



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Combined fourth to sixth periodic reports submitted by Paraguay under article 44 of the Convention, due in 2017^{*, **}

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* The present document is being issued without formal editing.

** The annexes to the present report may be accessed from the web page of the Committee.



Introduction

1. The preparation of this report was coordinated by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and a drafting team composed of representatives of the three branches of government and autonomous government bodies, in conjunction with the Human Rights Network of the Executive Branch, which is coordinated by the Ministry of Justice.

2. The report provides information on follow-up to the recommendations received as a result of the review of the third periodic report and on the progress made in their implementation. In order to comply with constitutional principles and its international undertakings, the Government of Paraguay, through its competent institutions, has taken action to fulfil responsibilities assumed with regard to children and adolescents through policies, plans, programmes and projects that have a particular impact on the everyday lives of children and adolescents and serve to foster the social, cultural and economic changes that will help to build citizenship based on the equitable exercise of rights.

3. The section of the report covering follow-up to the Committee's recommendations was prepared using the SIMORE recommendations monitoring system designed by the Government of Paraguay, with support from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), that compiles and systematizes information and makes it available for consultation by the general public, and drawing on reports received from various government bodies.¹

I. General measures of implementation

4. Paraguay has no reservations in respect of its obligations under the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the related Optional Protocols.

5. It ratified the third Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure by Act No. 5770/16 (annex II).

Measures taken to bring domestic legislation and practice into full conformity with the Convention and the Optional Protocols

6. In response to the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2010, a far-reaching legislative review was carried out with a view to strengthening the institutions and mechanisms through which children's rights are promoted and protected.

7. The following laws have been adopted to enhance the promotion and protection of rights:

- Act No. 6285/16, enacting the National Strategy for the Prevention of Forced Labour 2016–2020
- Act No. 5778/2016, establishing the National Programme for Timely Stimulation (PRONAES) (annex IV)
- Act No. 5683/2016, establishing the obligation to display visibly in public places a notice that reads: "Trafficking in persons is a criminal offence in the Republic of Paraguay, especially when it is perpetrated for purposes of the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents. Report it"
- Act No. 5659/2016, promoting good treatment and positive parenting and protecting children and adolescents against physical punishment and any form of violence used as a method of correction or discipline
- Act No. 5653/2016, protecting children and adolescents from harmful content on the Internet

¹ <https://www.mre.gov.py/simoreplus/>.

- Act No. 5419/2015, amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 on the partial amendment of the Civil Code to raise the minimum age for marriage
 - Act No. 5415/2015, establishing the register of child support debtors (annex IV)
 - Act No. 5407/2015 on domestic labour
 - Act No. 5362/14, adopting the Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired, or Otherwise Print Disabled (annex II)
 - Act No. 5347/14, providing for free access to tertiary-level courses in public and private universities for applicants from Indigenous communities (annex II)
 - Act No. 5189/14, establishing an obligation to publish information on the use of public resources and the salaries and other remuneration paid to public servants of the Republic of Paraguay
 - Act No. 5136/2013, the Inclusive Education Act (annex II)
 - Act No. 4962/2013, establishing benefits for private sector employers as an incentive for the recruitment of persons with disabilities (annex II)
 - Act No. 4788/2012, the Comprehensive Act on Combating Trafficking in Persons
 - Act No. 4744/2012, incorporating the human papillomavirus vaccine into the expanded programme of immunization run by the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare
 - Act No. 4720/2012, establishing the National Secretariat for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. This Act also established the National Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Its implementing regulations were enacted by Decree No. 10514/13
 - Act No. 4698/2012, on guaranteeing nutrition in early childhood
 - Act No. 4633/2012, on combating bullying in public and private schools
 - Act No. 4616/2012, providing for priority seating to be reserved for persons with physical or motor disabilities
 - Act No. 4313/11, on guaranteed funding for the reproductive health programmes of the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare and the distribution of birth kits
8. To strengthen State institutions, the following laws have been adopted:
- Act No. 5115/13, creating the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security (annex II)
 - Act No. 4675/12, elevating the Department of Women's Affairs to the rank of ministry (annex IV)
 - Act No. 4758/12, creating the National Fund for Public Investment and Development and the Fund for Excellence in Education and Research
 - Act No. 4251/11, the Languages Act, creating the Language Policy Secretariat
 - Act No. 4288/11, on the national mechanism for the prevention of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment
 - Act No. 4423/11, the Organic Act on the Public Defence Service
9. The executive branch issued the following administrative decrees to implement or modify laws, programmes and policies:
- Decree No 3891/15, implementing the Accessibility Act (annex IV)
 - Decree No. 2837/14, implementing the Inclusive Education Act (annex VI)
 - Decree No. 2794/14, adopting the Paraguay 2030 National Development Plan, a strategic instrument of nationwide reach designed to facilitate coordinated action across the various sector-specific institutions of the executive branch and between the

different levels of government, civil society, the private sector and, where possible and appropriate, the legislature and the judiciary (annex VI)

- Decree No. 10747/13, adopting the National Human Rights Plan
- Decree No. 291/13, through which the executive branch declared the goal of poverty reduction a national government priority (annex VI)
- Decree No. 262/13, creating the National Secretariat for Youth
- Decree No. 10449/12, restructuring the Inter-Institutional Commission for the Enforcement of International Judgments
- Decree No. 8309/12, adopting the National Plan on Preventing and Combating Trafficking in Persons (annex IV)
- Decree No. 7126/11, adopting the National Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development and establishing the National Early Childhood Commission (annex IV)
- Decree No. 5196/10, establishing the Foster Care Programme for Children and Adolescents Receiving Protection and Support (annex IV)

National Strategy for Children and Adolescents

10. Within this strategic framework, the National Council for Children and Adolescents, which is the most senior body of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents and is chaired by the Permanent Secretary of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, has issued decisions adopting the following plans and programmes:

