



**Convention on the Rights
of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Forty-eighth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 1326th MEETING*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Tuesday, 27 May 2008, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. LEE

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* No summary records were prepared for the 1324th and 1325th meetings.

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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)

Initial report of Serbia (CRC/C/SRB/1; CRC/C/SRB/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Serbia took places at the Committee table.
2. Mr. LONČAR (Serbia) said that the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified in 1990 by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and that in March 2001 the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, of which the Republic of Serbia was the legal successor, had submitted a declaration of succession in respect of the basic United Nations treaties, including the Convention on the Rights of the Child.
3. The initial report on the application of the Convention, covering the period 1992-2005, had been prepared by the public authorities of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. It dealt with a complex period in Serbia's history marked by significant changes in the State system and the constitutional order, the dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the establishment of the new Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, ethnic conflicts, intervention by the international community, a radical change of power and the political system in 2000, constitutional reform and the creation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in 2003, and the secession of the Republic of Montenegro.
4. In 2000 the Serbian State had initiated a process of integration in the international community, regaining membership in the United Nations and demonstrating its readiness to accede to many of the international human rights treaties.
5. In 2006 Serbia had adopted a new Constitution, which provided that the generally accepted rules of international law and the recognized international treaties formed an integral part of its judicial system and were directly applicable.
6. The Constitution guaranteed children's right to a name, to be registered at birth, to know their parents, to preserve their identity, and to be protected against mental, physical, economic and other forms of exploitation; it also defined the rights and duties of parents. Children born out of wedlock had the same rights as children born within a marriage. Furthermore, the Constitution prescribed special measures in the fields of education, culture and public information in order to encourage respect for diversity, and it prohibited incitement of racial, national, religious and other forms of discrimination. Lastly, it stipulated that everyone had the right to education, that primary education was compulsory and free, and that secondary education was free.
7. In order to coordinate activities relating to the protection and promotion of the rights of the child at the State level, Serbia established in 2002 a Council on the Rights of the Child. The National Action Plan for Children, produced by the Council and adopted by the Government in 2004, brought together all the activities and measures designed to advance the rights of the child. It was based on the four fundamental principles of the Convention: the right to life, survival and development; the best interests of the child; protection against discrimination; and the freedom of thought. Its objectives were to reduce poverty, to provide quality education and protect children's health, to improve the situation and the rights children with disabilities, to protect children deprived of a family environment, to protect children against maltreatment, neglect, exploitation

and violence, and to build up the country's capacity to solve the problems with which children were confronted.

8. Attention must be drawn to a problem of the application of the Convention in the Autonomous Province of Kosovo and Metohija, which had been part of the territory of the Republic of Serbia since 1999 under Security Council resolution 1244 (1999). Serbia was unable to apply the Convention in that province, which was administered entirely by the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK); hence the initial report contained no information on the province. The human rights situation in Kosovo and Metohija was not satisfactory, and indeed particularly worrisome in the case of the fundamental rights of the members of the non-Albanian communities, especially the Serbs and the Roma. The delegation suggested therefore that the Committee should request UNMIK to provide information about the application of the Convention in the province.

9. Despite an adequate legal framework and the adoption of specific measures for the application of the Convention, Serbia was still facing a number of problems connected with the aftermath of the conflicts in the region, the economic sanctions, the military operations carried out in the country by the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), and the large numbers of refugees from the former States of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and displaced persons from Kosovo and Metohija. Other difficulties were that part of Serbian territory had been under international administration since 1999 and that the country had been undergoing a complex process of economic and social transition.

10. Serbia was committed to continue its efforts to make further progress in securing the democratization of its society and respect for international obligations and standards, especially where human rights were concerned; that implied active cooperation with the international institutions dealing with those issues.

11. Mr. ZERMATTEN (Country Rapporteur) said that the Committee welcomed the adoption of the new Constitution in 2006, for it recognized the existence of children's rights and facilitated the adoption of legislation in that field. It noted with satisfaction the recently adopted legislation, in particular the Family Act of 2005, the Disabled Persons (Prevention of Discrimination) Act of 2006, and the Juvenile Offenders Act of 2006, and the establishment of the Council for the Rights of the Child, which brought together governmental bodies and non-governmental organizations (NGOs).

12. Where international affairs were concerned, the Committee welcomed Serbia's ratification of the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, its accession to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court, its ratification of the Palermo Protocol and of the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention (No. 182) of the International Labour Organization (ILO).

