



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General  
25 January 2018  
Original: English

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-seventh session

### Summary record of the 2258th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 17 January 2018, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Winter

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Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Panama*

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

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

*Combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Panama* (CRC/C/PAN/5-6; CRC/C/PAN/Q/5-6 and CRC/C/PAN/Q/5-6/Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Panama took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that, although challenges and obstacles remained, Panama had made progress in effectively implementing the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the three Optional Protocols thereto and had brought its national law into line with international human rights standards. Public policies, plans, programmes and services had been redefined with a view to realizing children's rights, based on the principle of the best interests of the child. The Government was committed to attaining the Sustainable Development Goals and to that end had formulated the "One Country" Strategic Plan 2015–2019, comprising six strategic areas and an investment plan of US\$ 22 billion. It had initiated a process of national ownership of the Goals by strengthening its partnerships with citizens, the business sector and civil society organizations, and had set up an inter-agency committee involving the participation of civil society with a view to implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
3. Significant advances had been made in relation to the well-being of children and adolescents, as well as their families, through the creation and strengthening of new social institutions for promoting and protecting their rights. The aim was to build a coordinated system of guarantees and comprehensive protection for the rights of children and adolescents, covering universal, social, special and judicial protection and assigning responsibilities and resources within a multi-year planning framework in which government institutions, civil society, communities and families worked together to achieve shared goals. In the area of child protection, a national deinstitutionalization committee comprising representatives of civil society and government institutions had been set up to devise measures for protecting children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability and risk.
4. The Government had also strengthened intersectoral coordination under the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents. Opportunities for children's participation had been created to ensure that their opinions and proposals were taken into consideration in the process of building citizenship. For the first time, the Government of Panama had established a formal, permanent mechanism for consulting children and adolescents on the concluding observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child.
5. With regard to the eradication of child labour, Panama had managed to reduce the number of child workers by one quarter over an eight-year period and was building a platform to tackle child labour with the participation of local authorities and civil society. A master plan for child and adolescent health care for 2016–2025 had been incorporated into the national health policy and the strategic plan for the health sector for 2016–2020. The principles underpinning the plan were the rights-based approach, equitable treatment, a child-, family- and community-centred approach, respect for cultural diversity, a gender perspective and social participation.
6. The Government was redoubling efforts to ensure that all children and adolescents had equal-opportunity access to free, inclusive education. Improving education quality was a priority, in line with Sustainable Development Goal 4. A range of projects were being implemented, including My School First, the eradication of shack classrooms, Bilingual Panama, Maximum Learning, and an extended school day for all students. Progress had been facilitated by the expansion of social protection coverage for the most disadvantaged groups and by the commitment to increased investment in education. A dialogue on the national commitment to education was under way as a means of defining State policy in that area.
7. Peace, tolerance and respect were the pillars of the country's growth and development. The economy had expanded steadily; the authorities hoped that the 5.6-per-

cent growth experienced in 2017 would be maintained in 2018. The Government was committed to channelling its resources towards initiatives to guarantee the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, and child survival, development and participation.

8. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** (Country Rapporteur) said that the State party was to be commended on the progress it had made since its previous dialogue with the Committee, including the ratification of the third Optional Protocol to the Convention and the implementation of an anti-poverty strategy. Welcoming the recent submission of the country's initial report under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, he pointed out that its initial report under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, which had been due in 2003, remained outstanding. The Committee hoped to be able to review both reports simultaneously as soon as possible.

9. Noting that Panama was one of the only countries in the region that did not have a comprehensive law on the rights of children and adolescents, despite the proposal of various bills over the last 10 years, he asked when such a law was expected to be enacted and what obstacles were delaying the process. Thus far, the State party had adopted only partial plans that emphasized child protection rather than a rights-based approach. Similarly, he wished to know when a comprehensive strategy on children's rights would be unveiled and whether it was contingent upon the adoption of the law. Were there any plans to create a coordination mechanism at a higher level than the Ministry of Social Development?

