



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
21 September 2017

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child Seventy-sixth session

Summary record of the 2233rd meeting*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 18 September 2017, at 3 p.m.

Chair: Ms. Winter

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Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova

* No summary record was prepared for the 2232nd meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

*Combined fourth and fifth periodic reports of the Republic of Moldova
(CRC/C/MDA/4-5; CRC/C/MDA/Q/4-5 and Add. 1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of the Republic of Moldova took places at the Committee table.*

2. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that, although overall poverty rates had been halved over the past 10 years, families with children were much more likely to be economically disadvantaged than other households. Under the national strategy and plan of action for the reform of the child residential care system, the regulatory and institutional framework for alternative care had been improved. In total, 39 large residential institutions had been closed, the number of children in such establishments had fallen by nearly 90 per cent and the number placed in alternative family care arrangements had almost doubled.

3. Under the national programme for the development of an integrated social services system for 2008-2012, primary social services had been strengthened and appropriate support provided to families with children. The aim of the programme had been to prevent the unnecessary separation of children from their parents, to ensure that specialized care was provided where needed and to see to it that children were placed in small-scale residential units following an appropriate needs assessment only where such an arrangement was strictly necessary. Commissions for the protection of children in difficulties had been set up across the country to examine cases in which the removal of children from their family had been recommended and to advise the authorities on the best care options available. As a result of those commissions' work, authorities and professionals working with and for children had become more accountable for their decisions.

4. Under Act No. 140 of 14 June 2013 on the special protection of children at risk and children separated from their parents, most regulations and standards relating to alternative childcare services had been aligned with the United Nations Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children. Family support services covered more than half the districts in the country, providing assistance, support and cash transfer payments to families through a grassroots network staffed by more than 1,100 social workers. A programme had been launched with the aim of providing a guaranteed minimum income to every household, subject to prior assessment. Under the national programme for the development of inclusive education for the years 2011-2020, 35 services had been set up across the country to provide inclusive education, with more than 1,200 teaching staff receiving related training.

5. A strategy and a law on the social inclusion of people with disabilities had been adopted with a view to implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, along with regulations and standards relating to specialized services for children with disabilities in residential and non-residential care settings. The Moldovan authorities were seeking to overhaul residential institutions for children with sensorial or severe disabilities and to upgrade the automated social assistance information system. Further efforts would be required to implement a national programme on the social inclusion of persons with disabilities for the period 2017-2022 and to develop educational services for vulnerable children. An inter-agency cooperation mechanism had been established to lower the mortality rate of children under 5 years of age.

6. Regulations governing early childhood development centres for children under 7 years of age and educational standards for children between the ages of 3 and 7 had also been adopted. Legislation on civil protection training and school transportation services had been introduced, and a network of health centres for adolescents and young people had been set up.

7. An inter-agency cooperation mechanism for the identification and monitoring of child victims and potential victims of violence, neglect, exploitation and trafficking had been established in 2014. The Child Safety Service had been set up to help to prevent juvenile delinquency and the victimization of children and to boost cooperation with the

police, schools and civil society organizations in providing training for parents and children in those areas. In addition, a unit had been set up to protect children from online sexual exploitation and to tackle the problem of child pornography in cooperation with the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and various national law enforcement agencies.

8. The Child Protection Strategy for 2014-2020 had been designed to enhance the stability of family life and to promote positive parenting. The authorities had stepped up their cooperation with the media on child rights issues and were working closely with development partners and civil society to uphold children's rights.

9. The Government intended to further strengthen the provision of family support and family-based caregiving services and to develop primary prevention and early intervention programmes. It also saw a need to develop an action plan for the implementation of an inter-agency strategy for the development of parenting skills for 2016-2022, alongside evidence-based parenting programmes. There were plans to convert placement centres for young children into family support and community care services, to develop aftercare services and to provide support for the social inclusion and employment of young people.

10. Other priority areas included the improvement of the childcare funding system, the consolidation of institutional capacities for ensuring that the views of minors involved in legal proceedings were heard and the establishment of a centre devoted to assisting child victims and witnesses of crime and raising public awareness of the problems posed by domestic violence and sexual abuse.