- Decision No. 02/2010, adopting the National Plan for Equitable Improvement of the Quality of Life and Health of Children and Adolescents 2010–2015, of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, submitted to the National Council for Children and Adolescents (annex III)
- Decision No. 03/2010, adopting the National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers and the Inter-Institutional Coordination Guide for supporting workers under 18 years of age, submitted to the National Council for Children and Adolescents (annex III)
- Decision No. 01/2011, adopting the National Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development, prepared jointly by the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, the Ministry of Education and Science and the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents
- Decision No. 02/2011, adopting the Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2012–2017, of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (annex III)
- Decision No. 01/2012, adopting the National Policy for the Special Protection of Children and Adolescents Separated from Their Families, of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents
- Decision No. 01/2013, creating the National Early Childhood Commission within the framework of implementation of the National Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development 2011–2020 (annex III)
- Decision No. 01/2014, creating the Network of Departmental Secretaries for Children and Adolescents as part of national policy for promoting, supporting and protecting the rights of children and adolescents (annex III)
- Decision No. 01/2015, adopting the National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2014–2024 and the National Plan for Children and Adolescents 2014–2018
- Decision No. 01/2016, adopting the National Policy for the Care of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law 2016–2021

11. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents adopted an institutional strategic plan for the period 2014–2018 and, building on this plan, has proceeded to design and implement a systematic training and capacity-building plan for public servants focused on children’s and adolescents’ rights, the applicable legal framework, fundamental human rights, proactive participation, popular education and the development of social policies, plans and projects. The plan was adopted by decision No. 776/14 and has been running for three years without interruption.

12. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has issued the following decisions adopting technical tools for planning and implementing programmes and projects:

- Decision No. 87/2017, defining harmful content in accordance with Act No. 5653/2016, on protecting children and adolescents against harmful content on the Internet (annex III)
- Decision No. 411/2016, declaring the “Muñecos Antiabuso” (anti-abuse dolls) Campaign, carried out on the initiative of Laboratorios Díaz Gill with the support of Amnesty International, of interest for the Ministry (annex III)
- Decision No. 91/2016, updating the procedures and requirements of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents for the registration of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) working to address child- and adolescent-related issues (annex III)
- Decision No. 36/2016, designating expert focal points within the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents in application of an inter-institutional cooperation agreement between the Municipality of Asunción and the Ministry
- Decision No. 815/2012, amending chapter IV of the regulations governing the approval and operation of care homes for children and adolescents under the special protection system (annex III)
- Decision No. 283/2013, adopting the procedures to be followed for transfers upon the submission of projects by educational institutions and non-profit organizations (budget classification 842)
- Decision No. 451/2015, declaring the documentary entitled *Chicas nuevas 20 horas*, produced by the production company Pua Tarará Films, of interest for the Ministry
- Decision No. 441/2015, declaring of interest for the National Secretariat the International Symposium on Mental Health focused on alternatives and current challenges in the diagnosis and treatment of children and adolescents, organized by the NGO Enfoque Niñez
- Decision 174/2015, declaring of interest for the National Secretariat the XII International Congress of the International Telethon Organization and the Foundation of the Latin American Academy of Child Development and Disability, the slogan for which was “Rehabilitation is a Human Right”
- Decision No. 776/14, adopting the systematic training plan
- Decision No. 406/2013, adopting methodological and procedural manuals for staff working with street children at the Ñemity Pedagogical Transit Centre, which provides comprehensive care for children living and/or working on the streets and is operated by the Directorate for the Protection and Promotion of Rights of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents (annex III)

Coordination

13. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has strengthened the role of the National Council for Children and Adolescents. It now organizes ordinary meetings every two weeks and has involved other institutions of relevance to child- and adolescent-related issues, including the judiciary, through representatives of the Supreme Court, the National Secretariat for Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry for Women and the United Nations

Children's Fund (UNICEF). By decision No. 01/2014 dated 11 March 2014, the Council approved the creation of the Network of Departmental Secretaries for Children and Adolescents, formed of representatives of the country's 17 departments.

14. One of the main focuses of the institutional strategic plan 2014–2018 was to strengthen the role of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents as the lead agency and coordinator of child- and adolescent-related policies by ensuring the efficient operation of the institutions that form part of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents.

15. The National Secretariat has developed various communication strategies designed to place children and adolescents on the public agenda and ensure respect for their rights. These have included: printing and distributing the text of the Code on Children and Adolescents and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; designing communication campaigns, newsletters, photographic and audiovisual materials and other formats; concluding agreements with universities and other supporting institutions at the national and international levels; and organizing training, seminars and workshops targeting educational spheres, mass media and other relevant forums.

National Action Plan

16. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents ran participatory workshops for member institutions of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents and representatives of civil society and children's organizations to gain input for the National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2014–2024. The policy was adopted by the National Council for Children and Adolescents by decision No. 01/2015, through which the National Plan for Children and Adolescents 2014–2018 was also adopted. The National Policy for Children and Adolescents and the related National Action Plan are funded from resources disbursed and administered by the Ministry of Finance.

Independent monitoring

17. As established in the Constitution, the Ombudsman's Office is an autonomous government body responsible for monitoring the implementation of international human rights instruments. Its Department for Children and Adolescents was created in 2005. The Ombudsman's Office is responsible for channelling complaints and coordinating action taken to ensure compliance with national and international instruments related to children and adolescents. Its main areas of action are promotion, protection, prevention and monitoring, and providing the mediation, conciliation and referral services necessary to protect the rights of children and adolescents facing threats or abuse.

18. The national mechanism for the prevention of torture is also an independent institution and is responsible for monitoring and conducting visits to places of deprivation of liberty and issuing reports and recommendations. The Coordinating Office for the Rights of Children and Adolescents – an association that brings together NGOs working to promote and defend the rights of children and adolescents in Paraguay – has a lead role in promoting, defending, monitoring and enforcing the rights of children and adolescents and is an active member of the National Council for Children and Adolescents.

19. The "Front for Children and Adolescents" network is composed of the Centre for Information and Resources for Development, the Coordinating Office for the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the Christian Children's Fund of Canada (CCFC), the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Fundación Teletón, Global Infancia, Plan International Paraguay, Save the Children, UNICEF and other representatives of organized civil society. The goals of the network are to encourage political and social leaders to commit to more extensive and more efficient investment in children and the fulfilment of their rights, to ensure continuing progress towards the fulfilment of children's rights in Paraguay and to monitor the implementation of policies and programmes designed to benefit children.

Resource allocation

20. The Government of Paraguay, through the Ministry of Finance, is committed to making concerted efforts to quantify the resources that are invested in the welfare of children and adolescents in Paraguay with a view to breaking the poverty cycle and achieving sustainable levels of social and economic development.