10. The Committee was concerned that children did not seem to be a priority in public policy and that, as recognized in paragraphs 19 to 22 of the State party's report (CRC/C/PAN/5-6), there was no clear budget for children. The delegation should indicate what steps would be taken to remedy that situation and when child-responsive budgeting would be introduced. Given that a functioning data-collection system had still not been established, he wondered how the Government was able to design policies for children. He would welcome clarification of whether the children's rights unit of the national human rights institution had the necessary material and human resources to fulfil its mandate and establish a child-friendly complaints mechanism.

11. He would like to hear more about the dissemination of the Convention: was it taught in schools, did university training for lawyers, doctors, teachers and other professionals who came into contact with children include instruction on the Convention, and were there public awareness campaigns for parents and children, including the indigenous population? With regard to cooperation with civil society, the delegation might comment on what was done to prevent conflicts of interest in the decisions of some institutions in respect of children deprived of parental care, particularly when organizations that provided services to such children were involved in the decision-making. The delegation should also explain what measures were taken to ensure that children were included in consultation processes with indigenous communities in relation to legislative or administrative decisions that affected them and that activities in the electricity, mining, agro-industry and tourism sectors did not have a negative impact on children's rights. He would like to hear more about what was being done to prevent sexual exploitation and child sex tourism.

12. While welcoming the decision to increase the minimum age for marriage to 18 years under article 35 of Act No. 30, he requested clarification of article 36, according to which marriages entered into in violation of article 35 were valid, subject to certain rules of a financial nature. He would also like to know whether unregistered forced marriages continued to take place in indigenous areas. The Committee remained very concerned about persistent discrimination against indigenous and Afrodescendent children; children with disabilities; lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children; and adolescents, among others. It would welcome information on efforts to end such discrimination and lift the curfew on adolescents.

13. He would be grateful for details of the number and location of the child and adolescent advisory councils and any efforts to expand them. Noting that the bills on adoption and fostering provided for the participation of children in administrative proceedings, he wondered whether that meant that until those bills were adopted, the views of children would not be taken into account in such processes. He would welcome

clarification concerning the evaluation of victims of sexual abuse to establish whether or not they could testify. In light of the alarmingly high rates of violence against children, he would be interested to hear about the results of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents and the resources available for its implementation. Lastly, he asked how the State party had followed up on the recommendation by the Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities that “safe havens” should not be used as a long-term solution.

14. **Ms. Skelton** (Country Rapporteur), welcoming the progress made in birth registration, particularly in indigenous areas, said that she would like an update on the situation since 2015 and details of how the system for the birth registration of migrant children was working in practice. Noting that national identity cards, which must be carried at all times, were issued to all children over the age of 12, she asked what happened if an adolescent lost his or her card and whether a child could be taken into police custody for failure to carry an identity card. The delegation should comment on the situation in relation to freedom of expression and association, including reports that the right to form student groups had been withdrawn. The curfew for minors was clearly a breach of the right to freedom of association and movement, not only under international law but also under the Panamanian Constitution. Given reports that the efficacy of the curfew was in doubt and the fact that adolescents made up only a very small percentage of those committing crimes, she asked how the Government justified maintaining the curfew. Since 2015, some 13,000 children and adolescents had been detained as a result of the curfew; if their parents failed to pay the relevant fine, they were detained overnight. She asked the delegation to comment on that situation and on the road map drawn up by Alianza Ciudadana Pro Justicia based on its assessment of the curfew.

15. **Mr. Lumina** asked whether the Government carried out regular analyses to assess the extent to which children benefited from initiatives funded by budget allocations and to ensure that those allocations were consistent with the State party’s obligation of non-discrimination. He enquired what measures were taken to ensure that provincial and local government funds were used in accordance with the State party’s human rights obligations; that funds were allocated in the most efficient manner to enhance children’s rights; and that money was not being wasted through poor procurement practices.

16. **Mr. Nelson** said that, although the State party had stated that it had no comprehensive system for the collection of data on violence against children, it had nevertheless provided data on child abuse and neglect. He wondered how data of that kind were collected and whether the figures provided were reliable. In the light of reports that the National Intersectoral Committee for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Young Persons had never actually met to discuss the development of a national strategy to prevent such violence, he wished to know whether there were plans to organize a meeting of that Committee and, if so, when. He also wondered whether that Committee had the necessary resources to carry out its functions.