11. **Mr. Madi** (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee welcomed the progress made by the State party in implementing the Convention and the policies it had introduced for that purpose. However, no comprehensive law that fully aligned national legislation with the Convention had yet been adopted. Information would be welcome on any measures taken to secure the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure in the near future. He would like to encourage the State party to increase its efforts to disseminate information on the Convention and its Optional Protocols among the general public and children. More might also be done to include the issue of children's rights in government training courses for professionals working with or for children. While he welcomed the establishment of dialogue platforms with civil society organizations, more weight could be given to those organizations' input relating to administrative, legislative and policy matters. Information would also be welcome on any government policies in place relating to the regulation and assessment of the impact of the activities of private businesses on children's rights.

12. It was his understanding that the National Council for the Protection of the Rights of the Child had been unable to monitor the enforcement of children's rights effectively or to steer the implementation of child-related policies. Increased coordination among national ministries and local authorities in connection with the Council's work was required. There was also a need to increase the dissemination of information on child rights and to better define the various agencies' roles and responsibilities in that regard.

13. He would like to know whether the Ombudsperson for the Protection of Children's Rights could receive and investigate individual complaints filed by children and whether the delegation had any information on the possibility of the Ombudsperson's Office being granted A status accreditation by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions.

14. More funding should be made available for inclusive education for children belonging to ethnic minorities and children living in poverty and for equipping child-friendly interview rooms. In general, social services at the local level appeared to be underfunded, as were efforts to implement children's rights as a whole. Information would be welcome on any measures taken to develop a comprehensive strategy or plan of action on children's rights in all fields.

15. Although disaggregated data relating to the State party was increasingly available, there was a lack of information on the situation of particularly vulnerable groups, including children with disabilities, members of the Roma community, and children living in poverty

and in street situations. Discrimination against children with disabilities, members of the Roma and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex communities, migrant children and children living in poverty had reached alarming levels in the State party. More needed to be done at the grassroots level and in schools to tackle that problem. Funding for the action plan for providing support for the Roma population in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016-2020 needed to be increased, and the plan should be expanded to cover the protection of Roma children from violence, abuse and exploitation.

16. The Committee had been surprised to hear of the revocation, in 2013, of a bill that would have amended language in the Code of Administrative Offences that might be interpreted as prohibiting the dissemination of information on sexual orientation and gender identity. Information on measures taken by the Government to combat discrimination against the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex community would be appreciated.

17. The principle of respect for the views of the child had been incorporated into various pieces of national legislation but had not been applied in practice. Neither, to his knowledge, had any specific legal provisions been adopted to establish the responsibility of parents, schools and government bodies to consult children when making decisions that would affect them. In addition, it seemed that no mandatory provisions had been put in place concerning the implementation of existing participatory mechanisms in schools, communities and at the central government level. Information on the use of such mechanisms in all fields, including family courts and the criminal justice system as a whole, would be welcome.

18. **Ms. Khazova** (Country Rapporteur) said that clarification would be appreciated regarding the circumstances under which the minimum age for marriage could be lowered to 16 years. She would also like to know which authority was in charge of making such decisions and whether there were any plans to abolish that provision. She would be interested to learn whether children aged 16 years who had been granted parental permission to enter employment or undertake business activities received the same protection as other persons under 18 years of age and whether they could marry without first seeking permission from a parent or legal guardian.

19. She wished to know whether any specific criteria had been set out for the assessment of the best interests of the child and whether judges and members of the commissions for the protection of children in difficulties and guardianship authorities received training in how to make such assessments.

20. While she was aware that the State party had made serious efforts to improve the effectiveness of the birth registration system, it still suffered from shortcomings, especially with regard to the registration of children at risk, such as Roma children, children born in the home or to underaged or undocumented mothers and children born out of wedlock. The Committee had received information according to which the Government had planned to institute a new programme in 2016 under which births at medical facilities would be registered automatically, without mothers being required to submit documentation, such as their own birth certificate. Had that programme been introduced? She had noticed some discrepancies between the birth registration data presented by the National Bureau of Statistics and the Ministry of Health and wondered if the Government planned to make the processing of such data more consistent.

21. The Committee was concerned about the prevalence of violence in the country. According to the State party, dozens of cases of domestic violence and other incidents had been reported within the first six months after the establishment of a free helpline in 2014. The Committee would like to know whether such cases were investigated by the authorities. Between 2010 and 2014, over 160 notifications of torture or ill-treatment had been received by the General Prosecutor's Office, and there were numerous reports that prison staff regularly beat children after their arrival at detention facilities. Were any investigations carried out and were the perpetrators of such acts punished? Were children who were victims or witnesses of violent acts afforded protection and, if so, in what form? In its replies to the list of issues, the State party had made mention only of the duty of staff at State institutions to report acts of violence. What mechanisms were in place to protect

children against violence when the perpetrators were members of the staff? Were the children able to file complaints of mistreatment by institutional staff and teachers without fear of reprisal? The Committee would like to know how cases of psychological violence were detected and investigated. Since, according to some reports, half of all students were aware of the bullying of at least one of their peers, she would like to know what steps the Government was taking to counter bullying.

