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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-second session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 844th MEETING*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Monday, 20 January 2003, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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* No summary record was issued for the 843rd meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 4) (continued)

Second periodic report of Romania (CRC/C/65/Add.19; CRC/C/Q/ROM/2; CRC/C/RESP/19; HRI/CORE/1/Add.13/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Calciu, Ms. Coman, Ms. Dragatoiu, Ms. Mindroiu, Ms. Negrutiu and Mr. Nicolaescu (Romania) took places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that, since 1989, her Government had been faced with the task of dismantling the legacy of several decades of totalitarian rule. In particular, the child welfare system had badly needed reform. Until only recently, children deprived of a family environment had been placed in large, State-run institutions, and raised under grim, lonely conditions with scant attention to their needs. Few efforts had been made to assist the child's reintegration into society; many children had spent their entire childhood in State institutions. In fact, until 1997, only non-governmental organizations (NGOs) had attempted to provide child-friendly services, sometimes in direct partnership with local authorities.
3. In 1997 reforms had been introduced with a view to decentralizing the provision of social services, as well as creating alternatives to residential care. Three years later substantial changes had been made to the way services were provided to children with disabilities, and steps had been taken to shift the focus away from institutional care.
4. Since the general elections of November 2000, the speed of reform had increased considerably. Her Government had made the protection of children's rights a priority and had adopted a number of new measures in accordance with the provisions of the Convention and other international agreements, including national plans and strategies for poverty reduction and social inclusion; promotion of the health of women, children and families; protection of children with special difficulties; prevention and elimination of HIV/AIDS; and improvement of the situation of the Roma. The Government had also implemented a national strategy for disabled persons. Government policy on child protection was based on the best interests of the child, non-discrimination, the importance of the family environment, decentralization, social solidarity, partnership, and an interdisciplinary approach.
5. Important achievements had been made over the previous two years. Approximately 60 residential institutions had been closed down and replaced with services for alternative care. One third of all children with slight or medium disabilities previously attending special schools had been integrated into the mainstream educational system. A single decision-making authority had been established at the county level to deal with child welfare issues. Various legislative provisions, including the law on the national social assistance system, the law on the minimum guaranteed income and the law on combating social exclusion, had entered into force, with a view to establishing a more coherent welfare system.
6. Over the coming years her Government planned to increase benefits and other forms of assistance to families with a view to reducing the rate of child abandonment; to continue shutting down residential institutions and replacing them with alternative care; to harmonize the legal

framework for child rights; to carry out reform of the juvenile justice system; to transfer decision-making authority from the administrative to the judicial level, with a view to establishing juvenile courts; to develop new procedures for the elimination of child trafficking; to set minimum standards and establish inspection mechanisms for service provision; and to enhance the financial and budgetary arrangements for the promotion and protection of child rights.

7. The CHAIRPERSON invited members of the Committee to put questions to the delegation concerning general measures of implementation and the definition of the child.

8. Ms. CHUTIKUL welcomed the progress made by Romania since consideration of its initial report. In particular, she noted the adoption of new legislation, the enhancement of the status of NGOs, and the increased participation of the Government in global and regional forums on child-related issues. However, the report focused too much on legislative reform, and failed to include enough details of measures of implementation. It also failed to address all of the issues raised in the concluding observations of the Committee following its consideration of the previous report.

9. According to information in the written replies regarding the revision of the Family Code of 1954, a bill on child protection had been prepared. She would like to know whether the bill had been submitted to Parliament, and whether it had been amended in the light of comments received by NGOs. The delegation should also explain whether the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption would be responsible for monitoring implementation of the law.

10. Referring to paragraph 35 of the report (CRC/C/65/Add.19), she asked whether the report by the Ombudsman concerning the observance of child rights had been completed and, if so, whether any action had been taken to implement its recommendations. She wanted to know whether the Ombudsman was concerned solely with the activities of public authorities, or whether he also received complaints concerning violations by parents and teachers. The delegation should confirm whether a separate children's ombudsman had been instituted, and whether the incumbent would be truly independent; it should also provide details of how children and parents would be informed about access to the children's ombudsman.

11. She welcomed the new accreditation procedures for NGOs, as well as the introduction of minimum standards with a view to enhancing service provision. Nevertheless, she asked how the Government planned to promote closer cooperation with NGOs in order to facilitate the new arrangements.