13. Serbia was in a process of thoroughgoing change and modernization, and its economy was experiencing rapid growth. Its wish to join the European Union had led to a profound commitment to enhance its respect for human rights. Serbia ought therefore to ensure particular respect for the rights of the child. Many traditional attitudes remained in place, and it would seem that the Convention was not promoted politically and was not used to any great extent in judicial practice.

14. During its pre-sessional meetings the Committee had received a delegation of Serbian children, which had presented a very interesting report based on a survey of a representative sample of 1,132 Serbian children conducted towards the end of 2007. The State was requested in that report to guarantee the physical safety of children, to focus its protection activities on programmes to combat violence, and to introduce projects to reduce aggressive behaviour, especially verbal attacks. That indicated a fairly violent environment. The State must join forces with schools and families to restore confidence.

15. The poverty affecting part of the population and the recurring discrimination against children from minority groups, in particular the Roma community, were obstructing the application of the Convention. The State party must take cognizance of that situation, reflect more extensively on the fate of those children, enforce the relevant legislation and, above all, equip the local and national bodies with the necessary human and financial resources.

16. The longstanding conflict in Serbia had been a big obstacle to the realization of human rights, including the rights of the child. Its aftermath was still evident in, for example, the high number of refugees and displaced persons, which included children whose rights were not always respected.

17. The new situation arising from the adoption of the 2006 Constitution ought to enable the country's leaders to fulfil all its commitments under the Convention. The delegation might describe the status of the Convention and the international treaties ratified by Serbia and indicate whether those instruments had been incorporated in domestic law, whether any enabling legislation was needed for their application, and whether the Convention was directly applicable by the judicial and administrative authorities.

18. It would be interesting to know whether the Government had verified the compatibility of domestic legislation with the Convention, whether the new legislation, in particular the Family Act and the Juvenile Offenders Act, had been drafted in accordance with the Convention, and whether the earlier legislation which was still in force had been amended. The delegation was also invited to indicate the status of the general protocol on the protection of children against abuse and neglect, adopted in 2005, and whether protocols had been drafted in other fields.

19. With regard to coordination, he requested information about the budget of the Council for the Rights of the Child, its human resources, the ministry to which it reported, and its coordination role.

20. He welcomed the adoption of the National Action Plan, which incorporated the Millennium Development Goals, and asked what specific targets had been fixed and what time limits had been set for their attainment, whether any interim targets had been envisaged, the size of budget allocated to the Action Plan, and whether the Action Plan was tailored to the new situation.

21. The delegation might supply some budget information, for the initial report did not specify the resources allocated for children, and the written replies (CRC/C/SRB/Q/1/Add.1) gave figures which it was impossible to analyze. The only figure given related to the education budget, which was the smallest in Europe.

22. Lastly, it would be useful to know the extent to which NGOs had collaborated in the drafting of the initial report and whether there was any legislation regulating the relations between them and the Government.

23. Ms. HERCZOG (Country Rapporteur) said that the Government should establish a system for collecting reliable data to establish, inter alia, the number of children placed in institutions and the number attending school. It would be interesting to know what methods the State party used for population censuses and data collection, for Serbia's region of the world was particularly sensitive in all matters relating to ethnic origin and religion.

24. It appeared that some categories of children, in particular Roma children and children with disabilities, suffered discrimination and exclusion, despite the existence of legislation protecting the rights and freedoms of national minorities and protecting persons with disabilities against discrimination. Notwithstanding the efforts to put in place a comprehensive strategy to combat discrimination, the right to an identity and the right to freedom of religion of many minority groups and various faiths were not always respected. The delegation might provide additional information on that topic.

25. It might also indicate what action the State party was taking to ensure that girls, a group with a particularly high illiteracy rate, had broader access to education and to improve hygiene in the country's schools, which, according to reliable sources, was poor.

26. She would like to know whether the National Action Plan had a sufficiently large budget to contribute to the strengthening of the family structure and thus to children's development. Lastly, she wished to know whether the State party was planning to introduce policies to improve early-childhood development and establish nurseries and whether it gave special attention to the problem of violence against children, committed either by adults or by other children.

27. Mr. PARFITT welcomed the forthcoming appointment of a national Ombudsman, to be supported by four deputies, one of them responsible for children's issues. He would like to know how many persons would be working under that deputy ombudsman, whether the service which he headed would have a mandate to ensure the realization of the rights of the child and the dissemination of the Convention, and what the service's operating budget would be.