22. While corporal punishment had been prohibited, uprooting such practices would require extraordinary measures. Had the Government been making an effort to raise awareness of the problem of corporal punishment, to campaign against it and to ensure that perpetrators were punished? There were apparently few rehabilitation centres for child victims of violence, and those that there were often did not have psychologists on their staff. She wished to know whether the newly approved action plan for supporting the Roma population in the Republic of Moldova for the years 2016-2020 included measures for protecting Roma children against violence, abuse and exploitation.

23. More than one third of the acts of sexual violence reported in recent years had taken place within the family. She would appreciate being apprised of what the Government was doing to address sexual violence in the home and whether specialists who worked with children were trained to identify, detect and treat victims of sexual violence. It would be of interest to the Committee to learn whether school curricula included mandatory classes on sex education, sexual behaviour and online safety and whether children were taught how to avoid becoming victims of sexual violence. She had the impression that the discussion of such topics was a taboo in Moldovan society and that child victims were sometimes blamed for the abuse that they suffered. It would be useful to hear what strategies had been adopted to overcome sexual stereotypes and to combat harmful practices such as early marriage.

24. **Mr. Pedernera Reyna** said that the Committee had learned that the Government had developed a youth strategy which was aimed at ensuring equality of opportunity for persons between the ages of 14 and 35 and encouraging them to participate and express their opinions. The Committee had also heard of the establishment of a national youth policy commission that was presided over jointly by the Prime Minister and a youth representative and whose 20 members were divided equally between representatives of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and government bodies and between males and females. Since that body was not open to participation by children under the age of 14, he wished to know whether any opportunities existed for young children from vulnerable or disadvantaged groups, including children with disabilities and Roma children, to take part in public life. He would, in addition, like to receive information on mechanisms for ensuring the participation of children in educational and other administrative bodies. He also wished to know whether the Government conducted any information or awareness campaigns on children's participation in society, whether there were any mechanisms for monitoring children's participation in public life and whether civil servants received training regarding the promotion of the right of children to take part in public life and to express their opinions.

25. **Mr. Madi** asked what measures the Government was taking to ensure that children could freely express their opinions in the family and in institutional settings, including schools. The Committee had heard that school curricula included classes devoted to teaching children about the Russian Orthodox Church. Were such classes mandatory and were classes also offered on other religions?

The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.20 p.m.

26. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Republic of Moldova was constantly adjusting both its primary and its secondary legislation in order to bring the nation's laws into line with the Convention and with other international standards.

27. **Ms. Dumbrăveanu** (Republic of Moldova) said that a number of programmes had recently been introduced to fight poverty. A social benefits programme had been developed as the mainstay of government efforts to support disadvantaged families. The programme had two components: a social benefit calculated to fill the gap between a family's overall income and a guaranteed minimum monthly income, and an additional benefit paid out during the cold months of the year. Half of the programme's beneficiaries were families

with children. The Government also had a programme that was specifically designed to help such families. That programme provided supplementary material support on the basis of assessments of each family's needs and monitored the families' use of that assistance. In addition, a national population support fund was drawn upon in order to provide needs-based, one-off, temporary assistance to families with children on a yearly basis.

28. A package of anti-corruption laws adopted in 2013 had set out more stringent penalties for corrupt practices and provided for measures to counter illicit gains, including confiscation of property and closer monitoring of the financial and material situation of all public servants. The enforcement of those laws had produced lasting and positive effects. In the past three years, a large number of amendments had been introduced to improve the effectiveness of law enforcement agencies working to combat corruption in both the public and private sectors. The national strategy for fighting corruption included measures targeting specific public service sectors such as education and health.

29. **Mr. Madi** asked for information on the number of cases of corruption that had been taken to court and the number of convictions.

30. **Ms. Dumbrăveanu** (Republic of Moldova) said that between 2013 and 2016 the number of corruption cases handled by the national anti-corruption centre had increased by about 14 per cent annually. The delegation would make available more detailed information on cases that had been prosecuted.

