



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
21 January 2013
English
Original: French

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Thirty-ninth session

Summary record of the 1036th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 24 May 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Doek

Contents

Consideration of reports of States parties (*continued*)

Third periodic report of Norway

This record is subject to correction.

Corrections should be submitted in one of the working languages. They should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent *within one week of the date of this document* to the Editing Unit, room E.4108, Palais des Nations, Geneva.

Any corrections to the records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be consolidated in a single corrigendum, to be issued shortly after the end of the session.

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

Consideration of reports of States parties (agenda item 5) (*continued*)

Third periodic report of Norway (CRC/C/129/Add.1; CRC/C/Q/NOR/3 (list of issues); CRC/C/RESP/80 (written replies by the State party); HRI/CORE/1/Add.6 (core document))

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Norway took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) said that the third periodic report of Norway and its initial report under the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had been prepared by experts from different ministries and public-sector agencies and by representatives of non-governmental organizations and that the concluding observations of the Committee would be widely disseminated among the bodies concerned and in civil society.
3. In its written replies, the Government had set out to provide additional information on changes and new developments in Norway affecting the implementation of the Convention since the previous report was submitted. Thus, in 2003 the Norwegian Parliament had incorporated the provisions of the Convention and its two optional protocols into Norwegian law. Henceforth, the provisions of the Convention would prevail over Norwegian statutes in the event of any conflict between domestic and international law.
4. The Government had also undertaken a review of laws relating to children's rights in order to remove any incompatibility with the Convention and to clarify the substance of their prescriptions. A number of amendments had thus been made to civil procedure law and to the Adoption Act and Child Welfare Act.
5. The Parliament had recently passed a bill to outlaw ethnic and religious discrimination, prohibiting any direct or indirect discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent, colour, language or religious belief and incorporated the provisions of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination into Norwegian law. The Anti-Discrimination Act would come into force on 1 January 2006.
6. Regarding the Optional Protocol, the Penal Code defined the offence of child pornography and the penalties applicable. In addition, the Parliament had asked the Government to consider separating child pornography from the general provisions relating to pornography and, on 11 May 2005, had passed a proposed amendment prohibiting the production, acquisition, possession and transmission of images of a sexual nature involving children to third parties for payment and punishing those activities with a fine or a prison term of up to three years.
7. In March 2005, the Government had prepared a development strategy for children and young people in the countries of the South that focused on health (especially measures against malnutrition and HIV/AIDS), education (particularly that of girls and young women) and child participation. UNICEF and the World Bank were associated with the different projects.
8. **Mr. Filali** highlighted the quality of the report submitted by the State party, which was readable and well structured and contained a wealth of information and analysis. Furthermore, the recent incorporation of the Convention into Norwegian law confirmed the country's commitment to the Convention.
9. The Committee welcomed the changes made to child-specific legislation, which strengthened children's right to be heard and to participate in decisions concerning them. Nonetheless, there were still some matters for concern. In particular, the delegation might confirm or refute, and if appropriate expand upon, reports that immigrants and refugees

were victims of discrimination, especially where jobs and housing were concerned. Another important question was why Norway, which gave considerable support to international organizations working for refugees, received so few of them on its soil, was seeing a rise in racism and xenophobia, was closing down reception centres for asylum seekers and was taking so long to process the applications of unaccompanied minors, especially when there were doubts about their identity, and what measures were being taken to remedy the situation.

10. It was regrettable that the Norwegian school system, while open to all groups in the population without distinction, was not succeeding in counterbalancing the influence of children's social background on their learning capability and in wholly removing any inequality of treatment between boys and girls, and that, for all the considerable progress made in recent years, not all municipalities were as yet effectively securing the active participation of children and adolescents, particularly in municipal and county councils, or their right to express their views on subjects concerning them, despite the decision taken to this effect by the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development.

11. It would be helpful to obtain details of how, within the framework of their prerogatives, municipalities were applying the principle of the best interests of the child as enshrined in the Children Act, the Adoption Act and the Child Welfare Act; and the same went for the judicial system, particularly in cases where unaccompanied children were expelled and parents sentenced to terms of imprisonment.

12. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** noted with satisfaction the resolute commitment of the State party to international cooperation and development aid and its role in the vanguard of children's rights. Norway now devoted a substantial portion of its gross domestic product to foreign aid and supported a great many of the development programmes put in place by different States parties to the Convention. The country's impressive record of legislation to harmonize domestic law with the Convention was another strong sign of its determination to further promote the enforcement of children's rights, and in some cases the children's rights recognized by Norwegian legislation actually went further than those enshrined in the Convention.

13. Given the information on difficulties in applying the Convention in immigration matters, it would be interesting to have specific examples of cases where Convention obligations intended to improve the lot of foreign children had prevailed over current law, and to know when the new Immigration Act was likely to be passed.

14. Following the Supreme Court ruling in the "KLR" case that international treaties incorporated into domestic legislation could only be directly applied when it was possible to derive concrete rights and duties from their provisions, the question arose as to how far Norwegian children's economic, social and cultural rights were guaranteed in practice, whether in point of fact children could easily obtain an exemption from religious education classes, which in principle were compulsory, whether they were not stigmatized when they took advantage of such an exemption, and whether the Government intended to reply to the criticisms made by the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights about the situation with respect to freedom of religion.

15. The delegation might say whether, as requested by NGOs and the Ombudsman, training in the Convention and human rights for professionals working with children and for teachers had been implemented, improved and given adequate budgetary allocations, whether a children's rights teaching module had been introduced into school curricula and whether parents-to-be, including those from other cultures, had access to programmes aimed at providing training in children's education and inculcating a greater awareness of children's rights.

16. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether the human rights action plan put in place in the country was framed in a way that would ensure the attainment over the next 10 years of the goals set out in the document “A World Fit for Children” adopted at the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children, and whether measures were being taken to enforce the right to adequate housing for children and their families and remedy the administrative delays entailed by the privatization of social housing services.

17. The delegation might say whether the authorities envisaged drawing up a comprehensive plan for the teaching of native languages and foreign civilizations in schools. Rather than providing religious instruction or granting exemptions, school establishments could teach religion in general and thus introduce a culture of tolerance that would serve to lessen xenophobia.

18. It would be helpful to know what steps were being taken to protect children from information and material likely to impair their development, particularly that found on the Internet, given that the law was currently restricted to punishing pornography and that the provisions invoked by the courts to punish the perpetrators of offences committed against children abroad were outdated or inadequate, as were the international cooperation agreements dealing with the subject.

19. **Ms. Lee** asked about the independence, make-up and financing of the Norwegian Institute for Human Rights and inquired why boys under 17 seemed particularly prone to accidental violent death, particularly in road accidents.

20. **Mr. Siddiqui** wished to be apprised of the contents of the report that the Committee on Violence against Women, which was also charged with studying the situation of children growing up in violent families, was supposed to submit in 2003, and the main causes of bullying at school, which was very widespread in Norway.

21. **Ms. Aluoch** asked how the right to freedom of association and the right of peaceful assembly for minors wishing to create or operate an association were exercised, since current laws and regulations seemed to be a hindrance to them.

22. **Mr. Zermatten** wanted to know whether municipalities had the fiscal resources they needed to provide primary health care or received them from the central State, and whether there was not a risk that the decentralization of competences in this area would lead to inequalities in treatment because of municipalities’ different priorities. Further information was needed on how the Ombudsman for Children was chosen and how independent the role was, and likewise on the state of progress of the bill that was to be presented to the Parliament in 2004 to bring in the proposed amendment to the Biotechnology Act lifting the anonymity of sperm donors in view of children’s right to know their origins.

23. **Mr. Parfitt** asked whether the budget allocated to the Ombudsman for Children was voted through directly by the legislature and whether the principle of the best interests of the child was the criterion followed by the immigration authorities when considering whether to grant refugee status or asylum to unaccompanied minors, in which case the question arose as to whether these authorities carried out studies of the countries these young people came from in order to take properly informed decisions concerning them.

24. **The Chairperson** asked whether the delegation thought the provisions of the Convention had now been fully incorporated into law. He wanted to know whether the proposal to make the child welfare service the sole agency responsible for coordinating measures for children at the municipal level had been followed through and what powers the central government exercised over the activities of municipalities.