28. He wished to know when Parliament was going to appoint the deputy ombudsman for children, what means the national Ombudsman would have to ensure that his recommendations were acted on, and whether he would be able to submit to Parliament a report listing any violations of the Convention or the domestic legislation on children and then to publish that report.

29. In view of the existence of another ombudsman in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina responsible for supervising the application of international instruments such as the Convention, he would welcome information about the specific situation of the rights of the child in that province.

30. He was worried by the reports from reliable sources about the living conditions of children placed in psychiatric establishments, institutions offering alternative protection, and children's prisons and wished to know whether the Ombudsman could enter those various places and take up complaints by children.

31. Given the very large number of complaints mechanisms put in place, he would welcome information about the way in which their activities would be coordinated in order to avoid duplication and ensure that victims knew which complaints institution to apply to.

32. The findings of a recent survey which had revealed that 41 per cent of young people knew of the principles embodied in the Convention were welcome, but it was regrettable that a vast majority of those young people had added that they considered that they had no role at the grass-roots level.

33. Mr. CITARELLA asked whether the Convention could be invoked directly in the courts and, if so, whether the judges had ever applied the provisions of the Convention rather than those of a domestic law which clashed with it.

34. According to some reports, minors were often forced to marry in certain remote rural regions and in the Roma community in particular. The delegation might provide additional information on that subject.

35. Ms. AIDOO noted with satisfaction that 98 per cent of births in Serbia were registered but said that the disparities in that connection between urban and rural areas and the fact that only 95 per cent of Roma children were declared at birth were regrettable. She asked whether the State party intended to take steps to ensure that all Roma children were registered and whether, in particular, it was going to simplify the procedures so that illiterate parents could complete the necessary formalities more easily or to establish local civil registry offices in the regions where particularly large numbers of Roma lived.

36. Ms. SMITH asked whether the State party was currently drafting a children's act which would address the various areas covered by the Convention.

37. Mr. FILALI asked whether the international conventions ratified by Serbia were directly applicable in domestic law or whether they first had to be published in the Official Gazette. If they did, it would be interesting to know how long that procedure took.

38. The delegation might indicate whether the Ombudsman was competent to bring matters before the Constitutional Court if he considered that the domestic legislation on the rights of the child was incompatible with the provisions of the Convention.

39. Mr. POLLAR asked whether the Government collaborated with NGOs, in particular in the drafting of policies on children. It was regrettable that the principles embodied in the Convention were taught in optional civics courses and that little was done to familiarize parents and teachers with those principles.

40. He would like to know what measures the State party had put in place to protect children's right to life and in particular to prevent accidents, which were a major cause of child deaths and mostly occurred on the way to school, and to reduce the high child suicide rate.

41. The delegation might also indicate whether account was taken of the principle of the best interests of the child in the drafting of all legislation and policies on children.

42. Ms. ORTIZ asked for details of the membership of the Council for the Rights of the Child and whether civil society and children's organizations were represented on it. She wished to know whether the Council worked in concert with other organizations at the grass-roots level and whether local action plans had been considered in the drafting of the National Action Plan.

43. She noted that 25 per cent of the children placed in foster families or children's institutions were of Roma origin when only three per cent of the country's total population were Roma and

asked why so many Roma children were so placed and what steps were being taken to prevent the marginalization of the Roma.

44. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, asked whether there was a ministry exclusively responsible and accountable with regard to children's policies, for the Council for the Rights of the Child had only an advisory function.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.35 a.m.

45. Mr. LONČAR (Serbia) said that Serbia had preferred to entrust responsibility for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child to several rather than to a single ministry and that it had created the Agency for Human and Minority Rights in order to ensure that the activities of those various ministries and the other competent bodies did not overlap with each other.

46. There were in fact several ombudsman's offices: at the local and national levels and in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina. Only about 15 municipalities had elected to create a post of local ombudsman responsible for taking up cases of violations of children's rights at the local level. The post of national Ombudsman had not yet been filled, for the appointment was a matter for Parliament, which was in the process of change-over following the elections in May 2008. The post was independent of the Executive and had its own budget. The number of employees assigned to the realization of the rights of the child under the deputy ombudsman responsible for that question would depend on the total budget allocated for the Ombudsman's office, but it would seem that Parliament has accepted the funding request submitted by the Ombudsman in November 2007.

47. The national ombudsman handled complaints of infringements of the rights of citizens, including children's rights, committed by the central authorities, while the Ombudsman of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina protected those rights at the local level. Serbia's constitutional system accorded very great importance to the role of the national Ombudsman. The post had been created quite recently and it had to be developed further. As soon as the new Parliament had been formed and had resumed its work, the children's ombudsman bill, currently under consideration, would be adopted.