31. **Mr. Țăruș** (Republic of Moldova) said that a feasibility study would be conducted with the support of the national office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) to determine whether the country was in a position to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.

32. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that the National Council for the Protection of the rights of the Child had previously been unable to deliver on its policy implementation mandate, but the Council was once again functioning properly under the leadership of the Prime Minister. Its mandate had been extended to encompass participation in the development of national policies. It also regularly issued progress reports on the implementation of laws related to childcare and child protection.

33. A law adopted in 2013 (Act No. 140/2013) had, for the first time, defined the various responsibilities of the different levels of local authorities in relation to childcare and child protection. As the country's social service system was decentralized, it was up to the local authorities to devise the specific means of implementing policies. The Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Family and, more specifically, the National Agency for Social Assistance provided guidelines for policy implementation by local authorities and service providers. Two intersectoral coordination mechanisms had been developed: one was aimed at reducing the mortality rate among children under 5 years of age, and another, established in 2013, focused on identifying, assessing and intervening in cases of child abuse, neglect or exploitation. After the adoption of Act No. 140/2013, a major effort had been undertaken to carry out training programmes for all professionals working in the field of social assistance or having contact with children, including social workers, teachers, medical doctors and law enforcement personnel, so that they could identify cases of child abuse and intervene effectively to protect victims.

34. **Mr. Țăruș** (Republic of Moldova) said that, since acceding to the Convention in 1993, the Republic of Moldova had adopted a law on children's rights and had implemented a number of sectoral strategies for the implementation of the Convention in specific areas, including child protection, education, children's health and juvenile justice. It was difficult to imagine that the adoption of a single, integrated strategy document would provide a more effective means of implementing the Convention. Most of the sectoral strategies covered multi-year periods. The Government also intended to adopt a new child protection strategy for 2021-2030 that would be more fully integrated with existing strategies for the promotion of health and education.

35. **Mr. Crudu** (Republic of Moldova) said that a significant portion of the country's education budget was earmarked for the inclusive education of some 10,000 children with disabilities. As of October 2016, there had been 28 Roma children who had lacked access to

schooling, whereas there had been more than 90 such children the year before. Starting on 1 September 2017, all children, including Roma children, in the first four grades had been receiving free school lunches, while Roma children from the first to ninth grades would be given free textbooks. In addition, the local authorities provided Roma families with allowances to enable them to buy school supplies for their children. The level of benefits varied from one district of the country to another, however.

36. **Ms. Khazova** said that she would appreciate it if the delegation would clarify whether all low-income children or only Roma children received free textbooks. Singling out Roma children could lead to a form of segregation.

37. **Mr. Crudu** (Republic of Moldova) said that textbooks were free for all children in the first to ninth grades. Considerable care was taken not to record Roma and non-Roma children as separate categories of students.

38. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that the Government had set up a new mechanism for redirecting resources to inclusive education and social services. As a result, inclusive education was being provided in schools throughout the country, and the number of children in residential institutions had fallen from 11,000 to around 1,300.

39. The Ministry of Finance had set up a fund for local authorities that had been having difficulty in maintaining the provision of social services at their pre-decentralization levels. In addition, work was under way on a project to identify high-priority services that would continue to be funded by the national Government. Overall funding for social services had not decreased.

40. **Ms. Khazova** asked whether the Moldovan authorities were certain that all the country's districts, including the more remote or rural ones, received funding for social services on an equal basis, in particular in connection with free school lunches and textbooks.

41. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that not all funding was centralized, but the national Government would continue to be responsible for a number of social services, including foster or kinship care and highly specialized forms of assistance. Local authorities would continue to be responsible for funding primary social services. Remote villages were supported by district-level departments, and the development of a network of community social workers, who could be found in every village in the country, had contributed greatly to the uniform provision of social services. Children and their families were referred to providers in other areas for specialized services unavailable in their communities.

42. **Mr. Țăruș** (Republic of Moldova) said that great store was being set by the development of an integrated social assistance information system to compile data on the cash benefits paid to low-income families and on other social services. That system would ultimately permit data to be broken down by any number of categories. In addition, social service providers would be able to use the system to determine whether the minimum quality standards for services for children had been met. The system would also include a human resources component and should become fully operational in the coming years.

43. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that it was not entirely true that the topic of children's rights was not covered in the training received by persons working with children. In fact, university programmes for students preparing for professional careers that involved working with children included a special module on children's rights. In addition, training in that field had been provided with the support of development partners and civil society organizations, and a recently established agency for social assistance would also furnish training on a variety of subjects, including children's rights.

44. The Moldovan authorities were well aware of the importance of the contributions made by the country's civil society organizations. The progress that the country had made would not have been possible without their input. There was a government strategy for supporting the development of such organizations, and every ministry had a civil society advisory board. Efforts to build and maintain close relationships with civil society organizations, which were critical to the development of social policy, were ongoing.

45. **Ms. Dumbrăveanu** (Republic of Moldova) said that budgets for the activities of Roma community mediators, whose positions had been created by decree, were the responsibility of the country's first-level administrative divisions. As a number of local authorities had failed to earmark funds for the mediators, however, a draft decree under which their work would be funded out of the national budget had been prepared.

46. The measures taken by the country to protect children did not specifically target Roma children, since care must be taken to avoid singling such children out or discriminating against them.

47. **Mr. Madi** asked when the Government expected the decree on State financing of the work of community mediators to enter into force. He would also like to know whether the subject of the Convention was covered in school curricula.

48. **Ms. Dumbrăveanu** (Republic of Moldova) said that community mediators' activities would be financed from the State budget starting at some point in 2017.

49. **Mr. Crudu** (Republic of Moldova) said that courses on civil rights, which included a module on the rights of the child, were compulsory in the country's schools. Children could also learn more about their rights and responsibilities in elective courses.

50. As for the right of children to be heard and to participate in public life, a student council composed of some 40 children in grades 5 to 12 from all parts of the country operated at the national level. The country's schools also had councils on which children were represented. In addition, schoolchildren participated in elections and were consulted on planned curriculum reviews. One increasingly common complaint, which had prompted a consideration of changes in school curricula, was that children's studies left them with less and less time to pursue their personal interests.

51. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that local authorities and the providers of social services for children operated under clear guidelines regarding the need to consult with children and seek their opinions. Eleven of the country's districts had children's advisory boards that worked with the Department for Social Assistance and Family Protection at the local level. Those boards had enabled children themselves to monitor the enforcement of their rights and make recommendations to the local authorities. A national advisory board of young people had also been established which worked with the Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and the Family. Representatives of a number of other countries had visited the Republic of Moldova to observe the methods used by the authorities to seek the opinions of children on matters affecting them.

52. **Ms. Zatic** (Republic of Moldova) said that anyone under 18 years of age was defined by law as a child. Children could be emancipated with the consent of their parents or guardians or by order of a judicial authority. Emancipation did not entail the right to enter into marriage, for which the minimum age was 18. In exceptional circumstances, however, and with parental consent, it was possible to marry at 16. Marriage at 16 was allowed under such circumstances to accommodate the widespread practice of early marriage in Roma communities. Simply eliminating the exception would turn people into outlaws. Efforts needed to continue to be made to discourage early marriage through other means, such as educational campaigns and outreach.

53. **Ms. Khazova** said that requiring the consent of the very persons who were pushing their children to marry — Roma parents, as it happened — was unlikely to be an effective means of preventing early marriage.

54. **Ms. Zatic** (Republic of Moldova) said that the authorities were well aware that requiring parental consent was not always an effective deterrent. As she had suggested, however, amending the law alone would not be enough. Roma communities also had to be persuaded of the undesirability of early marriage.

55. **Mr. Madi** asked whether the exceptions to the minimum age of marriage applied only to Roma children or to all children. It would be helpful for the State party to launch an awareness-raising campaign that clearly conveyed the Government's intention to remove all exceptions to the minimum age of marriage.

56. **Ms. Zatic** (Republic of Moldova) said that birth registration was a public priority. For the last 10 years or so, birth certificates had been issued immediately by the clinics where children were delivered. The situation had therefore improved considerably. Home births and births of children out of wedlock were also registered, in general through the efforts of the social or medical workers involved in such births or as a result of later hospitalization. The failure to register a child for civil status purposes, for which parents could be held to account, was a separate problem. Work on the development of an electronic birth registration system was under way.

57. **Ms. Khazova** asked how the public authorities were made aware of home births in cases where the mothers were not subsequently hospitalized.

58. **Ms. Zatic** (Republic of Moldova) said that prenatal care facilities and social workers submitted reports in the event of home births. The local authorities were also involved in efforts to ensure that all births were registered.

