



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Sixty-second session

### Summary record (partial)\* of the 1769th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 22 January 2013, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Ms. Lee (Vice-Chairperson)

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Initial report of the Philippines on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography*

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\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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*In the absence of the Chairperson, Ms. Lee, Vice-Chairperson, took the Chair.*

*The discussion covered in the summary record began at 3 p.m.*

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

*Initial report of the Philippines on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (CRC/C/PHL/1; CRC/C/PHL/Q/1 and Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that the Philippines condemned in the strongest terms the despicable practices of the sale of children and child prostitution and pornography and would do everything in its power to stamp out such phenomena. Since the submission of its initial report in 2008, the Government had taken a number of initiatives to protect children's rights, including the establishment of the Human Development and Poverty Reduction Cluster to strengthen coordination among agencies so as to improve the quality of life. The Government had increased the amount of support for children and their families through the conditional cash transfer programme, which benefited over 7.4 million children in 79 provinces, and was implementing a comprehensive programme for street children, street families and indigenous peoples, especially the Sama-Badjaus, which permitted them to live productive and safe lives. The Government's Council for the Welfare of Children monitored and reported on the impact of Government programmes benefiting children, and together with other national agencies and local governments, NGOs and faith-based groups, the Council held an annual national awareness week for the prevention of child sexual abuse and exploitation. Other awareness-raising activities were conducted at schools and in premier tourist destinations; billboards and posters were placed in areas frequented by tourists; and police officers, tour guides, taxi drivers, hotel front office staff and others received targeted training. Public prosecutors and agents of the National Bureau of Investigation received training on combating cybercrime and child pornography, and also received instruction on how to use child-sensitive techniques in their investigations.

3. In 2009 the Government had enacted the Anti-Child Pornography Act, which had added to the panoply of laws protecting children against exploitation, abuse, discrimination and trafficking. The Inter-Agency Council against Trafficking had rescued 414 trafficked minors in 2011 and maintained a database of information on human trafficking. To date, 30 persons had been convicted of trafficking in children thanks to its work. Since 2008 the Department of Justice had set up the National Justice Information System, which would be interconnected with the Philippine Center for Transnational Crime. The Center acted as a clearing house for referral of cases to the proper agencies.

4. The Philippine National Police had over 1,800 women and children's desks at its police stations throughout the country. It was currently handling 8 cases of child pornography and had worked on 103 cases of child prostitution and 5 cases of child trafficking. The Committee for the Special Protection of Children had been enlarged and had focused its efforts on law enforcement and legal assistance; it had also adopted guidelines for the case management of child victims of abuse, neglect and exploitation.

5. The Department of Social Welfare and Development implemented a recovery and reintegration programme for trafficked persons that had provided 285 victims of trafficking with psychosocial, social and educational services. It operated 42 residential facilities and temporary shelters that had served over 300 clients between 2009 and 2012. Lastly, the perpetrators of acts covered by the Optional Protocol were criminally liable under

Philippine law and could be ordered by a court to pay compensation if the victims filed complaints.

6. **Mr. Koompraphant** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography), noting that the Committee had previously urged the Philippines to conduct a study to assess the causes, nature and extent of commercial sexual exploitation and child pornography, asked whether any such study had been conducted and what measures had been taken to combat such phenomena. Specifically, what kind of preventive measures had been set out by the Second National Plan of Action for Children covering the period until 2016, and what kind of budget was being allocated for the plan's implementation? The delegation should describe the programmes implemented at the local level for children who suffered abuse, exploitation or discrimination and should inform the Committee whether the model of the Child Protection Unit implemented at the Philippine General Hospital had been emulated at other establishments. Had a monitoring mechanism been established to ascertain the number of victims of the offences covered by the Optional Protocol? The Committee should be informed how the various laws defined the sale of children and whether the possession of child pornography was prohibited. Lastly, did the Government intend to ratify the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction?