48. Mr. ČEKLIĆ (Serbia), speaking as representative of the Ministry of Justice, said that the conventions and treaties ratified by the Republic of Serbia or, previously, by the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia or the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro occupied second place in the hierarchy of the internal judicial order, immediately after the Constitution, and took precedence over domestic law. The provisions of those international instruments could thus be applied directly by the courts. The procedure for ratification of an international instrument was as follows: the Government adopted a decision authorizing the ministry concerned to sign the international instrument. A bill on ratification of the instrument was then submitted to the Government, which approved it and remitted it to Parliament for consideration. Parliament adopted the bill, which contained the full text of the instrument in English or French and a translation into Serbian. After adoption, the act was published in the Official Gazette of the Republic of Serbia and entered into force on the same day. It then became an integral part of the domestic judicial system and its provisions could be applied directly by the institutions and authorities responsible for the application of laws. Laws adopted before the ratification of an international instrument and containing provisions at variance with the provisions of the instrument were amended. If the necessary amendments were too numerous, new laws were

drafted. Serbia was subject to a monitoring exercise conducted by the Council of Europe in the course of which all draft legislation was examined by the Council before adoption.

49. Mr. IVANOVIĆ (Serbia), speaking as representative of the Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, said that, in the light of the replies given by children to the questionnaire submitted to them to the effect that their primary concern was their physical safety, a national strategy to prevent violence against children had been produced and was to be adopted by Parliament.

50. Mr. VUJIĆ (Serbia) said that the provisions of the Convention had been incorporated in the new legislation, including the Juveniles Offenders Act, the Protection of Minors Act, the Family Act, and the Churches and Religious Communities Act. Judges who were to conduct the examination proceedings in cases involving minors were required to undergo special training. More than a third of the training programmes for judges, prosecutors and members of the forces of law and order dealt with the provisions of the Convention and the Committee's recommendations, as well as with the provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights. The training was provided by the Legal Training Centre, which was required to follow the programme prescribed by the Government. The Legal Training Centre and members of NGOs had also been involved by the Government and the Ministry of Justice in the drafting of the training programmes. The Serbia Office of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had also furnished support, including funding, for those activities.

51. There had not been any cases in which the Supreme Court had applied directly the provisions of the Convention. The Supreme Court was a conservative body and evolved rather slowly. However, it had on several occasions quashed the judgements of courts of first instance and ordered new hearings, precisely because it was more assiduous than the lower courts in taking the provisions of the Convention into account. The Supreme Court had cited decisions of the European Court of Human Rights in some of its judgements. It was apparent that in the lower courts the judges conducting the examination proceedings in cases involving minors changed their practice after having undergone the special training and took cognizance of the fact that it was important to avoid secondary victimization. Change was thus under way, even if it was taking some time.

52. Mr. FILALI asked whether the courts were resisting the application of the Convention.

53. Mr. VUJIĆ (Serbia) said that during the 1990s there had been a "grey" period in the application of a number of international instruments. It was not a question of resistance but of caution, at least where the application of the European Convention on Human Rights was concerned.

54. Ms. IVANOVIĆ (Serbia) said that every measure and every activity in a programme relating to the application of the Convention underwent a financial analysis. One example was the national strategy to prevent violence against children and protect children against violence, the implementation of which would necessitate the adoption of an action plan. Financial experts had been recruited to assess the funding requirements of the activities and measures envisaged in the plan before it was submitted for adoption.

55. Ms. FILA (Serbia) said that a book on the rights of the child had been produced in 1992 in order to make children aware of the Convention. The book had become very popular and was studied from age seven in civics courses, which were available as optional subjects in primary schools and up to the end of secondary education. Teachers received training in the subject.

A number of NGOs, notably Civic Initiatives, which provided valuable assistance in that connection, had produced a training handbook. Some 15,000 teachers had received training in the application of the Convention, and the Ministry of Education had a budget of about one million euros for that purpose.