21. The table below shows investment made in fulfilment of the Government's 20 commitments to children and adolescents. The first commitment made was to progressively increase investment in children and adolescents to at least 7 per cent of gross domestic product in the period 2013–2018. The Government has been gradually increasing this investment since 2013 and, by 2016, investment specifically in child-related programmes, whether direct or indirect, had reached 6 per cent of gross domestic product. A target of 7 per cent was set for 2018.

<i>Baseline</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Target: 2018</i>
4.4 %	4.5 %	5.9 %	6.0 %	7.0 %

Source: Integrated Administration and Finance System Reports. Period 2015–2016.

22. The table attests to an increase in investment in children from 9.407 billion guaraníes (G) in 2015 to G 10.636 billion in 2016. Financial year 2016 saw an increase in investment in programmes benefiting families, with a proportion of this increased investment and expenditure being channelled into projects specifically benefiting children and pregnant mothers. There was also an increase in investment and expenditure to ensure supplies of drinking water, adequate sewerage and sanitation, and access to housing, and in programmes for addressing climate emergencies, inter alia.

<i>Programme category</i>	<i>Financial year 2015</i>			<i>Financial year 2016</i>		
	<i>Budget at year end</i>	<i>Executed budget</i>	<i>Percentage of budget executed</i>	<i>Budget at year end</i>	<i>Executed budget</i>	<i>Percentage of budget executed</i>
Direct	6 928	6 309	91	6 748	6 267	93
Indirect	2 212	1 904	86	2 360	1 957	83
Expanded	268	235	88	1 529	1 182	77
Total	9 407	8 448	90	10 636	9 406	88

Source: Integrated Administration and Finance System Reports. Period 2015–2016.

* Includes investment in the Itaipu and Yacyretá binational entities (headings 23800/2017 and 25636/2017) and the total budget executed by the municipalities under expenditure item 848: transfers for school meals.

23. The Technical Planning Secretariat uses a Results-based Planning System that enables it to consolidate management information from the different State institutions and compare results against the guidelines set in the National Development Plan with a view to identifying the critical path for achieving national development objectives. Using this system, State institutions are able to define their contributions to the National Development Plan, including targets and expected outcomes, which serve as a basis for the general national budget. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has been incorporating its budget into the Results-based Planning System for the purpose of preparing the preliminary draft budget for the following year since 2013. Specific expenditure items incorporated are: action to restore the rights of children; provision of integrated assistance to children and adolescents in vulnerable situations; action to promote and support adoptions; comprehensive protection of children engaged in hazardous labour; and alternative care for children and adolescents.

24. In 2011 and 2012, specific articles were added to the decrees implementing the legislation through which the general national budget was adopted in order to ensure that social expenditure on children and adolescents, which is considered a social investment, was prioritized. This expenditure continued to be prioritized in the 2013, 2014, 2015 and 2016 budget programmes, the objectives of which were to safeguard programmes and items of expenditure that could not be cut back. The National Poverty Reduction Plan and the Social Protection System were specifically mentioned by name, thereby ensuring that expenditure under these budget headings was protected and prioritized.

Data collection

25. The Government of Paraguay has been developing integrated information systems for use by the institutions responsible for public policy that are able to compile and process information on a regular and timely basis and produce the reports necessary for monitoring, assessing and formulating public policies. The integrated information systems include information on social programmes and child- and adolescent-related programmes, as detailed in the following paragraphs.

26. The Integrated Social Information System used to manage social welfare policies incorporates in a single system information on current and potential beneficiaries (in a central register of beneficiaries), the social programmes available and the budgets assigned to them. The system facilitates effective decision-making on social welfare as well as the planning and coordination of the different lines of action associated with the social welfare policies and programmes in place in the country.

27. The Results-based Planning System links institutional operating plans to the State budget planning and execution process. The Government is thus able to assess how effective each institution is in meeting the national development goals set in the National Development Plan. The Results-based Planning System is also linked to the Presidential and Citizens Dashboard – a strategic tool designed as part of the National Development Plan to contribute to efficient and transparent public administration. The Mobile Monitoring System developed by the Technical Planning Secretariat collects information in text, multimedia and georeferenced formats and automatically forwards it to the Presidential Dashboard, the Results-based Planning System and any other government information system that requires it.

28. The Integrated Financial Management System² is an evolving system that integrates the budget, treasury, accounts, public lending and public debt systems. The information it contains includes amounts invested in children and central government expenditure, disaggregated by function, sector and institutions, among other variables.

29. Since 2013, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has redoubled its efforts to develop and maintain independent computer systems for the following social programmes that directly benefit children and adults:

- The Embrace (Abrazo) programme,³ through its monitoring department, maintains a database containing information on the number of children and adolescents who benefit from the programme in each annual reporting period
- The 147 telephone helpline⁴ uses an independent system that compiles, at regular intervals, information on cases processed and referred to member institutions of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents that reflects the types of violation that affect children and adolescents up to 18 years of age. The children concerned may be victims of child abuse, sexual exploitation and abuse, mistreatment or neglect, among other violations, or children in street situations

² <https://www.hacienda.gov.py/web-presupuesto/index.php?c=147>.

³ <http://www.minna.gov.py/pagina/229-abrazo.html>.

⁴ <http://www.minna.gov.py/pagina/1224-fono-ayuda-147.html>.

- The Special Protection Directorate maintains an up-to-date database and directory of alternative care facilities nationwide as well as a record of all children and adolescents living in such facilities, with data disaggregated by age, sex, family background, identity and civil registration status
- The Executive Office of the Adoption Centre maintains two databases, one containing information on children and the other containing information on prospective parents wishing to adopt. The first database includes the following variables: name, age, sex, date of birth, siblings and information about the biological parents and extended biological family

Dissemination of and training on the Convention on the Rights of the Child

30. The recommendations issued to Paraguay by the Committee on the Rights of the Child have been published and widely distributed in printed form, both by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and by UNICEF. They are also available for consultation on the relevant web pages and through the SIMORE Plus recommendations monitoring system.

31. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has carried out the following child-friendly awareness-raising campaigns:

- The “Green Ribbon” (Lazo Verde) Campaign, launched in 2012 and designed to raise awareness of child and adolescent sexual abuse among public and private institutions, the media and adult citizens as well as among children and adolescents themselves. The country has proclaimed 31 May as the National Day against the Mistreatment, Sexual Abuse and Labour Exploitation of Children and Adolescents
- The “True Friend” (Amigo Real) Campaign, launched in 2016 to raise awareness of the rights of children and adolescents and encourage use of the 147 telephone helpline in order to help child and adolescent victims to escape continuing violence
- The “Hot Clothing” (Prendas Eróticas) Campaign, launched in 2016 with the slogan “Some adults make innocence a commodity”. The campaign purportedly introduced the world’s first range of “hot” clothing for children, although the range was not actually sold anywhere in the world but was intended to highlight the humiliation to which thousands of girls were subjected
- The “No to *criadazgo*; respect my rights” (No al Criadazgo, Respeta mis Derechos) Campaign, launched in 2015, which shed light on the practice of offering children food, clothing, shelter and in some cases education in exchange for domestic labour (*criadazgo*) (annex IV)
- The Operation Trans-Chaco Rally Prevention Campaign, which has been running since 2008 and was launched in response to frequent complaints, received via the 147 helpline, of rights violations and sexual exploitation in the area surrounding the route of the Trans-Chaco Rally
- The “Connect Safely” (Conéctate Seguro) Campaign, launched in 2014, aimed at both children and adults and designed to protect Internet users while surfing, to cast the spotlight on cyberbullying, grooming and sexting and to promote good practices on social networks (annex V)
- The “Good Treatment” (Buen Trato) Campaign, launched in 2014 and designed to eliminate the use of corporal punishment and violence as a means of disciplining children by parents, teachers, caregivers and other adults and to raise awareness of positive parenting methods and the importance of applying the five key phrases used in the campaign, which were: “Listen to me”; “Talk to me”; “Give me a hug”; “Slaps don’t teach me anything, they just hurt”; and “If you shout at me, you’re ill-treating me” (Escúchame, Háblame, Abrazame, Los golpes no enseñan, duelen, and Si me gritás, me maltratás).

- The Toy Bank Campaign, launched in 2017 under the slogan “There are other ways to help”. The aim was to create the first bank of new and used toys for subsequent distribution throughout the year to protection centres run under State programmes that organize activities for children and also to public and private sector institutions
- The “Be a Responsible Dad” (Se Papá Responsable) Campaign, launched in 2017 to encourage, reinforce and re-establish the role of the family in the harmonious development of children and adolescents by appealing to social sensitivities and promoting responsible fatherhood

Training

32. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, through agreements and cooperation with other organizations and companies, has carried out awareness-raising workshops focused on the good treatment of children.

33. With the support of international cooperation agencies, including the Organization of Ibero-American States for Education, Science and Culture, the Directorate for Institutional Development of the System has provided training to departmental and municipal representatives who work on child-related issues related to public policy, the prevention of violence against children and adolescents, support for victims and early childhood and has organized seminars on subjects including “Childhood Counts”, “Alternative Care” and “Child protection and non-violence under the new sustainable development agenda”.

34. Seminars and courses on State budget planning for better investment in children and the Guide for Inter-Institutional Coordination in Addressing Child Labour, inter alia, were organized in 2015, and awareness-raising workshops and seminars aimed at professors and students in the fields of social work, psychology, law and medical sciences have been held in various universities in the country as part of the drive to promote the rights of children and adolescents.

35. Training on compliance with Act No. 5508/2015, on promoting, protecting and supporting breastfeeding, has been provided for officers of the Ministry of Defence.

36. To promote the Convention on the Rights of the Child, copies of the Code on Children and Adolescent that include a section focused on the Convention were printed for awareness-raising purposes and were distributed in schools, colleges and public and private sector institutions, as well as among judges, prosecutors, public defenders, children’s organizations, departmental secretaries and the general public.

State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children’s rights

37. The National Early Childhood Commission, which is a subcommission of the National Council for Children and Adolescents, is responsible for implementing State policies on early childhood in conjunction with member institutions of the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents, representatives of civil society, children’s organizations, private sector companies, the media, training institutions and independent professionals. Its aim is to ensure that issues affecting children from birth to 8 years of age are visible and are given priority.

38. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has worked with the business sector on various initiatives on the basis of agreements and cooperative action. These have included:

- A framework agreement for inter-institutional cooperation in preventing and eliminating child and adolescent labour in the gambling sector and preventing children and adolescents from gambling themselves, especially in the game of chance known as “Máquina de Gremio Programado”, concluded between the National Gambling Commission, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the Paraguayan Organization for Inter-Municipal Cooperation

- The Toy Bank Initiative, a scheme set up with support from a number of companies and shopping centres in which members of the public are invited to become shareholders by making a donation
- An expert advisory meeting organized to discuss the creation of a children’s centre to cater for the children of employees of Fujikura from birth to the age of 2 years and the establishment of a breastfeeding room. The discussions are being spearheaded by the Early Childhood Coordinating Office of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, with support from the National Early Childhood Commission, the Breastfeeding Programme of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare and the Early Education Programme of the Ministry of Education and Science
- A “Play day” workshop: the “Avancemos” event dedicated to early childhood involved performances of various art forms including dance, storytelling, songs, puppetry, wordplay and other educational games with a focus on information- and knowledge-sharing. At the event, specially equipped spaces were made available for breastfeeding (hosted by breastfeeding support groups), team games (hosted by Ludoteca Club Perler), a repair workshop and exchange (hosted by Fundación Teletón), a “life and sensations” tent (hosted by the psychomotricity department of the Ibero-American University), the “Bibliobus” library (hosted by the municipality of Asunción), drawing and painting workshops run by students of the Catholic University, and exhibitions on foster care, timely educational care, early childhood development and other topics of interest.
- As part of its undertaking to promote the rights of children and adolescents, oil company Petrobras has entered into a partnership with the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, UNICEF and the Coordinating Office for the Rights of Children and Adolescents with a view to working together to ensure that awards of competitive grant funding serve to strengthen State action to protect and promote human rights in the sector.

II. Definition of the child (art. 1)

39. Act No. 2169/03 sets out the following definitions for interpretative purposes:
- Child: any individual from conception to the age of 13 years
 - Adolescent: any individual between the ages of 14 and 17 years
 - Adult: any individual aged 18 years or over
40. If there is doubt about an individual’s age, the following assumptions are made:
- (a) An individual who could be a child or an adolescent is presumed to be a child;
 - (b) An individual who could be an adolescent or an adult is presumed to be an adolescent.
41. Act No. 5419/15, amending articles 17 and 20 of Act No. 1/92 on the partial amendment of the Civil Code, was enacted on 6 May 2015, increasing the minimum age for marriage to 18 years.

III. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

(a) Non-discrimination

42. Children and adolescents are equal in dignity and rights and it is the State’s duty to promote equal enjoyment of dignity and rights. Article 46 of the Constitution expressly states that discrimination is not permitted and that the State is required to remove the obstacles and prevent the factors that maintain or give rise to it.

43. Although Paraguay does not yet have regulations governing the constitutional principle of non-discrimination, as a bill on the matter is still being drafted and debated by the general public and the different branches of government, article 45 of the Constitution clearly stipulates that the lack of regulatory legislation may not be invoked to deny or curtail any right or guarantee, including those related to non-discrimination.

44. Education policy takes a rights-based approach involving the participation of all stakeholders. It is geared towards children, adolescents, parents and teachers and is intended to identify the rights of, and obligations between, child and adolescent peers from different cultures.

45. The Ministry of Education and Science and the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs promoted the construction and fitting out of schools in Indigenous communities in order to expand the education system in accordance with the cultural characteristics of each ethnic group, employing properly trained Indigenous teachers and ensuring respect for the cultural rights of Indigenous children and adolescents.

46. Act No. 5136/13, the Inclusive Education Act, provides for an inclusive approach involving various related government and non-government sectors.

47. The Directorate for the *Buen Vivir* (peaceable, harmonious, ethical and environmentally sustainable living) of Indigenous Peoples, which is part of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, has provided support and care to groups of vulnerable children and adolescents in street situations belonging to the country's 19 Indigenous Peoples.

48. Measures have been taken to encourage and perpetuate cultural practices relating to *opy* (prayer houses) and *jeroky* (traditional dance), to promote Indigenous values and the Indigenous cosmovision, and to strengthen cultural identity and support for communities and young people's and women's organizations in order to preserve the cultural practices of each community. Furthermore, registration drives for the issuance of personal documents such as ethnic identity cards and national identity cards have been carried out.

49. The Coordinating Office on Inclusion of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents carries out the following actions: participating in the preparation of the health component of the action plan of the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities; participating in the standardization of the uniform regulations governing the care of children aged between 3 months and 5 years and the national strategic framework for unplanned teenage pregnancy; and coordinating with the Directorate General for Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education and Science to ensure that the campaigns and services of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents are accessible.

(b) Best interests of the child

50. This principle is reflected in the priority assigned in law to the just satisfaction of the rights of the child with a view to ensuring his or her comprehensive development. In determining these interests, the child's family ties, education, and ethnic, religious, cultural and linguistic origins must be respected. Account must also be taken of the child's views, the balance between his or her rights and duties, and his or her status as a developing human being (Code on Children and Adolescents, art. 3).

51. The principle of the best interests of the child is consistently applied by the judiciary in the decisions of the courts and tribunals. Decision No. 965/2015 of the Supreme Court sets out guidelines on the admission of children and adolescents to health-care institutions as a protective measure to be taken in emergency situations.

52. A seminar/workshop on special protection for children and adolescents in the justice system and a training session on the *Cristina Aguayo* case for justice officials were held in the districts of Encarnación and Coronel Oviedo. The participants included judges, public defenders, prosecutors, representatives of public institutions and civil society organizations.

53. Under article 43 of the bill on migration, the National Directorate of Migration, in coordination with the relevant agencies, will support programmes to assist unaccompanied

children and adolescents in situations of vulnerability who cross border checkpoints, providing them with protection, counselling, health care and legal assistance with a view to reuniting them with their families, applying the principle of the best interests of the child in a cross-cutting manner and complying with the principle of non-refoulement. Any decision to expel or refuse admission to a migrant child or adolescent, whether accompanied or not, must be based on the best interests of the child and be taken in the context of due process of law evidencing that such is the case. Special and particular protection measures will be established for children and adolescents who are victims of trafficking, exploitation, abuse and violence, among other offences.

(c) Right to life, survival and development

54. The purpose of the National Plan for Comprehensive Childhood Health 2016–2021 is to propose measures based on strategies for reducing morbidity and mortality and improving the quality of life of children under 10 years of age in the country, emphasizing the need to reduce the gaps that give rise to inequity. The Comprehensive and Integrated Health Service Networks are based on the primary health-care strategy and are intended to advance progress towards universal health-care access and coverage. Act No. 5508/15 on the Promotion of Breastfeeding was a significant step forward for the rights of the child.

55. The Programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Syphilis has been successfully implemented. Antiretroviral drugs are free of charge and available at the services of the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare. Significant efforts have been made to expand the number of public health facilities that offer voluntary counselling and testing for HIV and syphilis. Manuals, guidelines and protocols that holistically address HIV and other sexually transmitted infections have been drafted in an inclusive, broad, comprehensive and participatory process involving representatives of government agencies, international organizations and civil society organizations.

56. The “Be a Responsible Dad” (Se papá responsable) campaign is the result of work carried out in conjunction with the Supreme Court and the Public Defence Service to highlight the importance of parental care for children’s development.

(d) Respect for the views of the child

57. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents promotes the active involvement of children and significant adults in communities, settlements, neighbourhoods and companies, recognizing them as agents of change in the situations affecting them. Meetings have been held to promote active participation, such as the seventh World Congress for the Rights of Children and Adolescents and a meeting to analyse the 20 commitments to children and adolescents.

58. The main measures taken in this regard have been: supporting and coordinating systematic training opportunities for officials of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents; drawing up a plan for training in active participation processes for children and adolescents at the Ñemity Residential Learning Centre of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents; drafting a training plan on active participation through art, intended for adolescents in the city of Asunción; holding national meetings of children and adolescents, organized jointly with civil society organizations; organizing the Caaguazú departmental children’s and adolescents’ forum on active participation; coordinating a training course on active participation in cooperation with the Inter-American Children’s Institute and the Organization of American States; providing technical support for the establishment of the Asunción Committee of Children and Adolescents; and building inter-institutional linkages at the national and international levels.

IV. Civil rights and freedoms

Birth registration

59. Act No. 1377/99 provides for free birth registration and free issuance of a person's first birth certificate, irrespective of his or her age; the registration of births and of acknowledgements of parentage is free of charge. By Decree No. 3238/15, a plan was adopted for the mass issuance of identity cards for school-age children, enabling mass registration campaigns to be conducted in regions previously identified as priority areas (annex VI).