17. He asked whether the helplines mentioned in the State party’s report were operational around the clock and, if not, whether there were plans to extend their operating hours. He also wished to know whether helpline staff received any training and what measures had been taken to ensure that children were aware of the existence of those helplines.

18. With reference to paragraph 113 of the State party’s report, he enquired whether the bill to professionalize the prison service had been passed and implemented. Lastly, he invited the delegation to comment on reports that harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation and cohabitation of young girls and older men, persisted in certain communities and to explain what steps had been taken to combat those practices.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.50 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.*

19. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that the bill to establish a system of guarantees and comprehensive protection for the rights of children and young persons had been approved by the Council of Ministers on 16 January 2018. Progress had also been made towards the approval of a public policy document on the protection of children’s rights by the Social

Affairs Office. Bills Nos. 536 and 537, on adoption and foster care, respectively, were currently in their first reading.

20. Multidimensional poverty indicators had been developed in order to assess child poverty; policy changes would be made on the basis of those indicators, in consultation with children. A national plan to eliminate poverty was being implemented, in accordance with Sustainable Development Goal 1.

21. Various social inclusion programmes were under way, such as the “Guardian Angel” cash transfer programme for persons with disabilities, which had benefited over 18,000 people in 2017, of whom 32 per cent were children or adolescents, and the “Opportunities Network” poverty reduction programme, which had benefited over 50,000 households in 2017, including over 26,000 households in indigenous regions. Thanks to the Government’s efforts, some 109,000 people, including more than 56,000 children, had managed to escape from poverty over the previous five years.

22. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that he did not see why the State party needed to pass legislation on the protection of child rights before it could develop a strategy in that area.

23. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) recalled that, in addition to the bill on a comprehensive system to protect child rights, a public policy document on that subject had been drafted and submitted to the Social Affairs Office for approval.

24. **Mr. Diéguez** (Panama) said that the national budget was managed in accordance with international standards, including the System of National Accounts. Between 2010 and 2017, social spending had increased by 71 per cent and social spending per capita had increased by 53 per cent. The majority of social expenditure was allocated to health, education and culture, and employment and social security. The Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance was taking steps to identify the budget lines relating to children and adolescents within the national budget so as to quantify the State’s efforts in that regard. In 2017, an estimated 20 per cent of social spending had been allocated to programmes for children and adolescents.

25. Child and adolescent advisory councils had been established to further the participation of children and adolescents in local decision-making. Municipalities sought bids for local projects under a procurement process that was as transparent as possible. As civil society was represented on the boards of directors of the public entities that carried out programmes for children and adolescents, it also took part in decision-making on the relevant projects and budgets. At the national level, the first readings of budget proposals in the National Assembly were open to the public.

26. Regarding impact assessment and non-discrimination, the Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance had an office of economic and social analysis that evaluated programmes and budgetary allocations in the area of social spending. As the poverty rate had ceased to decline since 2015, the Government was focusing its resources on the poorest areas of the country, including indigenous areas. It had launched a number of initiatives to address regional disparities, including the “Internet for All” project, whereby all schools would be equipped with Internet access.

27. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked what measures had been taken to promote transparency and combat corruption, in order to ensure that funding for child-related projects was not diverted elsewhere.

28. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that the multidimensional poverty index was used to ensure that resources were spent on initiatives to support the most vulnerable groups. Procedures had been established to combat corruption and to prevent the misuse of funds.

29. A number of initiatives had been organized to raise awareness of children’s rights, including a television and radio campaign aimed at parents of children under 6 years old, which emphasized the importance of good nutrition and mental stimulation. Campaigns had also been carried out to combat child labour, violence against children and sexual exploitation of children.

30. **Ms. de la Guardia** (Panama) said that the Government recognized the challenge of bringing the juvenile justice system into line with the Convention and other international

guidelines; it strove to guarantee that punishments imposed on adolescents in conflict with the law fully respected their rights and allowed for their effective social reintegration. In that context, the authorities were engaged in reforming the prison system by strengthening institutions, professionalizing prison staff, improving prisoners' living conditions and strengthening rehabilitation and social integration. A strategic plan setting out objective parameters for the measurement of progress and achievements had been adopted, and results-based management was being introduced. An information system had been developed for the systematic recording of data pertaining to adolescents in custody.