25. Details about the existence of a special training programme for judges, social workers and all professionals whose work involved listening to children would be welcome,

as would information about how often the telephone helpline for children was used and the problems reported by them.

26. It would also be interesting to know the results of the Action Plan for Combating Female Genital Mutilation, which expired in December 2004, and the specific measures taken to disseminate the documentation prepared as part of the “Life before 18” project. Lastly, it would be good to know whether any national agency was charged with checking whether the municipalities, which were responsible for following up placements in foster families and institutions, carried out this task effectively.

The meeting was suspended at 10.55 a.m. and resumed at 11.15 a.m.

27. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) said that the Convention had been incorporated into national law in 2003 and that it took precedence over legislation adopted subsequently and not only over that which already existed at the time it was incorporated. The new immigration bill would not be finalized for some time.

28. The freedom allowed to the municipalities created a dilemma between the desire of policymakers for the greatest possible municipal autonomy and the desire of central government to exercise a minimum of oversight over these authorities and hold them to certain baseline standards.

29. Immigrants were still discriminated against, but the figures did not show the phenomenon to be on the rise. There were no statistics to show that girls were not treated in the same way as boys in schools.

30. Some reception centres for asylum seekers had indeed closed down, but a number of them had been opened to cope with the massive influx of asylum seekers from 2000 to 2002, and were therefore temporary.

31. A pilot project run by Norwegian municipalities and inspired by the Convention let young people attend and speak at municipal council meetings.

32. The Ministry of Education and Research was encouraging schools to strengthen their teaching of children’s rights and planned to do the same for human rights generally, one of the main tools for this being a website for students, teachers and school heads.

33. The International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights was fully incorporated into national law, but in 2001 the Supreme Court had handed down a ruling under which the courts could review the justiciability of the rights enshrined in the Covenant and Convention. No court had ever pronounced these rights legally unenforceable.

34. In November 2004, having received a communication relating to Norway, the Human Rights Committee adopted Views on the course entitled “Christian Knowledge and Religious and Ethical Education” in which it concluded, particularly with regard to exemption practices, that there had been a breach of paragraph 4 of article 18 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. In response, Norway informed the Human Rights Committee that it planned to remove the provision relating to the course at issue from the Education Act, introduce a different provision on possible exemptions, ensure that the relevant provisions took due account of the rights of parents and minorities, simplify the exemption notification procedure, amend the syllabus in order to distinguish more clearly those elements liable to be considered actual religious practices, provide clarification on the choice of teaching methods to prevent any confusion between teaching content and any religious practice and give wide latitude to parents wishing their children to receive adapted instruction in this area, if necessary by granting them the right to a full exemption until the law came into force. The amendments envisaged were to apply from the start of the 2005 school year.

35. **The Chairperson** asked whether it would not be easier to make the course optional, whether this solution had been envisaged and whether exempted children could attend another course or carry out another activity.
36. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) replied that this possibility had been extensively debated but had not been adopted and that no alternative activity was on offer, this in fact being one of the weaknesses picked up on by the Human Rights Committee.
37. The four-year human rights action plan launched in 2000 ought to be evaluated, as should the planned follow-up to the Special Session of the United Nations General Assembly on Children.
38. Because the political class as a whole had come to the conclusion that the long tradition of social housing and very strict rent controls in Norway, while perhaps justified in the 1940s and 1950s, was not necessarily the best way of meeting the difficulties of the present day, a variety of privatization programmes had been set in train.
39. While it was true that the Institute for Human Rights had not been fully accredited as a national institution, the Government should quickly find a way to ensure its budgetary independence, particularly since the ordinary budget of the Institute was supplemented by very substantial support funds.
40. For reasons as yet undetermined, boys were indeed more likely to die violently or have accidents than girls, and the same situation was revealed by the suicide statistics, which showed three times as many boys attempting to take their own lives as girls.
41. Norway gave real priority to its international cooperation on anti-human trafficking efforts, and meant to extend this to other countries.
42. **Ms. Aluoch** requested details of the procedures for incorporating the Convention into Norwegian law.
43. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) replied that since being incorporated into the Human Rights Act in 2003, the Convention and its two protocols had formed an integral part of Norwegian domestic law, could be directly invoked before the courts and took precedence over other laws.
44. **Mr. Kotrane** asked whether Norway had passed implementing legislation for the Convention or its protocols to enable the courts to punish any activity that flouted the rights of children.
45. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) replied that Norway had passed a first and a second package of laws, respectively before and after the incorporation of the Convention into domestic law, and thus felt it had done what was necessary, but the country's legislation might need to be better aligned with the Convention in some areas.
46. The amendment to the Biotechnology Act removing anonymity for sperm donors and enforcing children's right to know their origins had been passed.
47. There were projects to train judges in the gathering of testimony from young children.
48. The Parliament was on its way to passing a bill to create the new position of Equality and Anti-Discrimination Ombud, which would improve enforcement of the Sex Equality Act, the law prohibiting ethnic and religious discrimination (Anti-Discrimination Act) and the anti-discrimination provisions of the Working Environment Act, as well as legislative provisions relating to housing. This instrument likewise covered discrimination based on disability, sexual preference, age and political beliefs, while it also had the function of enforcing the provisions of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of