60. The legal framework and coverage have been improved to ensure timely registration, with the number of registrations increasing by 18.5 per cent between 2013 and 2016, as shown in the table below:

Number of children under 1 year of age registered in the civil registry

<i>Baseline 2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Target: 2018</i>
208	82 971	91 673	95 054	

Source: Department of Vital Statistics – Directorate General of the Civil Registry – Ministry of Justice – 2016.

61. The Directorate General of the Civil Registry is in the process of fully decentralizing the services that it provides. Accordingly, 14 of the 17 departmental capitals are now permanently connected to the head office. Among the activities carried out, priority has been given to reorganizing the head office in order to improve the service provided to the public and ensure better oversight of operations.

62. The Directorate General of the Civil Registry, in conjunction with the National Institute of Indigenous Affairs, holds documentation days with a view to providing all the inhabitants of the different departments with identity documents, thus improving the quality and timeliness of the records of Indigenous inhabitants at the national level. In coordination with the Supreme Court, work carried out under the “Right to an Identity” (Derecho a una Identidad) programme is being strengthened.

63. In order to reduce the rate of unregistered births (underregistration), mass campaigns to register births and issue birth certificates are regularly carried out throughout the country, including in Indigenous communities.

64. The Coordinating Council on Identity, which forms part of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, is responsible for promoting, coordinating, managing and facilitating free access to the universal right to identity for children and adolescents by promoting and raising awareness of this right.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

65. The national preventive mechanism is an operationally independent State agency for the prevention of torture and the protection of persons deprived of their liberty or otherwise confined who are at risk of being subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment. Its monitoring directorate has been preparing reports on juvenile education centres, police and military facilities, care homes, places of detention and prisons, as well as reports on actions taken on specific situations and annual activity reports for accountability purposes.

66. The Human Rights Directorate of the Public Prosecution Service is a technical and operational directorate that carries out monitoring visits to juvenile education centres to check on the conditions in which adolescents are detained. If ill-treatment and/or torture are found to have occurred, the specialist public prosecutor of the area concerned is asked to take action.

67. The purpose of these visits, which are conducted randomly, is to eradicate ill-treatment and torture in juvenile education centres and to prosecute the perpetrators of such acts against children and adolescents and their accomplices. The Special Unit for Human Rights Offences is responsible for taking action against the following offences: enforced disappearance, the infliction of bodily harm by persons acting in an official capacity, torture, malicious prosecution, wrongful punishment, genocide and other offences.

68. The Victim Support Centre of the Public Prosecution Service provides emergency psychological support to victims of the aforementioned offences and to children and adolescents who are deprived of their liberty, ensuring that their arrest, detention or imprisonment is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and that they are given prompt access to legal and other assistance.

Corporal punishment

69. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, as the coordinator of the National Commission for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents and the Comprehensive Care of Victims, spearheaded the adoption of Act No. 5659/16 promoting good treatment and positive parenting and protecting children and adolescents against physical punishment and any form of violence used as a method of correction or discipline. A comprehensive public policy for the promotion of positive parenting is currently being designed and drafted.

70. At the national level, the agencies of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents have conducted a number of training sessions, workshops and conferences, aimed at children, adolescents and key adults, on the prevention of violence and rights violations of all kinds. As part of efforts to combat violence against children and adolescents, awareness-raising campaigns and measures have been carried out.

71. In 2014, in order to commemorate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Convention, the National Early Childhood Commission held an event dedicated to early childhood, entitled “Avancemos”, which was organized by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and supported by public institutions and civil society organizations that work with young children and their families.

72. A campaign to raise awareness of the abuse and sexual exploitation of children and adolescents, using the hashtags #LazoVerde and #RespetáMisDerechos, was carried out. In order to prevent and address violence, train-the-trainers workshops on the rights of children and adolescents have been held throughout the country within the framework of the Project to Strengthen the National Protection System for the Prevention of Violence against Children and Adolescents.

73. With the support of Petrobras and the Paraguayan Automobile and Touring Club, the “Innocence Threatened with Extinction” (La inocencia en peligro de extinción) awareness-raising campaign was carried out prior to and during the Trans-Chaco Rally.

74. With the support of SOS Children’s Villages and the creative agency Nasta, a campaign on the theme “Some adults turn innocence into a commodity” was launched. As part of the “True Friend” (Amigo Real) campaign, materials for mass distribution were prepared and school kits bearing the campaign messages were distributed with the support of the Ministry of Education and Science. Celebrities and journalists were involved in these activities.

Partnership campaigns

75. In 2010, the campaign “Child Labour: Dropping out of School Is One of Its Consequences” was implemented to raise awareness of other harmful effects of the exploitation of children on their lives.

76. In 2011, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the International Labour Organization relaunched an awareness-raising campaign on trafficking in persons with the slogan “It’s a Crime”.

77. Within the framework of the coordination initiative Niñ@Sur, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents helped to develop an awareness-raising campaign on child trafficking that was widely publicized in the areas bordering Argentina and Brazil.

78. In 2014, a three-nation campaign with the slogan “Use your voice to silence injustice” was held to combat violence against children and young people (annex IV).

Follow-up to the United Nations study on violence against children

79. As part of a programme-based strategy, the Paraguayan State has been carrying out annual accountability exercises for children and adolescents with the support of civil society organizations and of groups and organizations of children and adolescents in order to share information on, and promote compliance with, the Government’s 20 commitments to children and adolescents. Every year the Government publishes information on achievements that it receives from the ministries and the agencies of the executive branch.

80. The Southern Common Market (MERCOSUR) guidelines on accountability for children and adolescents were submitted to the Niñ@Sur Initiative Standing Committee. The advances in this area in Paraguay were used as a benchmark for good practice.

81. As part of the national campaign “Mayors for the Rights of Children and Adolescents” (Intendentes por los Derechos de la Niñez y la Adolescencia), candidates for the post of mayor in different districts in the country signed a letter of commitment expressing their desire to defend and implement the Code on Children and Adolescents. This initiative was overseen by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and its objective was to guarantee that people who occupy elective positions at the municipal level effectively ensure the realization of the rights of children and adolescents during their terms of office.

V. Family environment and alternative care

Family environment

82. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has made efforts to strengthen families. The “Abrazo” programme, under which support is provided to beneficiaries of the National Financial Inclusion Strategy, includes the “Abrazo Kyrey” project, the purpose of which is to promote the education and financial inclusion of vulnerable families. The project includes training in formal employment, entrepreneurship, investment, savings and loans.

