of access to confidential voluntary testing and the deficiencies in the surveillance system to detect cases of HIV/AIDS. The Committee is also concerned that services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS have not been integrated in the health system. The Committee is also particularly concerned that one third of children with HIV/AIDS do not go to school.

65. **In the light of its general comment No. 3 (CRC/GC/2003/3) and the International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, the Committee recommends that the State party provide for a system of voluntary testing for HIV/AIDS with full respect of the right to privacy and confidentiality and improve the surveillance system to detect cases of HIV/AIDS. The Committee also recommends that services to prevent mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS be fully integrated in the health system. The Committee further recommends the State party to reinforce preventive action among youth, targeting teenagers in the most vulnerable situations, and ensure that HIV/AIDS education programmes are provided in secondary schools and children with HIV/AIDS are able to attend school without discrimination.**

### Standard of living

66. The Committee notes that poverty levels in the State party continue to be high and thus welcomes the creation of child protection offices in the communes and at district level and the commitment made by the State party to establish a functional child protection system to deal with issues of child poverty. The Committee is concerned, however, that social protection schemes do not focus specifically on children, are limited to small cash

transfers and have failed to lift families, in particular Roma families and families with children with disabilities, out of poverty. The Committee is also concerned that two thirds of poor families are left without any economic aid.

67. **The Committee recommends that the State party reform its child protection system and undertake structural changes in order to address child poverty, including by ensuring priority access to services for all families and children at risk, paying particular attention to Roma families and families with children with disabilities. In that regard, the Committee recommends that the State party provide all families with child allowance as a universal benefit and that cash transfers to families living in poverty are complemented by measures to promote employment for women and children after completing education and provide skills training, housing, transport and other benefits. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure that social workers are well trained, receive sufficient salaries and are clearly instructed to identify families and children at risk, manage the social schemes effectively and follow up on their implementation and assess their impact.**

68. While welcoming the information provided by the State party during the dialogue that the Roma families forcibly removed from their settlement near Tirana train station in February 2011 were finally provided with housing solutions, the Committee remains concerned about the precarious housing conditions in which some of these families still remain.

69. **The Committee recommends that the State party address the housing conditions of all the affected Roma families and refrain in the future from forced evictions.**

## **H. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29 and 31 of the Convention)**

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

70. While the Committee welcomes the introduction of the “Second Chance” programme, it is concerned that only 3.2 per cent of the State party’s gross domestic product (GDP) was devoted to education in 2011, which is well below the minimum international standard and below the regional average. The Committee is particularly concerned about the dilapidated state of school buildings, the poor situation of hygiene and sanitation, the poor education services and learning conditions in rural areas. The Committee is also concerned that:

(a) Although compulsory education lasts until Grade 9, only primary school is free, and costs compromise the ability of parents to send their children, especially girls, to school;

(b) Despite efforts to provide transportation to schools, most schools are concentrated in the centre of the communes;

(c) There are barriers to accessing education for children lacking birth registration and identity documents, including Roma children, children with disabilities, children from remote areas and children with HIV/AIDS;

(d) Although pregnant girls are allowed to continue education, they are in practice often encouraged to do distance learning;

(e) Only 10 per cent of all children between 1 and 3 years have access to preschool education and children from the Roma communities have even lower access,

although enrolment in preschool education would provide them with opportunities for early language skills, socialization with other children and preparation for primary school;

(f) The educational system continues to be seriously affected by corruption; and

(g) Contrary to the law, minority children, and in particular Roma children, have limited possibility to be taught in their own language and learn their history and culture within the framework of the national teaching curricula.

**71. In the light of its general comment No. 1 (CRC/GC/2001/1), the Committee urges the State party to significantly increase its budgetary allocations to the education sector. The Committee also urges the State party to take all necessary measures to:**

**(a) Assess whether the “Second Chance” programme is effective and sustainable in attracting students who drop out of school to resume their education;**

**(b) Invest in teacher training and the maintenance and renovation of the educational infrastructure, in particular in rural areas, and ensure that adequate facilities are available for quality education;**

**(c) Ensure that compulsory education is free throughout the years of compulsory schooling for all children, including with regard to textbooks and transportation to school for disadvantaged children and families living in rural areas;**

**(d) Ensure effective access to education to children with disabilities children, children infected by HIV/AIDS, Roma children and pregnant girls;**

**(e) Ensure that Roma children, children with disabilities, children of single mothers and households classified as poor have priority access to comprehensive preschool programmes to facilitate early learning and socialization and ensure adequate funding for an effective implementation of policies which encourage their enrolment in preschool education;**

**(f) Prosecute perpetrators of corruption in schools; and**

**(g) Train educators and develop curricula, textbooks and other aids in order to provide minority-language education, particularly for Roma children, and develop curricula units for children at school level, including in relation to Roma history and culture, in order to promote understanding, tolerance and respect for the rights of Roma in Albanian society and consider ratifying the European Charter for Regional and Minority Languages.**

## **I. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 38, 39, 40, 37 (b)–(d), 32–36 of the Convention)**

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

72. The Committee expresses concern that children migrating to Albania, including unaccompanied children, are generally considered as irregular migrants, detained in the National Detention Centre for Irregular Migrants in Karec and deported back without having had access to legal procedures to determine their best interests or specialized services and the assistance of a legal guardian. The Committee is further concerned that asylum-seeking and refugee children with no proof of educational background may not have access to education.