59. **Mr. Țăruș** (Republic of Moldova) said that the child helpline received reports of cases of violence, neglect, abuse and trafficking. The integrated social assistance information system currently under development would make it possible to track the actions taken in such cases until they were closed. Promotional campaigns in the country's schools had been undertaken to ensure that children knew that the helpline was available to them.

60. **Ms. Grigoras** (Republic of Moldova) said that there was an intersectoral coordination mechanism that maintained an outline of the procedures to be followed by all child protection agencies in cases of violence against children. Campaigns against corporal punishment had been conducted with the support of development partners and civil society. Creative efforts to raise awareness of the ban on such punishment were ongoing, and the near disappearance of that practice from the country's schools, where it once had been common, showed that they were having an effect.

61. Following the adoption of the 2016-2020 action plan to combat bullying and psychological violence, specific programmes would be conducted in schools to prevent bullying and psychological and emotional abuse. Several rehabilitation centres for victims of violence were currently being run by NGOs with the support of the local authorities. Although, owing to their highly specialized nature, such centres could not be set up in every part of the country, plans were in place to establish them at the regional level to support child victims and witnesses of violence.

62. **Ms. Buzatu** (Republic of Moldova) said that the General Police Inspectorate of the Ministry of the Interior organized campaigns in schools aimed at preventing violence against and among children. In collaboration with school staff, the Ministry organized courses for children and talked with them about violence, the different forms that it took, the consequences of committing violent acts and the people to whom they could turn if they became victims of violence. The courses included information about the child helpline and the various services available to support child victims. In 2016, the Ministry of the Interior had launched an information technology platform with the aim of informing children about sexual violence and the ways in which they could protect themselves against it. The platform provided children with a way to report acts of sexual violence, which were then referred to the police for investigation.

63. **Ms. Khazova** said that she wished to know whether parents and teachers received training in how to protect children from online abuse and exploitation.

64. **Ms. Buzatu** (Republic of Moldova) said that, at the start of each school year, representatives of the General Police Inspectorate organized meetings with parents in order to raise their awareness of Internet safety procedures, the dangers that children faced online and the steps that they could take to obtain support for children who had experienced online abuse or become addicted to the Internet.

65. **Mr. Crudu** (Republic of Moldova) said that, in recent years, a great deal of debate had taken place about the teaching of sex education in schools. Currently, children in the fifth, sixth and seventh grades received sex education as part of the compulsory subject of biology. Some parents supported the provision of sex education from the earliest possible

age while other parents, and certain groups, were completely opposed to the idea. The Government would be addressing the question in 2018 as part of its discussions on the content of school curricula.

66. Some 97 per cent of the population were Russian Orthodox. In the 2016/17 school year, around a quarter of all schools had opted to include a course on Russian Orthodoxy in their curriculum and around 8 per cent of the pupils at those schools had chosen to take the course. An optional course on certain other Christian denominations had been developed for the curriculum but, as yet, no pupils had chosen to take it.

67. **Ms. Khazova** said that she wished to know what measures would be taken to identify and register the large numbers of children who were left behind when one or both of their parents migrated abroad in search of work. She was aware that plans had been made to amend the law to ensure that parents who would be away for more than three months would be required to inform the authorities, and she wondered whether the amendment in question had been adopted, why a period of three months had been chosen and what was being done to uphold the right of children to maintain relations with parents who, for whatever reason, did not live in the State party. She would like to know what measures would be taken to ensure that parents living abroad paid child support and whether foreign court judgments on child support or access rights would be enforced in the State party without the need for any specific agreement.

68. The State party was to be commended on the significant drop in the number of children who lived in institutions, and she would like to know what measures would be taken to ensure that foster care was available in all parts of the country, including remote areas. She wished to know whether children in institutions received any training to prepare them to live independently before they left those institutions, whether sufficient funding and staff were available to ensure that Act No. 140/2013 was fully enforced and how the country's Gatekeeping Commissions ensured that children who were removed from their families were monitored. The Committee was concerned about the fact that, in spite of the support that poor families received, children were sometimes removed from their families on purely financial grounds.

69. Although the Committee was aware that the laws on adoption had been amended, it was still concerned to note that adoption procedures were often excessively lengthy and that adoptions sometimes failed because adoptive families had not received proper training. She wondered why only children over 10 years of age were entitled to give or withhold their consent to a prospective adoption.

