



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 1712th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 7 June 2012, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Zermatten

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties *(continued)*

Second and third periodic reports of Greece on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (continued) (CRC/C/GRC/2-3; CRC/C/GRC/Q/2-3 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Greece took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece), replying to questions raised earlier, said that the new Initial Reception Centre would accommodate 250 migrants, while detention facilities could presently accommodate a total of 1,000 persons. The centre would be fully operational in September or October 2012, and ultimately a total of 10 or 12 such centres would be established across the country.
3. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that, pursuant to the Criminal Code, only rehabilitation or therapeutic measures could be imposed on children under 15 years of age. In the case of children aged 15 to 18, custodial sentences could be imposed only if the offence committed involved violent acts and would have been classified as a felony if committed by an adult. In cases where a custodial sentence was imposed, the court decision must provide justification, and must have taken into account the circumstances of the case and the personality of the child. Only offenders over 18 years of age were brought to trial. Children in detention were generally separated from adult detainees and were not denied their civil rights.
4. Under new legislation adopted in 2010 following consultations with NGOs and the Ombudsman, minors held in preventive detention must be placed in welfare institutions rather than detention centres. In exceptional cases where it was determined that placement in a welfare institution was not appropriate, the minor could be placed in a juvenile detention centre, but only after the views of the minor had been taken into account. A mandatory hearing of the young person was also required in cases involving minor offences in which the public prosecutor chose not to prosecute. In such cases, rehabilitation measures and/or a fine of up to €1,000 could be imposed.
5. Articles 150 and 155 of the Code of Criminal Procedure did not pertain to the age of majority and were therefore not in conflict with the Convention. Article 150 referred to the preparation of a report by a public servant and stated that the witnesses to that report must, inter alia, be at least 15 years of age. Article 155 referred to the delivery of court documents and stated that if the person concerned was not at home, the documents could be handed over to another member of the household who must, inter alia, be at least 17 years of age.
6. **The Chairperson** asked if begging was still classified as an offence in the State party.
7. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that he did not have a copy of the Criminal Code at hand but presumed that begging was classified as a minor offence.
8. **Ms. Wijemanne**, turning to the question of breastfeeding, said that the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes was unfortunately not monitored or implemented and urged the State party to assess the situation in its hospitals.
9. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that he did not know what informal practices were followed in hospitals regarding breastfeeding, but the formal policy was to discourage advertising of breast-milk substitutes and to encourage mothers to breastfeed.
10. **The Chairperson** requested additional information on the availability of health-care services to adolescents.

11. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that adolescents had access to contraception and that health-care services for adolescents were covered by the national insurance system. The Government attached great importance to aspects of children's health such as breastfeeding and nutrition, as well as to reproductive health in general. Its policy on reproductive health was based on family planning, awareness-raising and guaranteed access to contraception. In addition, a large number of health-care programmes were operational in schools.
12. **The Chairperson**, noting that the consumption of substances such as drugs and alcohol among adolescents appeared to be on the rise, said that he would like to have additional information on the specific measures taken by the State party to remedy that situation.
13. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that he had no data on the consumption of those substances. However, the Government was conscious of the need to educate young people and their families about drug and alcohol consumption and had launched various awareness-raising campaigns to that end.
14. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that many studies had shown that young people who had not consumed alcohol or tobacco between the ages of 15 and 21 were less likely to start in later years. In the light of that fact, the Government should give priority to raising awareness among adolescents about the health risks associated with the consumption of such substances, given the proclivity of adolescents to experimentation.
15. **The Chairperson** asked whether the current economic crisis had taken a toll on the emotional health of young people in Greece and whether more young people had begun seeking assistance from health professionals or seeking advice about their future. He also enquired as to the impact of the shortage of health-care professionals.
16. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that no specific cases of young people seeking such assistance had been recorded but that, in general, young people feared for their future.
17. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that the Youth Advisory Panel had collaborated with the children's ombudsman in devising a questionnaire on the impact of the economic crisis on students. The questionnaire had shown that students and their families had been affected on a practical and psychosocial level and looked to education to help them overcome the problems caused by the crisis.
18. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece), replying to a question raised at the previous meeting concerning the disappearance of around 500 Albanian children from a care centre, said that between 1998 and 2002, 661 children had been placed in the centre and around 502 had subsequently escaped from it. A number of them had been returned to their parents while some had been relocated to another institution or picked up by the police. The exact number of children was difficult to determine, as many had been admitted more than once under different names and possessed no official documents. In a reply to questions raised by the People's Advocate of Albania in 2004, the Greek children's ombudsman had explained that the names on record had been provided by the children themselves in the absence of any supporting documents and may have been false. When approached by the police, some of the children had given a different name and had been admitted to the centre for the second or third time. Steps had been taken to gather information on the background of those children and that information had subsequently been sent to international social service authorities and to the Albanian Embassy. However, there had been no cooperation between the Albanian Embassy and the Government of Greece. Most of the children concerned were found to be Albanian Roma children whose births had never been registered and who had no permanent residence. The international social service authorities had not been able to gather information on all the children and it was revealed that many had been placed in the institution against their will, which had prompted them to escape. Those who had escaped were declared missing and, if found by the police, had been returned to the centre.