7. **Ms. Aidoo** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that the Council for the Welfare of Children had many responsibilities related to children's rights, and noted that a large number of other agencies were also involved in work related to such issues. In the recent past, responsibility for the Council had been transferred three times, and it was now a part of the Department of Social Welfare and Development. The Committee was concerned about the question of whether the Council was able to work effectively to coordinate actions related to the very specific crimes covered by articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol, as such crimes took place at various levels in a country with such a high degree of decentralization. What human and financial resources were at its disposal? The Committee had learned that the Council's budget had recently been raised to about 650,000 dollars, which was still insufficient.

8. Notwithstanding the fact that the Philippines had made a laudable effort to conduct dissemination activities and train relevant stakeholders in issues related to the Optional Protocol, the instrument was still relatively unknown among children and parents. That lack of awareness only served to perpetuate a culture in which sexual exploitation was tolerated, which meant that offences all too often went unreported. What was the Government doing to ensure sustainable dissemination, awareness-raising and training to help change attitudes?

9. Fighting the crimes covered by the Convention would require a more preventive approach addressing their root causes based on in-depth research. Was any research conducted into the links between the crimes in question and aspects such as poverty, the lack of birth registration, social inequality, discrimination against girls and the breakdown of families? The delegation should describe the cooperation between the Government and the private sector in combating sex tourism.

10. **Ms. Nores de García**, noting that the Government recognized in its report that it still did not allocate sufficient resources to combat the crimes covered by the Optional Protocol, said that the Committee should be informed whether consideration was being given to securing more funding for such activities, how such budgets were calculated and followed up and what oversight mechanisms existed to ensure that allocations were not subject to corrupt practices and that they were used effectively.

11. **Mr. Madi** said that it was the Committee's understanding that under the Philippine Criminal Code, foreigners who committed crimes in the Philippines involving sex with children were liable to prosecution. The delegation should give statistics on the number of cases prosecuted and of convictions for such offences. Philippine nationals who committed such crimes in other countries were not subject to prosecution in the Philippines. Did the Government plan to amend the law so that it extended extraterritorial jurisdiction to cover them as well? The requirements of the law currently governing extradition were too stringent, as they made extradition possible only in cases where an extradition treaty existed and where the offence was covered by double criminality.

12. **Ms. Sandberg** said that in 2009, when the Committee had issued its concluding observations following consideration of the report submitted on implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Committee had expressed concern about the lack of birth registration of some 2.6 million people, most of whom were Muslim or from indigenous groups in Mindanao. What had the Government done to step up the registration of births? Were service charges still applicable for such registration, and were fines applicable in the event of late registration?

13. **Mr. Cordona Llorens** said that the Philippines deserved congratulations for bringing its law largely into line with the Optional Protocol, but that the Committee would like the delegation to explain what efforts were being made in practice to eradicate the crimes in question. What initiatives were taken to raise public awareness? Raising the age of consent from 12 years would no doubt help to change the current permissive attitude towards child prostitution. What efforts were made to disseminate information on the Optional Protocol in schools? How were the sale and trafficking of children defined, and how did those definitions apply to cases of adoption? The Committee had heard alarming reports that certain new adoption practices were aimed at circumventing the law. For example, some women were paid to have their babies in other countries. What steps were taken to extend the country's jurisdiction over such offences? Lastly, were children who were apprehended for involvement in prostitution treated as criminals, or as victims?

14. **Ms. Wijemanne** asked how information on the crimes covered by the Optional Protocol was collected and maintained in databases. The delegation should explain who collected the information and maintained the databases, whether there was an established reporting system and whether any research was done regarding the use of the information. Was the data useful in geographically mapping trends? She also would like to know whether any research was carried out on the perpetrators of the offences covered by the Optional Protocols. What specific methods were used to identify cybersex involving children, and what efforts were made to provide vulnerable children, including street children, with life skills so as to keep them from becoming victims? Were law enforcement officers, social welfare officers and members of the judiciary trained in the applicability of the Optional Protocol? Lastly, what programmes existed to afford protection and provide care to child victims of exploitation?

15. **Mr. Pollar** noting that the courts had the right to order the confiscation of property under the law, asked whether any decisions had been handed down relating to the seizure or confiscation of property involved in the commission of offences under the Optional Protocol.