83. In 2016, a total of 19,665 people benefited from the project and improved their quality of life index, which is measured using indicators related to income, habitability, education, health and the elimination of child labour. Of the total number of beneficiaries, 4,213 are young children (aged 8 years or under), 4,470 are boys and 4,002 are girls (aged between 9 and 14 years), 2,988 are adolescents (aged between 15 and 17 years) and 3,992 are adults.

84. As of the end of December 2016, a total of 1,982 families had received conditional cash transfers. A total of 3,782 families were assisted at the different centres, receiving solidarity vouchers, food baskets, tutoring services and nutritional supplements. A total of 2,400 children actively participated in bimonthly promotion and training activities related to the rights of children and adolescents. A total of 120 beneficiary families and 298 children completed the programme, improving their quality of life index after receiving continuous assistance and social support.

85. In late 2016, 4,838 adolescents and responsible adults who had been conditional cash transfer recipients in Asunción, Concepción, Cordillera, Guairá, Caaguazú, Itapúa, Misiones, Alto Paraná and Central received training in financial literacy. During the second half of the year, the beneficiaries of the “Abrazo” programme in the district of Encarnación were trained by the National Career Development Service.

Alternative care

86. In 2012, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents promoted the design and adoption of a special national policy (the National Policy for the Special Protection of Children and Adolescents Separated from Their Families) in order to support children and adolescents separated from their families. This policy sets out three strategic lines of action: (1) the maintenance of family ties as a guiding principle; (2) family foster care as a protection model; and (3) deinstitutionalization as a strategy. The Special Protection Directorate is responsible for authorizing, registering and overseeing the functioning of care institutions.

87. In order to prevent children and adolescents from being placed in institutions, the Special Protection Directorate implements Decree No. 5196/10, establishing the Foster Care Programme for Children and Adolescents Receiving Protection and Support. Under the programme, children and adolescents who, for various reasons, cannot remain in the care of their families are taken into care, while efforts are made to maintain their ties to their families of origin. In cases where children and adolescents cannot be reintegrated into their family, efforts will be made to have them adopted, in accordance with the law in force.

88. In early August 2014, in accordance with the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children adopted by the United Nations General Assembly, a call to action for the eradication of the institutionalization of children under 3 years of age was launched in Paraguay. State institutions and civil society organizations signed a declaration of commitment to join forces with a view to eradicating institutionalization.

89. An action plan for children in care, jointly designed by the national preventive mechanism and the Special Protection Directorate, in collaboration with the Human Rights Directorate of the Supreme Court and the juvenile courts, has been implemented. The purpose of the plan is to establish mechanisms that provide definitive solutions for children and adolescents who are deprived of their family environment under a judicial protection measure, in accordance with the guidelines of the National Policy for the Special Protection of Children and Adolescents Separated from Their Families.

90. In 2015, during the country's pro tempore presidency of MERCOSUR, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the National Foster Care Network, with the support of UNICEF and the Red Latinoamericana de Acogimiento Familiar (Latin American Foster Care Network), held a seminar entitled "Alternative Care for Children and Adolescents in the Region: Progress, Difficulties and Challenges", within the framework of the twenty-fifth meeting of the Niñ@Sur Initiative Standing Committee and the twenty-seventh meeting of the MERCOSUR High Authorities on Human Rights.

91. The following conclusions and recommendations resulted from this seminar:

- Promote, within MERCOSUR, the identification of human rights standards relating to alternative care and the prevention of family separation as a basis for the development of a model law to guarantee children's and adolescents' right to live in a family setting and to alternative care
- Create opportunities for children and adolescents to contribute to the design and implementation of public policies in this area
- Promote campaigns to raise awareness and encourage participation in family foster care programmes in the region, to enable more children and adolescents who require alternative care to be placed in foster families
- Ensure that national budgets provide for the necessary resources, in sufficient quantity, to carry out programmes to prevent separation and to promote deinstitutionalization and alternative care
- Make use of ongoing monitoring tools to identify the progress made and the difficulties and challenges faced by the agencies responsible for protecting the rights of children and adolescents in order to ensure the provision of alternative care in each country

- Strengthen interaction between children and adolescents, civil society and State authorities in order to identify and share lessons and good practices learned from experiences of alternative care
- Ensure the necessary State support for the families and communities of origin of children and adolescents who are vulnerable or have been separated from their families, with a view to promptly and safely reuniting them with their families and communities
- Ensure that decisions to separate children and adolescents from their nuclear families are appropriate and temporary by periodically reviewing protection measures
- Continue carrying out deinstitutionalization measures in compliance with the call to action for the eradication of the institutionalization of children under 3 years of age in Latin America and the Caribbean
- Ensure that all public policies, plans, programmes and projects relating to these issues are focused on children and adolescents as rights holders, taking their best interests into account and ensuring their participation

92. In the first half of 2017, the Special Protection Directorate launched the national campaign “I Chose to Love More: There Are Other Ways to Help” (Elegí amar más, hay otras formas de ayudar), the main objective of which was to encourage families to foster vulnerable children and adolescents.

93. In 2015, by decision No. 632/15, the regulations for the alternative care of children and adolescents in foster care programmes and care institutions were adopted, along with seven protocols, all of which govern the operation of care institutions at the national level. The protocols in question are as follows:

- Annex I. Protocol governing measures to search for and locate the families of origin of children and adolescents separated from their families
- Annex II. Protocol governing the maintenance of family ties for children and adolescents separated from their families
- Annex III. Protocol governing the care provided to children and adolescents in alternative care
- Annex IV. Protocol governing foster-care work with children and adolescents who are separated from their families
- Annex V. Protocol governing work with children and adolescents separated from their families who are in shelters or residential care
- Annex VI. Protocol governing measures to trace the origins of children and adolescents
- Annex VII. Protocol governing the granting of subsidies to children and adolescents in foster care

94. Prosecutors and officials of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents underwent capacity-building and refresher training with the aim of enhancing data production and improving on the outcomes of past judicial proceedings, under which children and adolescents were institutionalized for long periods of time, by adopting other types of alternative care under the Plan for the Deinstitutionalization of Children and Adolescents.

Adoption

95. The Adoption Centre, which reports to the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, incorporates the Committee’s observations in all its actions, technical reports and recommendations to the specialized justice system, ensuring that, when it intervenes in a situation, the adoption is feasible and every effort is made to maintain family ties, thus guaranteeing that care and protection is provided within the biological family.