70. The Committee would like to understand why, despite the decline in the mortality rate for infants and children under 5 years of age, a substantial number of children continued to die at home from preventable causes. She also wondered why, despite the universal availability of medical insurance, parents often had to pay medical bills out of their own pockets, why children did not always receive medication that they had been prescribed, whether youth-friendly health centres were available everywhere and whether those centres offered psychological and psychiatric care to children who needed it. She was concerned to note that doctors were not always on staff in schools and that children were often worried that information given to medical staff would not be kept confidential. Lastly, she wondered whether children had time to take part in sports, leisure and cultural activities and whether there were plans to make facilities for such activities available in all towns and villages.

71. **Mr. Madi** said that he wished to know what steps were being taken to address the fact that, despite the existence of laws on child labour, 1 in 3 children between the ages of 5 and 17 was engaged in an income-generating activity, often in dangerous conditions. The Committee was particularly concerned about children between the ages of 5 and 11 who worked in the agricultural sector. He wished to know the results of the 2011-2015 action plan on the prevention and elimination of the most hazardous forms of child labour and whether, as recommended by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/MDA/CO/3, para. 65 (a)), the Government had conducted a comprehensive national survey on the number and characteristics of working children. In view of the fact that the number of children living and working in the streets had risen, particularly in the

capital city, he wished to know what steps were being taken to address that situation and whether the Government had developed a strategy for attacking the root causes of homelessness among children and for raising awareness of their rights.

72. The Committee was concerned about the absence of juvenile courts and about the fact that staff working in the judicial system were not trained in the application of the Convention as a matter of course. The practice of randomly assigning juvenile justice cases to different judges was problematic in that children could find themselves appearing in a court presided over by a judge with no training in juvenile justice and no experience in interacting with children. In view of that situation, he would like to know whether the Government was planning to establish dedicated juvenile courts.

73. Although children in pretrial detention were held in separate facilities from adults, the Committee was concerned to note that they interacted with adults when eating their meals and engaging in other activities, which undermined the whole purpose of separation. It was his understanding that children were held in pretrial detention for an average of seven months, and he would therefore appreciate receiving information on the standards governing the detention of children and the conditions under which they were held. He wished to know whether a mechanism existed for expediting or prioritizing cases involving children in conflict with the law and whether the Government would consider abolishing the practice of placing children in solitary confinement. It was also his understanding that hearing rooms for child victims and witnesses were available only in the capital and that the services that provided support to such children were run by civil society organizations and were experiencing funding problems. In view of that situation, he wished to know whether the Government would consider offering such services itself or providing adequate financial support to the organizations that currently ran them. He was aware that hearings involving victims under the age of 14 were conducted in special facilities by specially trained interviewers, and he would be interested to learn why that age limit had been established and what the protocol was for hearings involving children aged between 14 and 18. The Committee would welcome information on the outcomes and assessment of the Justice Sector Reform Strategy 2011-2016.

74. He would appreciate learning whether children under a certain age were allowed to stay with their mothers in prison, what services and facilities were provided to incarcerated mothers whose children were with them, what alternatives to custody existed for child offenders, what complaints mechanisms were in place for children deprived of their liberty, whether such mechanisms were independent and how complainants' identities were protected. He also wished to know what measures were being taken to prevent trafficking in children, to rehabilitate and reintegrate child victims of trafficking and to address the factors that prevented some perpetrators of trafficking from being convicted and sentenced.

75. The Committee was concerned at the lack of information on the implementation of its concluding observations on the reports submitted by the State party under the two optional protocols to the Convention (CRC/C/OPSC/MDA/CO/1 and CRC/C/OPAC/MDA/CO/1). With regard to the implementation of the latter optional protocol, he wished to know whether children from the State party had travelled to the Syrian Arab Republic to participate in the war in that country and, if so, how many children had done so and how many of them had returned.

76. **Ms. Todorova** said that she would welcome further information on the way in which the social welfare budget was distributed among the various sectors of society. In particular, was it true that only 20 per cent of that budget was spent on children while 80 per cent was spent on the elderly? She would like to invite the delegation to comment on the fact that the number of children requiring State care, social services and financial support remained high and was increasing. The Committee would welcome further information on the gatekeeping system and on efforts to return children to their biological families. She wished to know whether there was a proper legal basis for the appointment of guardians, particularly of children who had been left behind by migrating parents, whether there were sufficient guardians available, whether proper training was provided to social workers and whether workload standards for social workers were to be adopted.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.