12. She failed to understand which official body had prime responsibility for ensuring implementation of the Convention. She wanted to know whether the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption was involved with all issues relating to implementation, or merely those concerning child protection. The delegation should explain how that body interacted with the Government Commission on Poverty and Social Inclusion, as well as the Inter-Ministerial Commission on Social Assistance. She would be interested to learn more about the links between the various child welfare bodies at the national and county levels.

13. The delegation should explain how the Government intended to integrate the targets set at the United Nations General Assembly special session on children into its action plan for implementing the national child protection strategy. It should also elaborate on the national action plan for children, referred to in paragraph 42 of the report.

14. She enquired whether social workers, local authority staff and teachers received training on the Convention. It would be useful to learn whether the general attitude towards the Convention had become more favourable and whether the mass media had taken an active role in promoting the Convention.

15. She asked whether the new child monitoring and tracking information system would provide comprehensive child rights indicators, or statistics relating to welfare services only.

16. Ms. AL-THANI asked for information concerning efforts to disseminate the Convention. She wanted to know whether translations into Romanian and minority languages had been completed. It would be interesting to learn whether civic education classes in schools contained specific courses relating to the Convention, and how the Government assessed children's awareness of human rights issues. Lastly, she would like to know why the minimum age for marriage was lower for girls than for boys (at 16 as opposed to 18 years).

17. Mr. AL-SHEDDI asked how far the courts, the police and other bodies actually implemented the new legislation, the introduction of which he commended. He also wondered which government departments monitored implementation. With regard to the 1954 Family Code, he asked whether any revision had been made since the submission of Romania's initial report. He confessed to some confusion concerning the number of bodies responsible for the coordination of child protection: he could not determine whether the Department for Child Protection, the National Committee for Child Protection, and the specialized department for the protection of the rights of the child mentioned in paragraph 30 of the report, were one and the same body. As for plans of action, his understanding had been that the starting point was to have been the work of a committee established following a national conference on children and the Convention held in 1994. The report contained no further reference to the committee and he wondered what the outcome of its work had been. He also wished to hear more details of activities undertaken to raise children's awareness of the Convention. In that connection, he noted that eight years' education was compulsory. If a child began school at 6, formal education would therefore be over at 14. He wondered how the last four years of childhood were filled.

18. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked why the child census carried out by the Government had stopped at children aged 17, when the Convention defined children as those aged 0-18. Older children should also be covered by programmes conducted in implementation of the Convention. She noted that, according to the second and third tables in the written replies, the number of children in both rural and urban areas had decreased between 2000 and 2001. She wondered what the explanation was. She wished to know about the Ombudsman and whether he had already started receiving complaints from children or monitoring the implementation of the Convention.

19. She commended the efforts made to introduce and then to implement a number of laws and programmes. She wondered, however, how the sustainability of the various programmes was assured, especially in remote areas, at a time when funding was actually diminishing. She also noted that 27 telephone hotlines were in existence, yet it appeared that they were little used. She wondered whether any action was taken to encourage their use and, if a call was received, how it was processed and followed up. Lastly, she expressed concern about the reduced protection available to 15-year-old females who were married and thus presumed to be adult. In that context, she shared her colleagues' concern that marriage at such a young age was permitted at all.

20. Ms. KHATTAB asked for information on specific activities undertaken by the Government to make up for the lost years of totalitarianism, when human rights had barely existed. She noted that, in 2001, the economy had performed better than expected and asked whether that improvement had been reflected in an increase in the resources allocated to children. There had been much commendable activity in terms of introducing new legislation, but she wondered how far such laws were monitored, whether they included a mechanism and provided for resources for their implementation, and to what extent legislation was synchronized. Synchronization was also an important element in data collection, and she urged the Government to ensure that the same phenomenon was not covered by two sets of figures. Lastly, she asked what legislation, together with mechanisms for implementation, had been introduced to deal with the commercial and sexual exploitation of children.