19. As to the facilities for unaccompanied minors on Lesbos Island, he confirmed that the detention facility had failed to comply with Government standards and had ceased to operate in October 2009.

20. **The Chairperson** said the fact that 502 Albanian children were still unaccounted for was of great concern to the Committee. The Committee wished to ascertain whether they had been kidnapped, trafficked or forced to engage in acts of prostitution or related activities.

21. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece) said that the Government shared the Committee's concerns but those children were now 25 or 26 years old and could approach the authorities on their own initiative if they wanted to.

22. **Ms. Lee**, noting that the State party had submitted its initial periodic report 10 years after signing the Convention and had delayed a further 10 years before submitting the present report, asked whether there would be sufficient political will to push children's issues to the forefront of the agenda once the new Government was finally in place, given the many competing priorities facing the country. She sought reassurance that the Committee's concluding observations would receive due follow-up and that the reporting process would provide the impetus needed to upgrade the child protection system and establish the urgently required data analysis and collection system.

23. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece), responding to an earlier request for information about child participation in legal proceedings, said that Greek legislation complied with the majority of United Nations treaty provisions and guaranteed the child's right to participate and be heard in all criminal proceedings. Children also had the right to participate in some, but not all, civil hearings. However, a major review of family law currently under way should prompt legislative reforms that would ensure due weight was given to children's interests and opinions in divorce and all other civil law proceedings.

24. **Ms. Toura** (Greece), responding to a request for further details about the Youth Parliament and about child participation mechanisms in schools, said that the Parliament was an educational programme organized by the Greek and Cypriot education ministries for Greek and Cypriot secondary-school children. Its purpose was to introduce students to the values, rules and practices of democracy and social justice and instil in them a positive attitude towards participation in public life. The Parliament met annually and provided a forum for exchanging experiences, opinions and future visions.

25. The most widespread mechanism for child participation in schools was the 15-member student council in place in many State secondary schools. Another important conduit for children's opinions on education and other rights was the Youth Advisory Panel created by the Office of the Children's Ombudsman in 2009, which was composed of young persons aged between 14 and 17 from various parts of Greece. The panel regularly contributed to debates and discussions on pertinent issues and in 2009 it had conducted a survey soliciting students' views on the effects of economic crisis and suggestions for measures to alleviate its impact. More recently, the Office of the Children's Ombudsman had piloted a web-based service through which children could submit questions, concerns and complaints and receive answers from specialists in the field. In addition, the local youth councils introduced in 2006 gave young people a voice in governance issues at the municipal level.

26. With regard to the concerns expressed about coordinating implementation of the Convention, she acknowledged the pressing need for an integrated approach to the task. She could assure the Committee that its recommendations would be given due consideration and that the content of the two optional protocols would be added to the agenda of the National Observatory on the Rights of the Child following its relaunch.

27. **Mr. Koompraphant** asked what the State party was doing to improve the living conditions of child victims living in often overcrowded shelters that were detrimental to their development and how their removal from the family environment might be avoided.

28. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that the authorities were working to facilitate and accelerate reunification procedures in those cases where it was possible for children to return to and remain in the family environment.

29. With regard to the possibility of introducing a national, toll-free, 24-hour helpline for children in need, there were a number of round-the-clock helplines already operating in Greece. Two were run by the National Centre for Social Solidarity, another by the Ombudsman's Office, and a fourth by an NGO called "The Smile of the Child" which ran community homes for children under a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity.