16. **The Chairperson** noted that over the years the vulnerability of the girl child had been a recurring theme in the various reports submitted by the Philippines to the Committee. The social attitude towards the exploitation of girls was a major challenge, and the national Government and various local authorities were not always in agreement on how to meet it. How could the Government ensure that efforts to change attitudes would be sustainable and effective? Acceptance in society of the exploitation of girls in tourist areas in the Philippines, of the use of mail-order schemes to arrange marriages and of the use of

entertainer visas for travel to other countries left many children in situations of vulnerability.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.*

17. **Mr. Lepatan** (Philippines) pointed out that, since the introduction of the Global Gender Gap Report by the World Economic Forum in 2006, the Philippines had always ranked highly, and in fact was the only Asian country in the top 10. The Philippines had been ranked eighth out of 135 countries in the most recent report, which would not have been possible if the country did not value girl children. The Philippines had also been ranked first in terms of women's educational attainment, health and survival; seventeenth for economic participation of women; and fourteenth for women's political empowerment. Those achievements should serve to dispel the perception that discrimination against girls was prevalent in the Philippines.

18. The possibility of accession to the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction was still under consideration, which involved a lengthy consultation process among various agencies. Although the Convention had not yet been signed or ratified, there were enough safeguards in domestic law to ensure that children could not simply be smuggled out of the country, including provisions that children were not allowed to travel without the consent of both parents.

19. **Ms. Vigo** (Philippines) said that the Council for the Welfare of Children was the mandated institution of the Philippine Government responsible for the coordination and monitoring of the State party's international and national obligations in respect of children. The Council's board was composed of representatives of the Departments of Social Welfare and Development, Health, Education, the Interior and Local Government, Justice, and Labour and Employment, among others. There were also regional committees for the welfare of children, which operated under the Regional Development Council and were linked to the local councils for the protection of children. Those structures had been designed to ensure good coordination of all activities to promote and protect children's rights.

20. A number of inter-agency councils also dealt with the multifaceted issues related to children. The year before, a summit of such councils had been held to strengthen coordination and agree on a mechanism to harmonize their mandates and better apportion their budgets. The summit had concluded that a coordination mechanism should be developed in the areas of planning, programming, data and information management, research, monitoring and advocacy. As a result, joint planning would soon be taking place for the 2014 budget so as to ensure the effective use of all resources and avoid overlap and duplication among the agencies.

21. **Ms. Caraballo** (Philippines) said that the Council for the Welfare of Children, together with governmental and non-governmental organizations, conducted specific campaigns to raise awareness of children's issues, and specifically of the Optional Protocol. Every year, the second week of February was designated National Child Sexual Abuse Awareness Week; various Government agencies issued circulars so that local governments could conduct simultaneous awareness-raising in their areas, and the Department of Education also issued circulars to all schools instructing them to educate children on that theme. The third week of March was the designated Girl Child Week, which focused on the protection of girl children. The biggest event was Children's Month which took place nationwide every October, with activities carried out by governmental and non-governmental organizations. Personal safety lessons were part of the school curriculum in 15 regions of the country; the aim of those lessons was to improve children's ability to protect themselves against sexual abuse and ward off possible exploitation. The children were taught that if they were approached or abused they should tell an adult they trusted

and were informed that there were social workers in every municipality who could provide help. The programme had been institutionalized by the Department of Education through a department order.

22. The Department of Education also had memorandums of agreement with Government agencies and NGOs to roll out the child protection policy, which included guidelines on the protection of children against abuse, exploitation and bullying, and the establishment and training of child protection committees in every school.

23. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that, from the information available to the Committee, it appeared that the largest number of children who were vulnerable to and affected by sexual exploitation were living in poverty and therefore not necessarily in school. She wished to know how the State party reached out to those children.

24. **Ms. Aidoo** said that the Committee had heard reports that, because of poverty and social exclusion, some parents felt obliged to give up or sell their children for sexual exploitation or forced labour in the agricultural sector. She asked how the awareness-raising and capacity-building programmes reached the children in the most vulnerable situations and their parents or guardians. There was a need for a more sustainable approach to public education and awareness-raising that reached all sectors of society.

25. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that one of the sustainable interventions was the provision of conditional cash transfers, which had reached more than 3 million households by the end of 2012, benefiting close to 7.5 million children from poor households. The beneficiaries had been identified through a national household targeting system, which had identified 5.2 million eligible households. Under the programme, up to three children per household were provided with a monthly cash grant for education of 300 pesos, approximately 9 dollars, and the mother and babies not in school received 500 pesos. The programme currently covered children up to the age of 14. There was also a modified conditional cash transfer programme for children in need of special protection who were not enrolled in school, such as street children, children from indigenous communities and children identified as vulnerable to child labour. Such children had not been identified by the household survey. According to a recent study funded by the International Labour Organization, 2.5 million children in the Philippines were working in hazardous conditions. On that basis, the Government provided not only the cash grant but, particularly for street families, rental housing and immediate livelihood support so that they could sustain themselves in the rental houses provided for six months. For indigenous people, the intervention also focused on nutrition conditions and the provision of supplementary feeding.

26. There were three conditions for receipt of the grants. Firstly, the parents had to send their children to school or alternative learning systems for 85 per cent of the time every month. Secondly, mothers and children had to visit health centres for procedures such as immunization, weight monitoring, nutritional advice and deworming. Thirdly, the parents had to attend family development sessions held monthly at the *barangay* level, which covered topics such as effective parenting, reproductive health, ways to combat trafficking and the provisions of the Optional Protocol. The anti-trafficking information was particularly important in disaster-stricken areas, where the most vulnerable families entrusted their children with strangers or family members in the hope that they would be given a better life. In areas identified as having children working in hazardous conditions, the family development sessions also urged parents not to send children to work. One of the challenges in that regard was that in mining areas, children earned more than the 300 pesos a month provided by the cash transfer, and therefore that issue still needed to be addressed.

27. **Mr. Koompraphant** asked about the outcome of the programmes and whether there had been any positive impact on the groups at risk of becoming the victims of sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution.

28. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that an impact evaluation of the conditional cash grant programme had been conducted by the World Bank the year before. It had compared areas where the programme was in place and where it was not. Assuming that other conditions were the same, the evaluation had indicated that children in areas where the programme operated were benefiting more, as their families spent more on education. In all of those areas, there had been an increase in enrolment and participation and in spending on nutrition and medicine, and pregnant mothers had received more medical attention. As for groups vulnerable to the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution, in the villages that had been studied, which were known to have had some trafficking, children had been found to have been kept in the villages. The delegation could provide a copy of the impact evaluation to the Committee.

29. **The Chairperson** asked whether the conditional cash transfer programme also included a voucher plan.

30. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that the possibility of introducing vouchers was still being studied, as it would necessitate a network of providers, which would not be possible in all areas. Under the current system, cash could be withdrawn from automatic tellers, and remittance services and the Philippine postal service were also used to disburse funds.

31. Turning to the issue of budgetary allocations, she said that, for the first time, at least 30 per cent of the budget had been allocated to social services, with the major beneficiaries being children. The largest budget was for education, which was provided free of charge from the elementary level to high school. The 2013 budget for the Council for the Welfare of Children was 975,000 dollars, which was a substantial increase on previous years. The Department of Justice had a budget of 550,000 dollars for preventive and prosecutorial programmes to combat the sale of children and trafficking. However, the greatest investment to prevent trafficking in children was in the conditional cash transfer, which had received 1.1 billion dollars in 2013. The investment was intended not only to keep children in school and keep them healthy, but to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty, which was one of the causes of the sale of children, child pornography and child prostitution.

32. **Mr. Fernandez** (Philippines) said that the Department of the Interior and Local Government, as a member of the Council for the Welfare of Children, actively participated and shared its resources and personnel with those programmes. The Department monitored local governments' compliance with national laws and programmes and ensured that local government units had local councils for the protection of children at both the municipal and *barangay* level. The Department issued seals of good housekeeping, which included financial incentives for local government units to achieve certain standards, including in the area of children's rights. The over 1,800 women's and children's desks at police stations participated actively in the enforcement of laws to ensure that children were considered victims rather than perpetrators of certain crimes.

33. Circulars had been issued in an attempt to achieve a 100 per cent birth registration rate, including among the indigenous population, for whom the registration fee was waived. According to the latest report of the National Statistics Office, the birth registration rate currently stood at 95 per cent.

34. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that the ranking of the Philippines had moved up about 20 places in the transparency index of the world's countries as a result of the intense drive by the current administration to reduce corruption. The delegation would be interested to hear the basis for any allegations about public funding being siphoned off,

as such information would make it possible to take action. There was a grievance redress system for the conditional cash transfer programme and other programmes which allowed people to send text messages or e-mails or to visit an office if they had a complaint about any personnel dealing with children. Action had been taken on such complaints.

35. **Mr. Fernandez** (Philippines) added that the seal of good housekeeping for local government units included requirements for transparency and that there was a strong emphasis on eliminating corruption.

36. **Ms. Tanodra-Armamento**, referring to efforts to integrate data collection and monitoring, said that the Philippines had created the National Justice Information System, headed by the Department of Justice, which would interconnect the existing information systems of justice sector agencies. In terms of implementation, the hardware was already in place and services were now being procured for nationwide interconnectivity.

37. The law provided that extradition requests could be granted only when there was an extradition treaty between the Philippines and the other State. In the absence of an extradition treaty, the Philippines could invoke a treaty on mutual legal assistance in criminal matters to request legal assistance in the case of violations of its laws relating to the protection and rights of children. In the present legal framework, no offences were extraterritorial in nature, not even those in the area of child protection. There was now a move to consider extraterritorial jurisdiction in the revision of the Criminal Code.

38. **Mr. Madi** asked whether the Philippines was considering using the Optional Protocol as a basis for extradition in the absence of extradition agreements. Was it true that the issue of double criminality no longer existed? He welcomed the fact that the Philippines was considering extraterritorial legislation, as the lack of extraterritorial jurisdiction was a major gap in the fight against sexual exploitation.

39. **Ms. Tanodra-Armamento** (Philippines) noted that article 5 of the Optional Protocol stated that a State party “may consider the present Protocol to be a legal basis for extradition”, but it was not mandatory to do so. The concept of double criminality was not present in the Philippine legal framework.

40. The Philippine authorities could initiate criminal proceedings only if an element of the offence had been committed in the Philippines. Numerous laws stipulated that children involved in prostitution were considered to be victims and were not subject to prosecution. Furthermore, child victims of pornography offences were entitled to compensation and witness protection services. Sexual relations between adults and anyone under 18 years of age were considered to be child abuse. Establishments involved in prostitution were immediately closed after raids.

41. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked up to what age children could not be prosecuted for prostitution. It was his understanding that the age of consent was 12. With that in mind, he wished to know if sexual relations between an adult and a child between the ages of 12 and 18 years was also considered to be sexual abuse.

42. **Ms. Tanodra-Armamento** (Philippines) said that having sexual relations with a child 12 to 18 years of age was considered to be sexual abuse, while sex with a child under 12 years of age was considered to be statutory rape. A study was being conducted to document and analyse cases involving the sale and trafficking of newborn babies for purposes of adoption. At the end of the study, recommendations would be made on ways to regulate the practice and address the root causes of the problem.

43. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that a new law on cybercrime provided for the prosecution of both Filipinos and foreigners who engaged in cybersex with children. Foreigners had been convicted for the trafficking and sexual abuse of children, and also for the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

44. **Mr. Balanhi** (Philippines) said that the Child Wise Tourism Program, a collaborative effort involving both the public and private sectors, had been launched to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children in the tourism industry. It involved measures such as training, awareness-raising campaigns and a hotline allowing citizens and travellers to report suspicious behaviour. The officers of the tourist police units established under the Tourism Act of 2009 received training in child wise tourism concepts. The programme was currently operational in Manila, Boracay and Puerto Princesa, and there were plans to expand it to cover 14 major tourist destinations in the country.

45. **Ms. Aidoo** asked to what extent the Government was working with members of the tourism industry to define strategies to tackle the problem and how it was monitoring the implementation of the programme.

46. **The Chairperson** expressed doubt that children would be able to remember a hotline number that was eight or nine digits long and said that it was necessary to monitor not only hotels but also taxi drivers, porters and others who might serve as middlemen.