31. The first phase of a census of adolescents in conflict with the law had been completed in December 2017; over 650 adolescents to whom custodial or non-custodial measures had been applied had been interviewed. Analysis of the findings would be completed in early 2018 and would assist in the formulation of evidence-based public policies. Furthermore, a comprehensive intervention model had been developed, including the use of non-custodial sentences and the standardization of criteria for evaluating progress in the resocialization process. Implementation of the new model was expected to commence in February 2018.

32. The Government was making progress on a pilot programme for the treatment of substance abuse and addiction at the Pacora juvenile prison. It had also adopted a legislative amendment to restore the option of allowing adolescents who reached the age of majority to complete their sentences in specialized transition centres, as recommended by the Committee. The first such centre was under construction and due to open in June 2018.

33. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that, thus far, two child and adolescent advisory councils, one in the Province of Colón and one in the District of San Carlos, had been established for 9- to 17-year-olds. A further council would shortly be established in the Province of Panamá. The councils ensured that young people's views and proposals were taken into account in the plans, projects and programmes carried out by municipal councils.

34. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that he would like to know what incentives were provided to encourage municipalities to set up child and adolescent advisory councils. He also wondered whether children and adolescents effectively participated in administrative proceedings, as envisaged under the new General Adoption Act.

35. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that the mechanism whereby municipalities could establish child and adolescent advisory councils was still being developed. Municipalities that received funding under the Decentralization Act would be evaluated by the National Secretariat for Decentralization to determine whether their projects took children's views into account. All proposed projects to be carried out with decentralized funds were subject to a public consultation in which representatives of the child and adolescent advisory council participated.

36. The State guaranteed that children's voices were heard throughout administrative processes such as those concerning adoption and placement in temporary care. In protection processes that followed complaints of ill-treatment or abuse, interdisciplinary teams provided children with support and listened to their views from the outset of the investigation. The Government also ensured that children with disabilities were able to participate in administrative and legal proceedings, inter alia by providing sign language interpreters and training officials in sign language.

37. **Mr. Ramírez** (Panama) said that the Government was alarmed by the possibility that female genital mutilation might be practised among the indigenous population. While the relevant authorities had not received any reports of such cases in recent years, the Government had taken note of the indication, on the United Nations website, that the practice existed among the Emberá indigenous group living on the west coast of Colombia. Given that there were also Emberá communities in Panama, he believed that the matter should be investigated. The delegation would be keen to examine any specific information that civil society had provided to the Committee.

38. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that the National Intersectoral Committee for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents had developed a national strategy for the prevention of such violence. It had organized a national forum on the topic and had

conducted a diagnostic study of the situation concerning violence against children and adolescents in the Provinces of Chiriquí, Colón and Panamá. As part of the participatory process of developing the national strategy, several workshops on different topics had been held with children and adolescents in different parts of the country. The strategy incorporated the perspectives of rights, equity, life cycle, gender, inclusion and interculturalism and focused on the areas of family, school, community, society and information. It was currently awaiting validation.

39. As mentioned in the report, the line 147 helpline was operational during daytime hours. Other helplines that catered to children and adolescents included those of the Juvenile Police and the Young Persons Section of the Judicial Investigation Directorate. Meanwhile, the citizens' helpline, 311, was operational 24 hours a day every day of the year. Children could use the 311 line to report situations of ill-treatment and be referred immediately to the relevant social or protection authority.

40. **Ms. Sandberg** said that she would appreciate confirmation that line 147 was a child-friendly helpline. As the 311 line was not specifically designed for children, she expected that children would be less likely to use it.

41. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that further information concerning the 311 line would be provided in due course. Line 147 was indeed specifically aimed at children.

42. **Ms. Skelton** said that she had not received a satisfactory response to her question on curfews, which restricted children's freedom of movement and freedom of association. She wished to know what prevented the State party from abolishing such measures, which clearly infringed children's rights.

43. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that the Government recognized that adolescents who were detained for breaking curfew often experienced difficult family circumstances or situations of risk that required a comprehensive response. Accordingly, the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and the Family and the Ombudsman's Office had recently advised all provincial governors that curfews were a violation of the rights of the child and that children in difficult situations should be referred to family strengthening programmes. Provincial governors had been given the opportunity to participate in awareness-raising and capacity-building on the rights of children and adolescents, while the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had provided technical assistance to the authorities with a view to enhancing the family strengthening programme.

44. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** said that during the State party's previous dialogue with the Committee, and on each of his three visits to Panama, he had received assurances from government officials that they would work to repeal the curfew laws. He did not understand how Panama, as a State governed by the rule of law, could continue to allow such measures while recognizing that they violated children's rights. The curfews stigmatized adolescents by perpetuating the idea that young people were dangerous, and in practice they were only applied in poor and marginalized neighbourhoods.

45. **The Chair** said that she too had visited Panama and that she agreed that the curfews not only were stigmatizing, but also blatantly discriminated against children in poor districts and did not address the root causes of the problems faced by such children. She wondered whether political considerations had contributed to the State party's failure to make progress on the issue.

46. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that in their efforts to ensure that children's rights were respected, the national authorities focused on raising awareness among their provincial and municipal counterparts. The aim was to bring about the repeal of local regulations or decrees that did not allow children to exercise their rights.

47. **The Chair** recalled that one Committee member had asked about cohabitation between young girls and older men, and specifically whether it was common for young girls who lived with older men to be abandoned when they became pregnant or gave birth; if so, she would like to know whether any assistance was available to such abandoned girls and their children.

48. **Ms. Cárdenas** (Panama) said that Act No. 29 of 2002, on pregnant minors, had been amended by Act No. 60 of 30 November 2016 with a view to combating teenage pregnancy more effectively. The National Council on Care for Adolescent Mothers, which brought together representatives of the Government and civil society, had been established pursuant to Act No. 60. Strategies for the prevention of teenage pregnancy were being developed with technical assistance from international partners.

49. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she wished to know what steps the State party was taking to combat forced extramarital cohabitation, which often involved girls in rural areas.

50. **Ms. Skelton** said that she would welcome an update on the number of children living in institutional homes in the State party. As many children were institutionalized for social and economic reasons, she wondered what support, including financial support, was available to families that wished to take their children back. It would be interesting to learn whether the authorities were seeking the resources that would enable them to expedite the deinstitutionalization process. In addition, she asked whether foster care was a component of the authorities' efforts to ensure that children were provided with protection and care and, if so, whether it included care provided to children by members of their extended families.

51. She also wished to know what plans had been made to expedite the issuance of permits for shelters and other such facilities and why the Government's plan to conduct regular oversight visits concerned only shelters run by non-governmental organizations. In that connection, she asked why it was taking so long for the oversight mechanism to come on stream, what plans had been made to ensure that it operated independently and whether it had a budget of its own. She also asked whether children in shelters could file complaints directly with the Ombudsman's Office.

52. The delegation should provide more information about the bill on adoption currently before the National Assembly. She wondered why the country's lawmakers were introducing new legislation on the subject when such legislation had just been adopted in 2013. In addition, the delegation should indicate whether the protocol for dealing with cases of international child abduction mentioned in the State party's periodic report had been drawn up and, if so, what procedures it would involve.

53. The construction of units for mothers and their children in the country's new prisons was a welcome development. She wondered, however, whether there were any laws or legal precedents that would allow convicted persons providing care to children to serve non-custodial sentences.

54. She would welcome a comment on reports that primary education was becoming less accessible to children in a number of rural areas. She likewise wondered whether reports that school dropout rates were increasing were accurate and, if so, what plans had been made to reverse that trend. It would also be interesting to know whether the education authorities took any steps to assist children after they had dropped out.

55. She wished to know whether the Government had identified the reasons behind the poor quality of the education on offer in the Panamanian school system, which, according to international and regional assessments, was underperforming. In that connection, she asked why Panama, which had participated in previous cycles of the Programme for International Student Assessment, in which it had performed badly, had not participated in the most recent cycle and whether it intended to participate in the next one. What could be done to ensure that the conditions in higher-performing schools could be replicated in underperforming ones?