21. Mr. CITARELLA said that he, too, was concerned that the permitted marriage age was different for males and females, as it constituted discrimination against the latter. He also requested further information on how the new legislation that had been introduced was implemented. Further, he noted that, while the number of children seemed to be diminishing, which in itself might not be a bad thing, there was cause for concern if it was due to an increase in infant mortality. Clarification was required in that regard, and also concerning the budgetary resources made available for children, which were particularly difficult to assess from the report and the written replies, given that the resources were split between local and central government. He also requested further information concerning the discrimination, especially against Roma children, revealed by a survey carried out in 2001 by the European Parliament. More information on measures taken to deal with street children and abandoned children, the number of which seemed to be on the increase, would also be welcome. Lastly, he asked about the status of the Convention in Romanian courts and whether judges were in a position to apply it in the absence of specific domestic legislation.

22. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether, when preparing legislation, the Government ensured compliance with the Convention, whether non-governmental organizations participated in such preparation and whether the monitoring of implementation was restricted to the relevant ministries or whether other bodies could be involved.

23. She sought clarification as to the use of the concept of "children in difficulty", which did not appear in the Convention. She wondered whether the definition contained in paragraph 266 of the report was still in use and whether it applied only to children abused or neglected within the family environment. She also asked whether the Government calculated the resources needed to implement a given piece of legislation. With regard to the decentralization of

decision-making, she asked whether the process had been completed and whether local authorities were in charge of all decisions concerning the implementation of children's rights. If decisions were exclusively in local hands, she wondered what resources they could call on and whether they were entitled to raise local taxes or had to rely on State allocations. The inference from the written replies was that local authority allocations were far lower than State ones. There were other difficulties, too: her understanding was that, for example, Law No. 145/1997, which provided free primary health care, was vitiated by the fact that only those whose health insurance had been paid for by their employers were eligible and that doctors were apparently sometimes unwilling to register certain groups of children, such as the Roma. Lastly, she had had difficulty in following the budgetary allocations set out in the report and the written replies in view of the number of benefit systems and the small number of people covered by them. She wondered whether a single comprehensive system was to be created and, if not, how allocations would be split between central and local government. She also wondered whether such benefits were means-tested.

24. Ms. KARP said that she wished to reinforce her colleagues' comments concerning the sustainability of the variety of strategies that had been put in place. She also wondered how such strategies were evaluated, given that they applied to different categories of children. She urged the Government to prepare a comprehensive plan, rather than trying to operate programmes piecemeal. In that connection, she asked whether the national anti-poverty and social inclusion plan had been evaluated for its effectiveness. As for the street children initiative mentioned in paragraph 20 of the report, some evaluation had been presented, but it was not clear whether the project had succeeded in dealing with all street children or what approach it took to children newly arrived on the street.

25. She wondered what action had been taken to integrate children who had been moved out of institutions into mainstream education, in view of the fact that teachers were often not trained to do so and public opinion was not necessarily supportive. With regard to the question of children in difficulty, she requested further details of Constitutional Court Decision No. 47, of March 1999, regarding the constitutionality of Emergency Ordinance No. 26/1997, as it related to the protection of the child. In that context she asked how far the courts were involved in the realization of children's rights. She also asked to what extent a rights-based approach was reflected in the Government's strategies and whether children were involved in preparing plans of action concerning them. She enquired about the reason for the long delay in introducing legislation on adoption. Lastly, she requested further information on the professional manpower available; she could find no reference to any provision of psychologists or social workers.

26. The CHAIRPERSON asked how the considerable funds supplied by the European Union, especially under the PHARE programme, had been spent at the national and local levels and what impact they had had. He wondered what control the Government had over the activities of international NGOs and whether it had any policy for guaranteeing the sustainability of programmes when the NGOs left or the funds ran out. Decentralization could have the disadvantage that control could not be maintained even though the central government remained responsible for outcomes. He asked whether the Government had any monitoring system in place.

27. He noted that 60 childcare institutions had been closed and wondered whether children formerly living in such institutions were sent back to their families or placed in foster care, new institutions or family-type homes. Lastly, he asked how far the Government would be able to meet its clear and strong commitment to improving the situation of children in view of its limited resources. Much had been done, but much more remained to be done.

The meeting was suspended at 11.25 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

28. Ms. COMAN (Romania) drew attention to the fact that the report and the written replies contained information pertaining to different periods. Since the issuance of the report many changes had been made in terms of coordination responsibilities and the system of budgetary allocation. Changes had also been made to legislation and to central and local structures for the implementation of international instruments.