30. Returning to the issue of breastfeeding, he said that the near-term aim of the National Breastfeeding Committee was to have at least one breastfeeding-friendly hospital in every prefecture and to achieve full compliance with the guidelines of the World Health Organization and relevant European Union bodies.

31. **The Chairperson** suggested that the existence of numerous helplines might be confusing for children and that a single, toll-free number might be simpler to use and maintain as well as more efficient.

32. **Mr. Pollar** (Country Rapporteur) thanked the delegation for its detailed answers, which had provided the Committee with a better understanding of the State party's compliance with the Convention provisions. The main concerns highlighted in the constructive dialogue related to coordination and monitoring, data collection and child protection, and he urged the State party to address the deficiencies in those areas as a matter of priority.

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

33. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the legal definition of the sale of children was incorporated into the legislation on human trafficking, specifically in article 323 of the Criminal Code, which stipulated penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine for involvement in human trafficking and at least 10 years' imprisonment and a fine if the victim was a child. If the offence resulted in the victim's death, then the penalty was life imprisonment.

34. **The Chairperson** said that the definition in article 323 of the Criminal Code covered only trafficking, while the sale of children was a broader concept that also included the transfer of children for purposes such as adoption or forced labour. The original question as asked by Mr. Kotrane in a previous meeting had been whether or not the Criminal Code had been amended to criminalize not just trafficking but all the acts defined in articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol.

35. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that other legislative provisions covered different aspects of the sale of children, such as illegal adoption. His Government was of the view that the sale of children was fully covered under Greek criminal legislation, and it currently had no plans to amend the Criminal Code.

36. **Mr. Kotrane** said that, as indicated in the written replies to the list of issues concerning the State party's report on implementation of the Convention (CRC/C/GRC/Q/2-3/Add.1), illegal adoption was classified as an offence under civil rather

than criminal law. He asked what penalties the civil law stipulated for intermediaries who facilitated illegal adoptions, and highlighted the fact that the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography called for criminal sanctions for the sale of children under the guise of adoption.

37. **The Chairperson** asked whether the Criminal Code prescribed penalties for trafficking in human organs and for forced labour.

38. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the provisions criminalizing illegal adoption were contained not in the Civil Code but in special legislation adopted in 1996. That legislation set penalties of up to 1 year's imprisonment and a fine of 1 million drachmas for persons who gave their child up for adoption or for intermediaries when financial gain was involved. Persons who committed the same offence on a professional basis were subject to penalties of up to 10 years' imprisonment and a fine of 5 million drachmas. The Criminal Code provisions on forgery also applied to falsified birth registrations and stipulated penalties of up to 3 months' imprisonment.

39. **Ms. Herczog** expressed concern about the absence of data on children living in non-State institutions, many of whom were unregistered. She asked how the Government could know how many children were in those institutions and whether they were illegally adopted or transferred.

40. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that, while he could not comment on the number of children with disabilities in institutions, there were about 1,000 able-bodied children living in public institutions.

41. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee remained very concerned about private adoptions which, due to a lack of oversight, were open to abuse and could involve practices considered as the sale of children under the Optional Protocol. He pointed out that the Optional Protocol called for the criminalization of intermediation in adoption and asked the delegation to comment on the matter.

42. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that the social worker assigned to the case prepared reports on the situation of the child and the adoptive family both before and after an adoption, and continued to monitor the situation for about three years after the adoption. If the child's situation had worsened, the adoption could be annulled. The adoptive parents could seek the social worker's help with any problems they had regarding the child. If the adoption was annulled because of immoral behaviour on the part of the adoptive parents, then the child was returned to the institution where he or she had previously lived.

43. **The Chairperson** said that what the delegate had just described was the ideal situation, but that in private adoptions many of those procedures were circumvented. The Committee's primary concern was the financial compensation that was likely to be involved when intermediaries played a role in adoptions.

44. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that Greece had experienced some difficulties in its efforts to implement certain provisions of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption. A multidisciplinary working group on international adoptions had been established, comprising representatives of various Government ministries, the police force, social services and NGOs, and a drafting committee comprising ministry representatives, judges, university staff and NGOs had also been established to review the Family Code.