Discrimination against Women and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, both of which were incorporated into Norwegian law.

49. **Mr. Helland** (Norway) said that the survey carried out by independent experts at the request of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs had established that municipalities strictly followed all the provisions of the Convention, although it was open to them to interpret these, and that the Convention took precedence over Norwegian legislation in the event that they conflicted.

50. The living conditions of unaccompanied child asylum seekers placed in reception centres had improved considerably over the past five years, and two new centres, responsible for taking in children under 15 and children in the 15–18 age range, respectively, had been opened. These children were given psychological care in discussion groups to help them overcome the traumas they had experienced in their countries of origin, and were assisted in their efforts to locate their parents. Staff at the reception centres were made aware of the situation in the main countries of origin of their residents.

51. When a whole family was placed in a reception centre awaiting the result of its asylum application, the parents were given advice on the obligations incumbent upon them as parents, which they often neglected because of the extraordinarily trying situations they had experienced in their countries of origin.

52. To protect children living with drug users or other young people with problems in poor-quality urban dwellings, especially in Oslo, the ministry responsible had asked the city authorities to remain vigilant on this point, which they had undertaken to do.

53. The law on sentencing stressed the need for incarcerated parents to keep in touch with their children and for there to be a favourable environment for their meetings, with the length and frequency of visits being left to the judgement of those managing the establishments concerned. The Government also planned to create apartments for this purpose in two of the country's penitentiaries. In addition, a judge could order that a mother sentenced to a prison term be placed in a special establishment where she could live with her child. Whatever the type of establishment, parents in custody benefited from a programme similar to the one for asylum seekers that taught them to better identify and respond to their children's needs. Any parent considering the length and frequency of the visits allowed by the prison governor to be inadequate and any mother wishing to be transferred to a special establishment where she could live with her child was entitled to apply to the Ministry of Justice, which would pass on the application to the competent authorities.

54. The programmes to raise awareness of children's rights that had been put in place for immigrants in Oslo, Bergen and Stavanger should shortly be rolled out nationwide, and almost 100 million crowns were allocated annually to the teaching of Norwegian to immigrants' children to bring them up to the same level of language proficiency as Norwegian nationals by the time they reached compulsory school age.

55. Bullying was no more widespread in Norway than elsewhere in the world, but because the country gave the subject the highest importance a great many studies had been carried out and a large quantity of statistics were available.

56. Norway spared no effort to combat money laundering, and among other measures had placed restrictions on the opening of bank accounts, to the extent that many minors had been refused permission to open one, even in the course of setting up associations. The Government was well aware of the problem and would consider how to remedy it.

57. The Norwegian Government had indeed transferred responsibility for health care provision to local communities, but it was continuing to exercise oversight to ensure that the services on offer were of the same quality from one municipality to another. In

particular, county governors were charged with supervising the process and taking action in the event of a user complaint.

58. The Ombudsman for Children was appointed by the government on the recommendation of the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs. To be satisfied as to the independence of the Ombudsman's office, it was enough to read the numerous press articles that had appeared over the past few months reporting its unsparing criticisms of government action. The budget available to it (proposed by the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and voted on by the Parliament) had been stable for the past few years, but it had never been refused funding by the competent authorities for its various projects. When the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs submitted its provisional budget to the Parliament, one line item was exclusively for the activities of the Ombudsman and could not be allocated to any other body.