29. The national action plan in favour of children had been the first government initiative that had incorporated the principles of the Convention and the first attempt at coordinating the application of a United Nations treaty. It had also marked the introduction of decentralization. The national action plan had led to the adoption of Emergency Ordinance No. 26/1997 on the protection of the child in difficulty, and other special legislation relating to children. The National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption was the central body best placed to coordinate the implementation of the Convention, although its monitoring activities were currently focused on children in difficulty and child welfare.

30. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether the status of the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption was comparable to that of a ministry.

31. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that the ministries involved in child protection had separate sectoral policies. The National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption was a specialized government body responsible for coordinating those sectoral policies as well as special projects at the local level. It also set the rules and regulations to be applied by local bodies and monitored their implementation.

32. The CHAIRPERSON said he would like to know whether the head of the National Authority held a ministerial position.

33. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that although the National Authority was coordinated by the Secretary of the Cabinet, it did not function like a ministry and did not have regional representatives.

34. Ms. KARP asked how many people worked for the National Authority and whether it had a separate annual budget.

35. Ms. CHUTIKUL asked whether the National Authority was answerable to ministries and whether it was composed of ministerial representatives. She would also like to know whether it was a permanent body.

36. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether the National Authority coordinated the Government's work with that of non-governmental organizations and international organizations, and whether priority was given to the poorest regions when providing social services.
37. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that both ministries and the National Authority negotiated and coordinated the implementation of programmes financed by the State or by international organizations. Since 1999, local authorities had had to apply to the central government for funding. In an effort to reduce regional disparities, an accreditation system had been created for all service providers, at both the local and central levels.
38. Mr. CALCIU (Romania) said that many institutional changes had taken place in Romania in a short period of time, making it very difficult to say whether or not the National Authority would be a permanent body. The National Authority had replaced a number of other bodies, many of which had been mentioned in the report, as successive cabinets had tried to improve child protection. Although the National Authority was not a ministry headed by a member of the Cabinet, it fell under the direct responsibility of the Secretary of the Cabinet, illustrating the importance attached to child-related issues. It was a regulatory body that focused on child rights and welfare and was responsible for coordinating the significant amount of international assistance provided for Romanian children. It had been one of the first government bodies with a budget based on the programmes it implemented rather than on the size of its staff. In 2001, its funding under the State budget had doubled.
39. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that in the financial year 1999/2000 the National Authority had allocated funds to local authorities on the basis of their applications for funding. In 2001/2002, NGOs had also been invited to apply.
40. Ms. KARP asked whether the Government had taken into account the issues raised during the Committee's recent day of general discussion on the private sector as service provider and its role in implementing child rights (CRC/C/SR.813-814).
41. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that any NGO wishing to work in the field of child protection must be accredited by the local authorities. The Government intended to extend the system to both public and private service providers.
42. Ms. DRAGATOIU (Romania) said that the Government Commission on Poverty and Social Inclusion had been created to monitor ministerial policies, improve coordination and set out objectives in combating social exclusion. The Commission, which comprised representatives of trade unions, employers, NGOs, international organizations and relevant ministries, discussed all relevant bills before they were submitted to Parliament. In 1998 a law had been adopted providing that State subsidies would be given to NGOs developing social services for vulnerable categories, particularly children with special needs.
43. Ms. MINDROIU (Romania) said that the Ministry of Health cooperated with all the other ministries as well as the National Authority for Child Protection and Adoption to ensure implementation of the rights of the child. It also worked with NGOs, particularly in the field of staff training.