**73. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that children are properly identified and registered during pre-screening procedures at border points**

and no longer detained and that best interests determination procedures are initiated to define how to best address the child's immediate and long-term needs. This should include the appointment of legal custodians and the provision of comprehensive information to minors on their return prospects. The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that the Border Police do not detain unaccompanied minors and, in this regard, seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. It also urges the State party to ensure that asylum-seeking and refugee children have access to education. It further recommends that the State party takes into account its general comment No. 6 (CRC/GC/2005/6).

#### **Children in situations of migration**

74. The Committee expresses concern about the physical, psychological and social impact that massive labour migrations have on the rights and well-being of children and the preservation of the family unit.

75. **The Committee recommends that the State party study the impact of migration on children as previously recommended by the Committee on Migrant Workers (CMW/C/ALB/CO/1, para. 38, 2010) and to provide children with all the necessary social services for them to fully enjoy their rights under the Convention.**

#### **Children belonging to minority groups**

76. The Committee notes with concern the weak implementation of the various programmes and strategies for Roma, owing mainly to inadequate allocation of resources and the insufficient coordination between institutions involved at central and local levels. The Committee is also concerned that Egyptians are not recognized as a minority in the State party and that Egyptian children might therefore not be entitled to the special protection measures for vulnerable groups of children.

77. **The Committee urges the State party to further strengthen and implement its various programmes and strategies for Roma children, in particular by further allocating human and financial resources. The Committee also recommends that the State party amend its National Strategy to Improve Living Conditions of the Roma Minority and take active measures specifically aiming at preventing and combating discrimination and marginalization of Roma children. The Committee further recommends that the State party recognizes the Egyptian minority, in order to guarantee special protection measures to which their children are entitled.**

#### **Economic exploitation, including child labour**

78. The Committee is deeply concerned about the large number of children subjected to economic exploitation in the State party and, in particular, those involved in hazardous occupations, such as agriculture, domestic work and illegal activities. The Committee also notes with concern:

(a) The weak capacity of the labour inspectorate to detect the worst forms of child labour; and

(b) The grave incident affecting a large number of children between 12 and 17 years of the explosion of a factory in the village of Gërdec on 15 March 2008, where they were illegally working to dismantle ammunition.

79. **The Committee urges the State party to strengthen its efforts to eradicate child labour, particularly in its worst forms, by addressing the root causes of economic exploitation through poverty eradication and education. In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) Strengthen the labour inspectorate and provide labour inspectors with all the necessary support, including child labour expertise, with a view to enabling them to monitor effectively, at the State and local levels, the implementation of labour law standards;

(b) Ensure that the Gërdec incident is thoroughly investigated and those responsible effectively prosecuted;

(c) Continue to seek technical assistance from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Office (ILO) in this regard; and

(d) Consider ratifying the ILO Convention No. 189 (2011) concerning decent work for domestic workers.

#### **Children in street situations**

80. The Committee reiterates its deepest concern about the high number of children living and working on the streets and that insufficient measures have been taken to address the situation of these children, who are subjected to the worst forms of exploitation, including begging in the street, extreme marginalization and homelessness, and are at risk of becoming victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Furthermore, the Committee is concerned that children in street situations might be treated as offenders.

81. The Committee, in the light of its previous recommendation (CRC/C/15/Add.249, para. 73, 2005) urges the State party, in collaboration with NGOs and with the participation of children, to:

(a) Strengthen the measures to protect and assist children from living in street situations and remove them from those situations, and ensure their access to education and health services by taking into account the views of these children;

(b) Strengthen the support and assistance available to families, both as a preventive measure and a measure conducive to the return of children to their families, as appropriate;

(c) Set up programmes and reporting mechanisms providing children in street situations with relevant information in order to prevent them from becoming victims of trafficking and economic and sexual exploitation, and assist and advise them;

(d) Ensure that persons using children for worst forms of exploitations are prosecuted and sanctioned; and

(e) Ensure that children in street situations are not considered or treated as offenders.

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

82. The Committee welcomes the various measures undertaken in order to combat trafficking of children, including the adoption of the National Action Plan for the Combat against Trafficking of Children and for the Protection of Children Victims of Trafficking (2011–2013), the incorporation in the curricula of high schools of awareness-raising programmes about the danger of being trafficked and the establishment of a database for the victims of trafficking. However, the Committee is seriously concerned that the State party continues to be a source country for children subjected to sex trafficking and forced labour, including forced begging within the State party and abroad. The Committee is further concerned that:

- (a) Roma and Egyptian minority children are overrepresented among children victims of trafficking;
- (b) The involvement of police and Government officials in trafficking cases and the corruption within the judiciary hamper the overall anti-trafficking law enforcement;
- (c) Efficient mechanisms to protect witnesses and victims of trafficking have not been set up; and
- (d) The State does not financially support NGOs providing trafficking victims with shelter, care and assistance.