59. **Mr. Parfitt** observed that in some legal systems, to preserve the ombudsman's independence, that institution itself submitted its budget to Parliament, obviating any interference by the executive.

60. **Mr. Helland** (Norway) emphasized that hitherto the Ombudsman's budget had never been a cause of disagreement with the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs and that furthermore the Ombudsman had repeatedly obtained funding from the Ministry of Education or the Ministry of Health to implement projects in these two sectors.

61. The delegation had no information available on the exact number of calls received by the telephone helpline set up to give guidance to young people (girls in particular) whose parents were threatening to force them into marriage, but it was much in demand, and the Ministry of Children and Family Affairs provided it with an annual contribution of 1.5 million crowns.

62. The national project "OK — Care and knowledge against female circumcision" had been completed the year before and the conclusions of its evaluation should be known shortly. The main features of the project would now be applied by all health services, and the Ministry of Health had been given responsibility for coordinating the activities of the different ministries in this domain, while it was up to county governors to pass on to the municipalities the guidelines to be applied to prevent this scourge.

63. Placements in foster families had to be followed up quarterly by someone who was completely independent of the municipality the foster family or home came under.

64. **The Chairperson** asked at what age children born from a sperm donor acquired the right to learn the identity of their biological fathers and whether this was an absolute right. He also wished to know whether the report on domestic violence that was to have been published in autumn 2003 actually had been, and what action had been taken on it.

65. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) replied that children's right to learn the identity of their fathers was absolute and was acquired at the age of 18.

66. **Mr. Helland** (Norway) stated that the report on domestic violence had been published in 2004. Children were liable not only to be victims of violence but also to witness violence against one of their parents, which was no less destructive. The Ministry of Children and Family Affairs, together with the Centre for Crisis Psychology in Bergen and the Alternative to Violence centres in the counties of Oslo and Telemark, had launched a project for children who were exposed to violence, with the focus on providing guidance to parents and raising awareness in families. Women's shelters were an integral part of the project. It was also important for the problem of child ill-treatment to be given a higher profile among staff working at municipalities, child welfare institutions, hospitals and anywhere else where professionals were in contact with children, not to mention the public at large.

67. A national resource centre for trauma victims had been set up at the University of Oslo, and the plan was for each of the country's regions to have its own by the end of summer 2005. These centres would take in victims of domestic violence and benefit from the expertise of specialists in child welfare, psychiatry and different medical disciplines.

68. **Mr. Parfitt** asked whether minors used in pornography could obtain redress on the same basis as any other victim of crime. The delegation might also say what measures were being taken to prevent suicides, which were worryingly frequent among young people.

69. **Mr. Helland** (Norway) stated that the suicide prevention project had been renewed. Suicide was another of the problems over which the regional resource centres for trauma victims would have competence. In parallel with this, different mental health pilot projects were being implemented at schools to encourage children to talk about their problems, and a suicide intervention training programme was in progress. Guidelines on the subject still needed to be laid down. More research was needed.

70. **Mr. Wille** (Norway) noted that the highest suicide rates among young people had been in the 1980s and that the trend had happily been downward since then.

71. **Mr. Filali** asked what specifically was being done to remove the obstacles facing disabled people wishing to take up their right of access to the labour market, higher education and cultural and recreational activities, among other things.

72. It would be desirable for the delegation to explain why the infant mortality rate, which had halved in 10 years, varied so much from one county to another and from one year to the next. It would be helpful to know what the State party was doing to determine the causes of the rise in asthma, allergies and indoor climate-linked diseases and halt their progression. Childhood obesity was another growing phenomenon that would justify food advisory services for schools and families. The recruitment and training of psychologists should be stepped up to ensure that the scarcity of psychologists did not continue, as it was very important to have them on hand at the various reception and health centres that had recently been set up or soon would be. This, together with the involvement of civil society, was a factor that could be effective in bringing down suicide rates.