44. Mr. AL-SHEDDI said he would like to know how the National Authority coordinated the work of the ministries so as to avoid duplication.
45. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that the National Authority held monthly meetings with ministerial representatives to coordinate sectoral policies at the national level. Efforts were made to provide integrated community services at the local level.
46. Ms. NEGRUTIU (Romania) said that although the provision of the Family Code setting the minimum age for marriage at 18 for boys and 16 for girls had not yet been amended, huge efforts were being made to reform all legislation to bring it into conformity with European standards. Consequently, the new draft Family Code would set an equal minimum legal age for marriage for both boys and girls. Unfortunately, the proposal was to lower the age of marriage for boys to 16.
47. Ms. KARP asked whether the Government could provide statistics indicating how many girls married at the age of 16 and under what circumstances.
48. Ms. COMAN (Romania) said that although no statistics were currently available, the Government could prepare a written response.
49. Mr. CALCIU (Romania) said that girls were legally allowed to marry at the age of 16 because, in some areas and among certain sectors of the population, they conceived at a very young age. The Government was uncertain about how best to deal with the problem and hoped to gain some guidance from the European Union.
50. Ms. DRAGATOIU (Romania) said that a new package of social assistance legislation had been introduced in recent years. The most significant piece of legislation was Law No. 705/2001, which regulated the organization, operation and funding of the national system of social assistance. The Law stipulated that social assistance benefits should comprise social aid and family allowances, based on a non-contributory scheme. In addition, the State provided an allowance for all children, a supplementary allowance for families with two or more children and an allowance for newborn babies.
51. Law No. 705/2001 provided for decentralization of the system, to be completed by the end of 2003. Under the Law most social assistance activities would be developed by county councils, which would set local priorities according to local community needs, in compliance with the national social assistance strategy. Some social assistance programmes were to be developed at the municipal level. Particular attention was being paid to the training of social services personnel.
52. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ said she would be interested to know whether social assistance consisted solely of financial benefits, or whether any other assistance, such as counselling services, was provided.

53. Ms. DRAGATOIU (Romania) said that the funds allocated for social assistance were administered and managed at the central level. The new social assistance services that were being developed at the county and municipal levels were designed to meet the social needs of the community and included, inter alia, the creation of community centres.

54. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ asked whether such services included access to housing.

55. Ms. DRAGATOIU (Romania) said that access to housing was covered under the new legislation referred to in the report. A special housing programme received funding from State and local budgets. Rent subsidies were available for up to three years; eligibility for such support was based on criteria established by the local authorities and social services. A particular effort was being made to combat marginalization and help young people.

56. Ms. MINDROIU (Romania) said that the Government had been working to improve its social assistance legislation. Emphasis was being placed on expanding the role of community nurses and health mediators in assisting the Roma population, particularly pregnant women and children, and promoting social protection and medical services at the local level. As many families had no health insurance, the Government had sought to improve access to primary health care. Community nurses worked with family physicians under the supervision of the local authorities. To improve coordination, as of 2003 the national insurance funds had been placed under the authority of the Ministry of Health.

57. Ms. COMAN (Romania), replying to a question on the children's ombudsman, said that a bill on children's rights proposed the setting up of such an office, but did not specify what its responsibilities would be.

58. Ms. NEGRUTIU (Romania), referring to the criminal responsibility of children, said that Romanian legislation distinguished between the ages 14 to 16 and 16 to 18. Whereas children between 14 and 16 years of age had criminal responsibility only in certain cases, those over the age of 16 always did. Children who committed a crime were either punished or were the subject of alternative measures.

59. The CHAIRPERSON asked who decided whether a child should stand trial.

60. Mr. NICOLAESCU (Romania) said that only 3 per cent of children who had committed a crime were sentenced to prison. The juvenile justice system was being reformed in an effort to find other ways of punishing offences committed by children.

61. The CHAIRPERSON invited the members of the Committee to put questions to the delegation concerning general principles, civil rights and freedoms, and family environment and alternative care.

62. Ms. CHUTIKUL asked the delegation to give details of the national strategy targeting domestic violence referred to in the written replies. She wondered which ministry was responsible for dealing with child abuse in the home, at school and in the workplace and what action had been taken. Was there any plan to introduce a mechanism to monitor child abuse?

She also asked what the results had been of the national survey on the prevalence of child abuse and neglect in Romanian families and whether the system for collecting data on child abuse and neglect had been improved. She sought further information on regulations prohibiting corporal punishment in schools and care institutions. Who monitored enforcement of the regulations? The delegation should comment on the report by the organization "Save the Children" alleging instances of corporal punishment. She wondered whether the new child protection legislation would include the prohibition of corporal punishment and whether there was any campaign to promote the use of alternative disciplinary measures.

63. She asked how the Government intended to deal with the abandonment of newborn children and minors, whom parents left in maternity wards or paediatric hospitals without any fear of legal consequences. It would be useful to know what percentage of foreign children born in Romania had been issued birth certificates and whether there were measures in place for registering births of Roma and stateless persons.

64. Allegations had been made of ill-treatment and torture of Roma and foreign children by law enforcement officials; those cases had not been investigated by an independent authority. She wondered whether the Government had cooperated with the Special Rapporteur on torture of the Commission on Human Rights.

65. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that, although the abortion rate was falling, it was still quite high, namely 2.2 per woman, and she asked what measures were taken to discourage the practice. The Committee was concerned that abortion continued to be used as a form of family planning. She wondered why family planning programmes were not functioning well and what problems had been encountered.

66. She would like to know whether, in the decision-making process, the Government took into consideration children's opinions regarding matters of direct concern to them and whether they could make their views heard in the family, at school and in institutions. Were the views of children in institutions taken into account with regard to alternative systems of childcare?

67. Registration of births had an impact on the payment of maintenance in divorce cases, and she asked what measures had been taken to ensure that all births were registered.

68. The Committee was concerned about the large number of stateless persons and their children. Many Roma children were said to be in that situation. She wondered whether the new policy adopted to improve the rights of the Roma population had made it possible to register births of Roma children and provide them with identification papers.

69. She enquired how Romania had improved the situation of the family and what was being done to reduce the divorce rate, protect family ties and help parents take care of their children in the current difficult economic environment.

70. The Committee had learned that foreign children who entered Romania illegally were treated as adults, in violation of the Convention. She asked the delegation to comment.

71. She noted that Romanian legislation had lacunae in its implementation of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction. Police officers were sometimes reticent to execute a court order for the return of children (CRC/C/65/Add.19, para. 531). How was it planned to improve the handling of such cases? She wondered whether Romania intended to conclude agreements with other countries similar to the one recently signed with Italy on the transfer of children and whether there had been any positive developments with regard to the return of children. In dealing with such cases, the Government must ensure that the best interests of the child and the child's views were taken into account.

72. She also sought information from the delegation on how the Government assisted families experiencing problems in connection with maintenance payments.

73. Ms. AL-THANI asked the delegation what was being done to improve the situation of disabled children, which the report failed to discuss; there had been reports of discrimination against the disabled.

74. Noting the efforts made to protect children from harmful advertising on television, she wondered what measures were taken to control access to harmful Internet sites.

75. She would like to know what progress had been made in restructuring the residential care units identified in the report as requiring urgent intervention (para. 16). She had been surprised to read (para. 183) that "the paternalist tradition [was] still being promoted in children's education, being excessively based on paternal authority and, very often, domestic violence". She asked the delegation to comment on that statement and to explain whether domestic violence was condoned and how it was linked to paternal authority in the family unit.

76. She was pleased that under Romanian legislation, it was possible to take paid maternal or paternal leave for up to two years. Had any parents actually applied for such leave?

77. Mr. CITARELLA asked whether legislation provided for equal responsibility of fathers and mothers or whether some legal differences persisted.

78. He wondered whether there were national guidelines to ensure that all the local authorities in charge of children's welfare used the same approach in dealing with problems of child assistance and protection.

79. Ms. KHATTAB enquired whether there was any cooperation between Hungary and Romania on the question of the educational rights of Hungarian children living in Romania, what the current situation was and whether there had been any change in priorities in the light of the forthcoming accession of the two countries to the European Union.

80. With regard to the family environment, she noted that child abandonment was on the rise, despite a number of incentives to counter it. She asked what cultural reasons could explain the high rate of child abandonment and what the Government was doing to teach adolescent parents about family values and encourage them to keep their children.

81. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ, noting that Romania was currently in the process of de-institutionalization, asked whether the best interests of the child were taken into consideration when placing a child back in the family and whether the child's views were heard. She wondered which authorities or courts took such decisions. Family planning policies should ensure that parents could have shorter working hours when they had small children, should make allowance for the situation of single parents, and should provide for paternity and maternity leave and child maintenance.

82. Mr. AL-SHEDDI asked about efforts by the national authorities to raise awareness of the importance of the family.

83. The CHAIRPERSON said that, according to the delegation, intercountry adoption had been suspended in 2000, yet on page 19 of the written replies it was stated that there had been 3,000 such cases in 2000 and 1,500 in 2001; he therefore wondered how effective that suspension was. According to page 18 of the written replies, the number of children separated from their parents for whom a temporary protective measure (family or residential type) had been instituted had totalled 57,000 in 2000 and 87,000 in 2001, or an increase of 30,000; he asked where those children came from, whether they had been abandoned, how many of those 87,000 were still in institutions and how many were in alternative care.

The meeting rose at 1.05 p.m.