56. Ms. MOHOROVIĆ (Serbia) said that the drafting of the initial report had started in the Ministry of Human and Minority Rights of the Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The first version had had two parts: one on Serbia and the other on Montenegro. In the meantime, the Republic of Serbia had been established and it had been decided that the report would deal only with that State. A number of NGOs, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and other international bodies had been consulted on the preparation of the report. Unfortunately, circumstances had prevented attendance at the meetings, and there were gaps in the report. The NGOs had not taken part in its drafting. The Agency for Human and Minority Rights, created in 2006, was authorized to prepare all kinds of reports on the application of human rights treaties. It was responsible for publicizing the provisions of the Convention, but other bodies, such as the Ministry of the Interior, also did so in the course of their activities.

57. In Serbia, everyone had the right to make his or her nationality known. However, it was not mandatory to do so. In the case of children aged under 15 years it was for their parents or the persons responsible for them to declare their nationality. Serbia had many minorities, and the statistics on minorities were produced by the National Statistics Institute. The Constitution accorded members of minorities the right to speak their mother tongue. In 2006, 673 minority languages had been listed in the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina, home to the largest number of minority groups. The commonest languages included Hungarian, Romanian, Slovak and Ruthenian. And everyone had the right to profess a religion, but it was not mandatory to make one's religious affiliation known.

58. Ms. HERCZOG (Country Rapporteur) asked how, from the methodological standpoint, the authorities linked nationalities and religions, for religions were not mentioned on the list of minorities. She also asked for details of the protection of the personal data of children aged under 15 whose parents had declared them to belong to a minority. Was the right of such children to confidentiality protected and was protection provided when the fact of belonging to a minority might involve risk?

59. Ms. AIDOO noted that the administrative and social authorities were not at present able to reach all the country's inhabitants and asked what the State party was doing to ensure that all children were registered at birth.

60. Mr. VUJIĆ (Serbia) said that a personal data protection act was being drafted. It would regulate matters connected with data collection and holding. The bill in question was being studied by the Council of Europe. Further work was certainly required on the issue. With regard to parents' declaration of their children's nationality and the age limit of 15 years, the rules and standards applied were old ones, but the legislation was progressing.

61. The right of constitutional remedy which had recently been incorporated in the Constitution provided that all citizens, including children, could apply to the Constitutional Court for protection of their rights.

62. The CHAIRPERSON asked what measures Serbia had taken to register the births of children who were difficult to reach, especially Roma and other undeclared children. Was the

Government considering decentralization in that regard or the creation of mobile units to facilitate declaration.

63. Ms. MOHOROVIĆ (Serbia) said that the national strategy for the advancement of the status of the Roma was currently being revised. Four action plans had been launched under the strategy, on education, employment, housing and health, and measures to improve the situation of Roma children in other respects were now being planned.

64. Ms. ZECEVIĆ (Serbia) said that a birth registration act was currently being drafted; it would introduce provisions to solve the problem of the failure to register large numbers of children, in particular internally displaced children, refugee children and Roma children, who accounted for most of the cases. Births would be registered in the place where the unregistered person lived, on the basis of the available information.

65. Ms. MARKOVIĆ (Serbia) said that in addition to the Disabled Persons (Protection against Discrimination) Act of 2006 Serbia had adopted in December 2006 a strategy for the advancement of persons with disabilities. That strategy, for the period 2007-2015, placed particular emphasis on the situation of children with disabilities and formed part of the plan produced by the Council for the Advancement of Disabled Persons, which also represented disabled children.

66. Serbia was to ratify in 2008 the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which it had signed in December 2007. With that in mind, the Government was currently organizing training programmes and awareness-raising campaigns to combat discrimination against persons with disabilities.

67. Local councils for the advancement of disabled persons had also been established. The main aim of the strategy pursued by those councils was to ensure that all matters relating to persons with disabilities were handled within an institutional and multidisciplinary framework.

68. The plan was to amend the Social Protection and Social Security Act in order, inter alia, to establish further measures for the protection of disabled children in the realm of employment. Where education was concerned, the amendments would focus chiefly on pre-school education and the new models of comprehensive education.

69. Most of the resources for children with disabilities came from the budget of Ministry of Labour and Social Policy, but funds were also allocated under the budget of the Ministry of Education. In addition, various tax deductions and exemptions were planned for disabled children and for disabled persons in general.

70. Mr. ZERMATTEN (Country Rapporteur) said that there seemed to exist in Serbia a climate of tolerance of violence, maltreatment and corporal punishment, especially within the family. What steps had the Government taken to make the population aware of that problem and what sanctions were imposed on the perpetrators of maltreatment?

71. On the question of the consumption of alcohol and illegal drugs, which seemed to be a source of concern in Serbia, he asked what prevention and intervention measures had been put in place and whether there were any programmes or institutions to treat dependency.