73. Some clarification of the distinction between refugee status and that of resident on humanitarian grounds would be helpful. The delegation might also state whether the "youth contracts" pilot project under which an alternative sanction was offered to offenders, particularly those aged between 15 and 17 who were not yet caught up in a permanent logic of crime, had been subject to evaluation and follow-up, and whether the lessons of the 1999 action plan against juvenile delinquency had been turned to account. It would be interesting in this respect to know how a minor placed in pretrial detention or sentenced after a serious crime would be dealt with, since there were no juvenile prisons. Lastly, it would be good to know what procedure was supposed to be followed if sexual abuse was suspected and what assistance was given to victims of such abuse.

74. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** said that separation and divorce were becoming commonplace, that loss of income sometimes forced one parent to go and work a long way from the family home, that there were children living in homosexual households—an array of new family structures whose sociological and psychological consequences needed to be studied. The delegation could explain where the State stood in this debate and how it struck a balance between its responsibilities and respect for the private lives of the country's inhabitants. She would also like details of the ethnic origin of children placed in care and information as to whether it was possible to exclude a violent parent temporarily from the family home rather than taking away the child.

75. There were more than 60,000 children living below the poverty threshold in the country and it would be helpful to know whether these were basically children of

immigrants, single-parent families and drug users. Given that sexual relations were outlawed before the age of 16, the delegation might also indicate whether two 15-year-olds having sexual relations (or just one of them) were treated as having committed an offence.

76. **Ms. Anderson** wanted to know what results had been obtained by mechanisms to assist children presenting severe behavioural difficulties and what indicators were used to evaluate these mechanisms. She asked how long children taken out of the family home at their own request spent on average in the institutions they were placed in, whether research had been done on the subject and how many minors on average were taken into care in this way.

77. It would likewise be desirable to know whether the proposed transfer to the State of the child and family welfare powers devolved to the counties had been approved and implemented since the report was prepared.

78. **Ms. Lee** was astonished to find that there were twice as many boys with disabilities or learning difficulties in ordinary or specialist schools as girls, and wanted to know how this was accounted for and whether there were enough day-care or other facilities to take in disabled preschool children.

79. **Mr. Zermatten** asked how the rights and interests of victims were taken into account in the “youth contract” system, which allowed criminal prosecution to be avoided.

80. Given that Norway faced a major problem with the consumption of legal and illegal drugs, he wanted to know which of the principles of prevention, repression, care and legalization had prevailed when the plan for dealing with drug- and alcohol-related problems was created.

81. On the subject of ragging or hazing, a form of student initiation that could take extreme forms, he asked what effect the policy of prohibition and “zero tolerance” had had.

82. **Mr. Kotrane** asked how the State party meant to facilitate family reunification for foreign children, since currently the procedures for reviewing applications could take a long time. He recalled the concerns the Committee had expressed in its previous concluding observations on the subject of children separated from their families and placed in institutions.

83. An explanation was required as to how the State ensured that teaching in private schools complied with the objectives of the Convention, particularly those enshrined in article 29.

84. The passing of the law on the Norwegian Immigration Committee forbidding the expulsion of anyone at risk of persecution in their own country could only be welcomed, and likewise the measures taken to improve the conditions of reception for asylum seekers, but a study carried out in 2003 for the Ministry of Local Government and Regional Development still identified difficulties, particularly as regards the procedures for determining a child’s age. It seemed in fact that Norway was still not in compliance with the principles of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, which recommended using only tried and tested methods.

85. **Mr. Liwski** asked whether the Plan of Action for Preventing Unwanted Pregnancies and Abortion had given good results. He noted with satisfaction that almost 80 per cent of mothers breastfed their children until the age of 6 months, and wanted to know whether any action was planned to increase the average breastfeeding period yet further.

86. With regard to mental health, it would be helpful to know whether enough time was spent on patients seeking psychological assistance at health-care facilities. There would seem to be a need to evaluate treatment criteria and look into the supply and quality of mental health services. Young migrants, for example, should receive mental health follow-

up, not only at reception centres but also much later, once they seemed to be well integrated into Norwegian society.

87. The delegation might also indicate whether health-care professionals followed training programmes dealing with human rights in general and children's rights in particular.

88. **The Chairperson** asked for further information on the procedures for implementing joint parental responsibility when parents separated. The delegation might clarify whether all couples, cohabiting or not, had access to this, how visiting rights worked under this system, what measures were taken to ensure proper application and what recourse was available in the event of disputes.

The meeting rose at 1.00 p.m.