45. **The Chairperson** asked whether the Optional Protocol was considered as a basis for extradition in cases involving countries that had not signed a bilateral extradition agreement with Greece. He also asked the delegation to comment on the criminal responsibility of corporate entities.

46. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the criminal acts covered by the Optional Protocol were all extraditable if the country concerned was also a State party to the Optional Protocol. For States that were not, if the case involved organized crime, extradition was possible under the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime. Otherwise, special provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure relating to extradition could be implemented if there was mutual reciprocity with the State concerned.

47. **Ms. Lee**, supported by **Mr. Kotrane**, asked for confirmation that the Optional Protocol could in fact be used as the basis for extradition in cases where Greece did not have a bilateral extradition treaty with a given country. She also asked whether Greek law had a requirement of double criminality.

48. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that, pursuant to the law ratifying the Optional Protocol, offences covered by the Optional Protocol were extraditable, in full compliance with article 5, paragraph 2. There was a requirement of double criminality, except for offences committed in the European Union, for which Greece had recourse to the European arrest warrant.

49. **The Chairperson** requested information on the State party's policies on sex tourism, and asked whether the Greek tourism industry was governed by a code of ethics and what steps were taken to raise awareness of the issue.

50. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that, under the Criminal Code, a person who organized, financed, supervised, advertised or facilitated by any other means a trip for the purpose of engaging in intercourse or other indecent acts with children was liable to 5–10 years' imprisonment. Participants in such trips were liable to imprisonment for a minimum of 1 year.

51. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece) said that no cases of child sex tourism had yet been reported to the police and cases of trafficking in children were restricted to sexual and labour exploitation.

52. **Mr. Koompraphant** asked what monitoring mechanisms were in place to detect cases of offences covered in the Optional Protocol.

53. **The Chairperson** asked for further explanation of victim support legislation, including in relation to the status of the victim and redress.

54. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that ample legal provision was made for vulnerable persons, including child victims of offences covered by the Optional Protocol, such as legal representation, confidential testimony, the right to an out-of-court hearing, psychosocial support and damages. However, those provisions were not systematically applied, which pointed to a need for additional funds and better coordination between Government entities.

55. **The Chairperson** asked whether the law provided for redress other than that to be provided by the perpetrator. Was there, for example, a national fund for victim compensation?

56. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that, pursuant to the Council of the European Union directive relating to compensation to crime victims, the Government had enacted a law which provided for State compensation under certain conditions and for official victim status. Special legislation for unaccompanied children applied in cases where the child victim was not a citizen of the European Union or was stateless.

57. **The Chairperson** enquired about rehabilitation and reintegration services, psychological care and other support for child victims.

58. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that primary, secondary and tertiary care centres were the backbone of the mental health system. There were 35 such centres, in addition to independent residential homes for persons with mental disabilities, autism or problems with aggression. Since 2010, extra child psychiatry departments had been established in paediatric units within general hospitals as well as day-care facilities for child victims of abuse and neglect.

59. **The Chairperson** asked whether care in those centres was free of charge.

60. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that health care was free of charge for disadvantaged individuals, those who were uninsured and child victims, irrespective of nationality.

61. **The Chairperson** asked for confirmation that the centres provided care to all child victims, irrespective of the offence committed against them.

62. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece) said that victims of offences covered by the Optional Protocol were also cared for in other institutions and received additional support from social workers and psychologists with a view to their successful social reintegration.

63. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece), referring to previous questions on prevention, said that the Government was implementing new legislation in that area, the General Secretariat for Equality carried out many awareness-raising campaigns and the Hellenic Police led seminars and conferences on organized crime and trafficking in persons. Efforts were being made to coordinate all Government action on trafficking and to implement the National Action Plan against Trafficking in Human Beings, although recent political changes and the economic crisis were causing delays.

64. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece) said that a national inter-agency action plan for combating the exploitation of women and children had been launched in 2006 and was being rolled out at the national and international levels, with the involvement of 21 countries and four European and international agencies. A compendium of police actions and best practices in that area had been assembled and was available on the website of the Hellenic Police.

65. **Mr. Kofinas** (Greece), turning to the question of corporal punishment, said that it was prohibited under both the law and childcare regulations and that the Ministry of Health and Social Solidarity had circulated a leaflet on the topic.

66. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that the law explicitly prohibited corporal punishment in schools and set out alternative forms of discipline, while the 2006 law on domestic violence prohibited corporal punishment as a method of child-rearing. The Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs was a founding member of a network set up to prevent and combat corporal punishment of children, which coordinated action to exchange information, promote institutional change and raise awareness among children, parents and professionals working with children. In May 2011, the network had held an open discussion at the Ministry on positive parenting; information was available to the public on the network's website.

67. **The Chairperson** asked how the State party intended to tackle the growing problem of online grooming.

68. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that any additional provisions needed to keep the law in step with new technologies had to take account of their impact on other freedoms, such as freedom of expression. A bill on cybercrime was nonetheless expected by the end of 2012.

69. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece) said that Law No. 3625/2007 had criminalized the possession of child pornography and defined the Internet, computers and mobile phones as means of committing related offences. Pursuant to Law No. 3666/2008, the authorities

could seek authorization to access individuals' communications. The Electronic Crimes Division of the Hellenic Police was adequately equipped and staffed with well-trained officers who took part in international seminars and received regular training, including a course given by American experts on software for real-time detection of online pornographic activity and online tracking of child pornography distributors. The division worked closely with other departments, EUROPOL, INTERPOL and other countries and published information on prevention. Since 2004, the division had processed 709 cases of possession and dissemination of child pornography and sexual offences, involving both Greek and foreign nationals. It had made 191 arrests and 40 individuals were still in custody.

70. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that legislative efforts would be guided by two recent directives of the European Parliament and the Council of the European Union on preventing and combating trafficking in human beings and protecting its victims and on combating the sexual abuse and sexual exploitation of children and child pornography.

71. **Ms. Toura** (Greece) said that the Ministry of Education, Lifelong Learning and Religious Affairs had issued guidelines on safe Internet use. It had also signed a memorandum of cooperation with the Adolescent Health Unit of the Second Department of Paediatrics at the University of Athens to inform children, parents and teachers of the resources available for information, counselling and emergencies relating to Internet use. The Safer Internet Awareness Centre also raised awareness of the potential dangers of improper use of information technologies and collected reports of unlawful online material.

72. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that, under Greek law, criminal liability could not be attributed to natural persons who committed or were involved in offences under the Optional Protocol when acting on behalf of or in the name of a legal entity. However, the law ratifying the Optional Protocol expressly recognized the liability of the legal entity. Since there was no provision for criminal sanctions, the penalties were restricted to administrative sanctions.

73. Training programmes covering offences and issues under the Optional Protocol were organized by the National School of Judges in Thessaloniki. Such offences were taken very seriously, as was reflected in a sizeable case law that included numerous cases of Internet-based child pornography and sexual abuse.

74. The Criminal Code expressly stipulated that Greek courts had full extraterritorial jurisdiction in respect of any act in another country committed by or involving a Greek national. That jurisdiction extended to all Optional Protocol-related offences, including trafficking, sexual abuse and child pornography.

75. **Ms. Nores de García** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography) said that the constructive dialogue with the delegation had highlighted both the strengths and the weaknesses of the State party's organizational arrangements and approach to problems related to the Optional Protocol. A key strength was its readiness to transpose the principles of the Optional Protocol into domestic law and to adopt targeted protection measures. The main areas of concern were private adoption, data collection and analysis, and the lack of a dedicated coordination and monitoring body.

The meeting was suspended at 11.35 a.m. and resumed at 11.55 a.m.

Initial report of Greece on the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict (continued) (CRC/C/OPAC/GRC/1; CRC/C/OPAC/GRC/Q/1 and Add.1)

76. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that Greek legislation had been amended and brought into line with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, which

prohibited conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 years into the national armed forces or using them to participate actively in hostilities. Any individual found guilty of conscripting or enlisting children under the age of 15 was liable to a prison sentence of at least 10 years.

77. **Mr. Madi** (Country Rapporteur for the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict) said that the Committee was aware of the amendment that had served to align Greek legislation with the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. However, given that the aforementioned legislation only referred to children under the age of 15, he requested clarification on whether there was specific Greek legislation criminalizing the involvement of children under the age of 18 years in armed conflict.

78. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that he was unable to provide any further information.