47. **Mr. Balanhi** (Philippines) said that the training component of the Child Wise Tourism Program targeted all tourism service providers.

48. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that, while the programme was led by the Department of Tourism, it was an inter-agency effort. At ports of entry in Boracay and Puerto Galera, any adults entering with children were required to declare their relationship with them. However, since children often arrived at tourist destinations alone, monitoring was also done by local government units at the village level. The Government was also working with chambers of commerce to involve local businesses in monitoring efforts.

49. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that perpetrators of sexual exploitation of children often preferred to stay in small guest houses that might not be registered rather than in well-known hotels, and she asked if there had been any efforts to identify and monitor such establishments.

50. **Mr. Balanhi** (Philippines) said that under the Tourism Act of 2009 all tourism establishments must be accredited and licensed.

51. **Ms. Villar** (Philippines) said that, in order to determine who was eligible for the conditional cash transfer system, the Government had established a proxy means test based on responses to a household assessment form containing certain indicators. The indicators were drawn up bearing in mind the need for objective information and the tendency of respondents to skew their responses; they included the type of housing the respondents lived in, their education levels, whether they owned certain appliances and the nature of their employment. The answers were compiled in a database and allowed the Government to know exactly who the poor were so that it could better serve them. Compliance with the conditions established for the cash transfer system was monitored using a database, with information provided by teachers, health-care providers and social workers.

52. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that the conditional cash transfer programme aimed to address the marginalization and disempowerment of people, which were root causes of poverty.

53. **Ms. Taradji** (Philippines) said that psychosocial services were provided to child victims of abuse and exploitation both through community-based programmes and in specialized centres. The centres provided immediate shelter and other basic services as well as legal and administrative support during the rehabilitation process. The community-based programmes included parent effectiveness training for the children's parents, which helped to ensure the children's reintegration into society and their families. The programmes were led by social workers, but also involved other partners from the community, including legal and medical practitioners and local government units.

54. **Mr. Koompraphant** asked how child victims of abuse and exploitation were identified and how many of them the rehabilitation programmes could accommodate.

55. **Ms. Taradji** (Philippines) said that victims were identified and referred to the programme by law enforcement services, family members or partners such as NGOs. Interviews were then conducted to determine the extent to which the child had been victimized. A total of 361 victims of prostitution, trafficking and child pornography had been assisted from 2009 to 2012. The Government operated 42 rehabilitation centres nationwide, and there were also other centres operated by NGOs.

56. **Ms. Sandberg** asked what accommodation was provided for children in the community-based programmes who were not able to stay with their parents.

57. **Ms. Taradji** (Philippines) said that those children were placed in rehabilitation centres or with foster families.

58. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that rescues were also performed in cooperation with the police and the National Bureau of Investigation.

59. **Ms. Aidoo** asked if any cases had been reported of children sold for purposes of organ transfer.

60. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that while no such cases involving children had been reported, there had been cases of the sale of adult organs, mainly kidneys, and efforts were being made in cooperation with the Department of Health to address the issue.

61. **Ms. Aidoo** expressed her appreciation for the delegation's fruitful and constructive dialogue with the Committee. It was clear that much had been achieved in the areas of awareness-raising, prevention, prohibition and prosecution. She noted with satisfaction the increase in the budget for the Council for the Welfare of Children and hoped it would result in closer monitoring of the implementation of the Optional Protocol. She hoped to see a progressive decrease in the number of victims of the sale of children, which was not to be confused with trafficking.

62. **Ms. Juliano-Soliman** (Philippines) said that the interaction between her delegation and the Committee had been an extremely valuable process and that her Government would carefully study the Committee's concluding observations. The Philippines had already planned several future activities to further advance the cause of children's rights, including: holding a national multi-stakeholder forum in March 2013 on the continuing challenges in implementing the Optional Protocol; further disseminating the Convention and the Optional Protocol; and adopting a relevant action and monitoring plan.

63. **The Chairperson** said that the Government of the Philippines had shown that multisectoral engagement was its strength, and its cooperation with civil society was a testament to its political will to advance children's rights. She commended the State party for the regular and timely submission of its periodic reports.

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 5.55 p.m.*