56. She would welcome an indication of how long it would take to replace the more than 250 shack classrooms in the Ngäbe Buglé indigenous region with proper schools. As the number of schools would be smaller than the number of shacks they replaced, she wondered what the consequences for travel to school would be. In view of reports that improvised shelters were being built for rural schoolchildren, she wished to know whether the authorities had made any plans to provide such children with school transport or proper boarding facilities. She also wished to know whether reports that impassable rivers prevented children from attending school were accurate and whether it was true that Panama spent only 3.3 per cent of its gross domestic product on education.

57. Regarding children in the justice system, it was disappointing that the State party had not acted on the Committee's recommendation to raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility, which had been lowered to 12 in 2010. She would welcome statistics corroborating the State party's assertions that most sentences handed down to minors in conflict with the law were of a social and educational nature. It was troubling that more such minors were not offered alternatives to judicial proceedings. Lastly, she asked whether children were entitled to free legal aid, whether juvenile detention facilities were still overcrowded, why efforts were not made to foster community-based reintegration for persons who were released from such facilities on turning 18 and what special measures had been taken to enable child victims or witnesses of sexual offences to give evidence.

58. **Mr. Cardona Llorens** asked whether the State party planned to develop policies for the advancement of children with disabilities that cut across all relevant areas, including health, education, access to recreational and cultural activities and housing. He wondered what efforts were being made to train teachers to work with students with disabilities, how much was invested in providing reasonable accommodation to students with disabilities, including by recruiting teachers' aides and making changes to curricula, and how the inclusion of children with disabilities in one-room schools worked. In addition, he wished to know how health personnel were trained to attend to children with disabilities and what specific benefits, other than cash transfers, were available to the families of such children.

59. Infant mortality rates were relatively high in some areas of the State party. He therefore wished to know what efforts, including monetary investments, were being made to improve prenatal and postnatal care. In addition, he wondered what was being done to provide sex education to students as a means of reducing the rising rate of teenage pregnancy. Were steps being taken to give adolescents information about contraception and to prevent pregnant girls from being forced to drop out of school? He also wished to know whether adolescents could ask to be tested for HIV without their parents' knowledge, whether efforts were made to prevent mother-to-child transmission of the virus and whether antiretroviral therapy was widely available. In addition, he asked whether children and young people had access to information about and treatment of human papilloma virus infections. Lastly, he wondered what efforts the State party had made to lower the proportion of households in extreme poverty, which had remained stubbornly high despite years of robust economic growth.

60. **Ms. Aho Assouma** said that she wished to know whether an initiative launched in 2017 had led to an increase in the small percentage of infants who were fed nothing but breastmilk. It would be especially interesting to know why that percentage was lower in rural and indigenous areas.

61. She asked whether there were special mental health services for child victims of sexual and other forms of abuse and rehabilitation services for children who were users of illegal drugs. Could children who abused drugs be referred to treatment facilities instead of being sent to detention centres?

62. **Mr. Rodríguez Reyes** asked whether the "Basic Sanitation: 100 Per Cent Safe Drinking Water/Zero Latrines" programme focused on rural areas, as the Committee had received reports that people in Capira District had no access to safe drinking water. The delegation should indicate whether there was a plan to ensure that such access was provided. In addition, he wondered whether the State party intended to participate more actively in the Baby-Friendly Hospital Initiative and allocate additional resources to the National Commission for the Promotion of Breastfeeding. Lastly, he would welcome more information on the mental health services available to children.

63. **Mr. Mezmur** said that he wished to know whether the State party was making efforts to develop a child-sensitive inter-agency process for the determination of refugee status. It would be interesting to know what was being done to develop protocols for the identification of minors in need of international protection. He wondered whether requiring beneficiaries of the Universal Grant Programme to have lived in Panama for at least 10 years was discriminatory, why the authorities had reversed the decision to make refugee and asylum-seeking children eligible for a number of scholarship programmes and what measures had been taken to combat xenophobic violence against children. He would also

like to know what efforts were made to help migrant families with children who found themselves stranded on their way through Panama.

64. Lastly, he would welcome an update on the efforts made by the State party to combat child labour. An indication of the budget for the monitoring activities of the Directorate to Combat Child Labour and Protect Adolescent Workers would be especially welcome.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*