72. He also wished to know how many children were living in the street and what prevention programmes and measures had been introduced for the shelter and training of street children.

73. According to some reports, refugee children from countries of the former Yugoslavia and displaced children from Kosovo suffered discrimination and infringements of their rights, especially where health, education and food were concerned. He would welcome details of Serbia's policy on refugee and displaced children.
74. Ms. HERCZOG (Country Rapporteur) asked how decisions on child placement were taken. She noted with satisfaction that the preference was for placement with members of the extended family and asked how the families in question were assessed and whether the children were monitored.
75. Since the percentage of children enrolled in nurseries was very low, it might be thought that families had recourse to informal child-minding arrangements. The delegation might perhaps indicate whether the Government planned to regulate such arrangements.
76. The Committee welcomed the Government's policy of de-institutionalization but wished to know whether that policy was monitored. It had received many alarming reports about the living conditions of severely handicapped children placed in institutions. Additional information on that subject would be welcome.
77. Mr. FILALI noted that the State party had made great efforts to modernize the juvenile justice system and that the system provided young people with certified vocational training to enable them to rejoin society when they left prison. Were the vocational training certificates recognized on the outside by both public and private sectors?
78. On the question of conscription, he asked whether it was true that the President of the Republic was considering taking a decision providing for mobilization of persons aged under 18 in exceptional circumstances such as time of war.
79. Ms. SMITH asked what treatment was available for children with mental illnesses. Since for want of support in the community such children were often placed in institutions, she asked whether there were any plans to mobilize resources to provide them with more effective assistance.
80. She also asked whether sufficient resources were allocated to adolescent health and whether free health services which respected the right to privacy were provided specifically for adolescents. She also wished to know whether the schools dispensed information to children about sex, HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted diseases.
81. She asked whether steps had been taken to prevent drugs from being brought into the schools.
82. Lastly, she wished to know whether there were any modern sports facilities, available free of charge, to enable children to do sports at school and after classes.
83. Mr. KRAPPMANN noted that the education budget remained below the internationally recommended level, a situation which had implications, for teachers' salaries and education levels for example, and asked what the Government was planning to do to increase the resources allocated to the education sector.
84. He also noted that secondary education was free for "ordinary" pupils, while other pupils had to pay. Which pupils were not regarded as "ordinary"? Since the cost of textbooks and school perquisites in general could impose a heavy burden on the budget of a poor family and jeopardize

school attendance and academic performance, he would like to know whether there were any arrangements for providing assistance to families in need.

85. The delegation might perhaps provide some information about the progress of the education reform, which was intended inter alia to improve teacher training and school curricula.

86. The Committee had heard many complaints about teaching methods, which were too traditional and gave emphasis, for example, to rote learning. He asked in that connection whether teachers received in-job training. He also asked what the languages of instruction in the schools were and whether children from minorities could use their own language in class.

87. He wished to know whether vocational training was provided in the secondary schools and whether all children who did not continue their education could obtain such training and a corresponding certificate giving them access to jobs.

88. Ms. ORTIZ said that she had received reports of the disappearance of children in certain public hospitals. She would welcome information about such disappearances and their investigation by the authorities.

89. On the subject of the violence inflicted in children's institutions, in particular on children with disabilities, she asked what measures were being taken to protect such children, simplify the complaints procedure, and ensure that the perpetrators of such abuse were effectively punished.

90. She asked which authority was competent to approve the placement of children in institutions or foster homes. She wished to know whether judges were informed of such placements and whether they were subject to periodic monitoring. And were children involved in decision-taking in that regard?

91. She asked about the way in which the network of local family support services was organized, the results obtained and the obstacles encountered, and whether the Government planned to develop the system.

92. Lastly, she would welcome information about the current legislation on national and international adoption and about the reasons why the number of adoptions was very small in relation to the number of children placed in institutions.

93. Mr. KOTRANE said that he would welcome information about child labour, in particular whether there was a labour inspectorate responsible for detecting and preventing the economic exploitation of children.

94. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights had stated that children and women were victims of trafficking for the purposes of sexual exploitation and forced labour and that police officers were involved in some of the cases. He would like fuller information on the subject and, in particular, details of any investigations opened, police officers prosecuted and penalties imposed.

95. He noted that Serbia had made considerable progress since 2006 in the field of juvenile justice and asked what practical effects that progress had produced. He wished to know in particular whether members of the forces of law and order and judicial personnel received the necessary training for dealing with cases of violation of children's rights.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.