79. **The Chairperson** said it was possible that the State party had not envisaged the need for legislation covering children aged between 15 and 18 since the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court already provided protection to children under 15 years of age. However, under the Optional Protocol, that protection was extended to all children aged between 15 and 18, and the State party should consider amending its legislation to reflect that fact.

80. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece), replying to questions raised earlier, said that Greek legislation did not explicitly prohibit the export of weapons to countries where children were involved in armed conflict but that the Government implemented all decisions regarding arms embargos and other sanctions handed down by the United Nations and the European Union with immediate effect.

81. Turning to the question of the procedures for identifying migrant children involved in armed conflict in other countries, he confirmed that the Government carried out a screening procedure in order to ascertain the country they had come from and their background.

82. **Mr. Madi** said that the Committee was more interested in the comprehensive set of procedures the State party had implemented to establish not only the country from which the migrant children had come but also their age and the details of their involvement in armed conflict. He wished to know more about the procedures to guarantee those children access to health-care services and to facilitate their social reintegration, and asked if those procedures had been effective in dealing with children seeking asylum. He enquired as to how many asylum applications had been accepted, the fate of the children whose applications had been rejected, and whether there were procedures for repatriation in place.

83. **Mr. Karageorgos** (Greece) said that the general screening procedure was used to collect all relevant information on a given individual, regardless of whether they were a minor or not. If an individual was classed as belonging to a vulnerable group, they were treated differently and could be sent to a centre for additional care.

84. Unfortunately, the statistics in his possession referred only to the number of applications submitted by minors in general and did not specify whether the children belonged to a vulnerable group or whether their application had been accepted.

85. **The Chairperson** said that the screening procedure should seek to identify not only the country from which the children had come but also whether they had been involved in a conflict, in which case a completely different approach to care would be needed. He asked whether non-State armed groups, such as security companies, attempted to take advantage of the high youth unemployment rate and recruit young people.

86. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the question of non-State armed groups fell within the remit of criminal law but there was no specific legislation governing it. However, Greek legislation on issues such as organized crime, trafficking and slavery did contain a number of applicable provisions.

87. **The Chairperson** asked whether the scope of the legislation prohibiting the recruitment or involvement of children under the age of 15 years in armed conflict could not be widened to cover the recruitment of young people by such security companies. He also wished to know whether any such security companies had their headquarters in Greece and, if so, whether the Government exercised adequate oversight over their activities.

88. **Mr. Giannakopoulos** (Greece) said that the aforementioned legislation applied to all children under 15 years of age and to any individual who attempted to recruit them. If a security company was found to be recruiting children under that age with a view to involving them in armed conflict, the individuals running the company would be held criminally liable.

89. **Mr. Karatsolis** (Greece) said that security companies in Greece were required to abide by the law. To date, the Government had received no reports of any attempts on their part to recruit children under 15 years of age with a view to involving them in armed conflict.

90. **Mr. Madi** reiterated his concern that current Greek legislation only prohibited the recruitment of minors under the age of 15 years for that purpose, and emphasized the need to raise that age to 18 years as a matter of urgency.

91. **Mr. Pollar** said that, while it was permissible for the State to recruit volunteers who were under the age of 18 provided that they were not involved in hostilities, it was not acceptable for non-State actors to recruit any child under the age of 18.

92. **Mr. Madi** said that, although the State party complied with the core principles of the Optional Protocol, further legislative amendments were needed to achieve full compliance. In particular, the minimum age of recruitment to the State Armed Forces or to non-State armed groups, including private-sector security companies, should be raised to 18 years, and a clear, explicit prohibition on the export of arms to countries where children were involved in armed conflict should be introduced. There was also a need for accurate data on the number of children arriving in Greece after involvement in armed conflict and the number of related asylum applications, and for comprehensive procedures that guaranteed sensitive and appropriate treatment of those children.

93. **Mr. Georgakopoulos** (Greece) thanked the Committee members for their questions and comments and said that his delegation had endeavoured to provide open, frank and detailed responses. Greece was experiencing a crisis on an unprecedented scale that affected the entire population. However, every effort would be made to minimize the negative repercussions for children, to use available resources as efficiently as possible and to achieve better policy coordination. The political will to preserve the welfare state and protect children remained strong and he was confident that the Committee's concluding observations would assist the Government in its future endeavours.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.