83. **The Committee urges the State party to take vigorous measures to end the trafficking of children within the State party and abroad. To this aim, the Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) Ensure that the National Action Plan for the Combat against Trafficking of Children and for the Protection of Children Victims of Trafficking (2011–2013) addresses prevention measures targeting, in particular, children from Roma and Egyptian minorities;**
- (b) Take active measures to bring to justice police and Government officials involved in trafficking cases;**
- (c) Establish a mechanism to protect victims and witnesses of trafficking;**
- (d) Provide child victims of trafficking with shelter, psychosocial support and assistance for reintegration and consider supporting civil society organizations which already do so; and**
- (e) Ensure that thorough investigations and robust prosecutions of persons committing these offences are carried out and that sufficiently effective and dissuasive sanctions are imposed in practice as recommended by the ILO Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations (Observation on ILO Convention No. 182 (1999) concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour, 2010).**

#### **Administration of juvenile justice**

84. While noting the information provided by the State party during the dialogue of the current reform of the juvenile justice system, the Committee reiterates its concern (CRC/C/15/Add.249, para. 76, 2005) about the lack of an effective juvenile justice system in the State party. The Committee expresses particular concern about:

- (a) Cases of children being held 48 hours in police stations, interrogated in inappropriate rooms, without the assistance of a lawyer, subjected to ill-treatment from the police and their inmates and detained in cells together with adults;
- (b) The continued use of pretrial detention of children who might spend months in detention without access to education, psychological support and reintegration measures and the fact that 70 per cent of convicted juveniles will have spent their sentence in detention while awaiting their trial;
- (c) The limited development of alternatives to detention;
- (d) The degraded infrastructure and unsanitary conditions in some pretrial detention centres for juveniles;
- (e) Limited access to medical and mental health services in detention;

(f) The absence of any educational programme for child offenders under the age of criminal responsibility, even in cases of the commission of crimes; and

(g) The lack of programmes to assist children in contact with the law and protect them from harm, intimidation, reprisals and secondary victimization and hardship during judicial procedures.

85. **The Committee recommends that the State party bring the juvenile justice system fully into line with the Convention, in particular articles 37, 39 and 40, and with other relevant standards, including the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty (the Havana Rules), the Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System and the Committee's general comment No. 10 (CRC/C/GC/10, 2007). In particular, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Establish specialized juvenile courts with adequate human, technical and financial resources throughout the country, introduce specialized judges for children in all the regions and ensure that such specialized judges receive appropriate education and training;**

(b) **Ensure that children are no longer detained in police stations together with adults and without access to a lawyer and that all cases of mistreatment are properly investigated and punished;**

(c) **Organize regular training for law enforcement personnel, including police and prison administration staff, in order to ensure that they all have a thorough understanding of provisions of the Convention and are aware that violations are not acceptable and will be investigated, and that perpetrators are liable to prosecution;**

(d) **Provide children, both victims and accused, with effective and adequate legal and other assistance at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings in conformity with the Code of Penal Procedure;**

(e) **Ensure that detention is a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time, and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to withdrawing it;**

(f) **Promote alternative measures to detention, such as diversion, probation, counselling, community service or suspended sentences, wherever possible;**

(g) **Take urgent measures to address the conditions of detention in pretrial detention centres for juveniles;**

(h) **Ensure that all children deprived of liberty have effective access to education and health services, including mental health care; and**

(i) **Make use, if relevant, of the technical assistance tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and NGOs, and seek technical assistance in the area of juvenile justice from members of the Panel.**

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

86. **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 Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and its Optional Protocol and the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

#### **K. Cooperation with regional and international bodies**

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

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

88. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the present recommendations are fully implemented by, *inter alia*, transmitting them to the Parliament, relevant ministries, the Supreme Court and local authorities for appropriate consideration and further action.

89. The Committee further recommends that the second to fourth periodic reports and written replies by the State party and the related recommendations (concluding observations) be made widely available in the languages of the country, including (but not exclusively) through the Internet, to the public at large, civil society organizations, media, youth groups, professional groups and children, in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto and of their implementation and monitoring.

#### **M. Next report**

90. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports on 27 September 2017 and to include in it information on the implementation of the present concluding observations. The Committee draws attention to its harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 1 October 2010 (CRC/C/58/Rev.2 and Corr. 1) and reminds the State party that future reports should be in compliance with the guidelines and not exceed 60 pages. The Committee urges the State party to submit its report in accordance with the guidelines. In the event a report exceeding the page limitations is submitted, the State party will be asked to review and resubmit the report in accordance with the abovementioned guidelines. The Committee reminds the State party that if it is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, then translation of the report for purposes of examination of the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

91. The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document in accordance with the requirements of the common core document in the harmonized guidelines on reporting, approved at by the fifth Inter-Committee Meeting of the human rights treaty bodies in June 2006 (HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I).