96. The work of searching for and locating nuclear and extended families, maintaining family ties and finding foster care is expedited by the use of regional teams of experts, through which services are decentralized. Decision No. 850/13 of the Supreme Court regulates judicial proceedings relating to adoption (annex VI).

97. A proposal to amend the Adoption Act has been put forward and is currently being developed by the National Commission for the Study and Reform of Matters Relating to Childhood and Adolescence. The Commission was established pursuant to Act No. 5576/16 with a view to preparing proposals to amend the laws regulating this area.

98. In the 2015 financial year, the total budget allocated to the Adoption Centre was 0.52 per cent of the institutional total. This figure stood at 4 per cent in 2016 and 7.28 per cent in 2017.

Abuse and neglect

99. Paraguay has been recognized as a pathfinder by the Global Partnership to End Violence against Children and adolescents. The presentation of an action plan is one of the first steps towards achieving this objective. Countries recognized globally as pathfinders will receive technical and economic support from the Partnership with a view to coordinating measures at all levels. The pathfinding countries have expressed their political will to achieve Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 and have pledged to implement a specific strategy to this end.

100. The National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents carries out different measures to combat violence against children and has set itself the goal of complying with Sustainable Development Goal 16.2 of the 2030 Agenda, on the protection of children from violence and exploitation.

101. Act No. 5659/2016 promoting good treatment and positive parenting and protecting children and adolescents against physical punishment and any form of violence used as a method of correction or discipline was the outcome of a years-long effort by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, civil society organizations and UNICEF Paraguay.

102. This Act establishes that all children and adolescents have the right to good treatment and respect for their physical, mental and emotional integrity. This right includes the protection of their image, identity, autonomy, thoughts, feelings, dignity and values. Physical punishment and humiliating treatment inflicted on children and adolescents as a form of correction or discipline, especially by parents, guardians, caregivers or persons responsible for their education, care, guidance or treatment of any kind, are prohibited.

103. The 147 toll-free hotline receives reports and refers them to the specialized justice administration agencies, the National Police (911) and “SOS Mujer” (137).

VI. Basic health and welfare

Children with disabilities

104. As part of the effort to build a more inclusive society with a rights-based approach, the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities was established by Act No. 4720/12, which is regulated by Decree No. 10514/13. The Secretariat’s mission is to guarantee equal opportunities, social inclusion, respect for rights, participation in social dialogue and accessibility for persons with disabilities in order to improve their quality of life and, by extension, that of their families and those around them, gradually adopting the necessary measures for the effective implementation of public policies based on the Constitution and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

105. To enable the Secretariat to fulfil its functions, the National Commission on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015–2030, which was designed with a human rights approach on the basis of the Convention and the international human rights recommendations systematized in the

SIMORE system. The Plan is harmonized with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and interlinked with the National Development Plan 2030, under which the executive branch coordinates sectoral actions with various institutions at different levels of government, the legislative branch, the judiciary and civil society.

106. The Secretariat has its headquarters in Fernando de la Mora and other offices outside the capital, in order to provide greater coverage, in the following places: San Estanislao, Caacupé, Coronel Oviedo, Villarrica, Pilar and Tebicuarymi. Through the network of the National Institute for the Protection of Exceptional Persons (the predecessor institution), services were provided to 80,600 users, whereas the Secretariat's network currently serves 102,296 users, whether in the form of ongoing care, benefits or assessments.

107. With regard to promoting the rights of persons with disabilities, steps continue to be taken to mainstream rights under the National Action Plan for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2015–2030, which was developed with the participation of citizens through departmental forums nationwide. In addition, through inter-institutional agreements, training was provided on disability-related issues, and support was given to initiatives of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and of civil society that prioritize children and adolescents with disabilities.

108. As part of its Agenda for Education 2013–2018, the Directorate General for Inclusive Education of the Ministry of Education and Science has been developing priority actions within the educational quality assurance policies under the National Education Plan 2024, which are aligned with the National Development Plan 2030.

109. The Ministry seeks to offer high-quality, inclusive education that is free of all forms of discrimination and promotes full access, the completion of studies and learning achievements for all, with a particular focus on those who are vulnerable or at risk.

110. The implementation of Act No. 5136/13, the Inclusive Education Act, is in full swing. Awareness-raising sessions are being held in educational institutions for all education professionals, and the number of institutions that meet the minimum standards for serving persons with disabilities is increasing day by day. The Single Student Registry has been introduced to collect data on children and adolescents with disabilities who are enrolled in educational institutions.

Health and health services

111. Pursuant to decision No. SG 613/15, and with technical assistance from the Pan American Health Organization, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare promotes the creation and implementation of integrated and comprehensive networks of primary health-care services as a means of contributing towards improved access to these services and universal health coverage for the population within a human rights framework. To this end, mechanisms have been implemented for land-use management, reorganization of services, coordination and development of networks, strengthening of human resources, management processes and financing of institutions.

112. The integrated and comprehensive network of health-care services known as “*Tesãi Pyahurã Paraguay*” is a range of interlinked, cooperative and interdependent health-care services with common objectives that enable the humane, safe and equitable provision of continuous and comprehensive care to the population. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare coordinates the various bodies that make up the network, including the Social Security Institute, the police health service, the military health service, municipalities and departmental governments, with which it enters into agreements, conventions and partnerships.

113. The aim of the National Plan for Children and Adolescents 2014–2018 is to propose measures based on strategic lines of action to reduce morbidity and mortality and to improve the quality of life of children under 10 years of age in the country, with an emphasis on bridging the gaps that result in inequity.

114. The Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is implementing an early childhood development programme entitled “Paraguay, Growing Together” within the framework of the National Plan for Comprehensive Early Childhood Development 2011–2020, which seeks to advance public policies for the comprehensive development of children and contribute to the cognitive, socio-emotional and physical development of children aged 0 to 5 years through promotional activities, early detection of developmental problems and timely access to treatment thereof.

Adolescent health

115. The National Adolescent Health Plan 2016–2021 is designed to enable adolescents to be proactive in building their own lives and to enjoy a better quality of life and full health. The Plan is the result of a collective process, is intended to serve as a tool for planning health interventions aimed at adolescents and is based on the outcomes of the qualitative and quantitative evaluation of the previous plan, which covered the period 2010–2015. It also responds to the provisions of the Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Code on Children and Adolescents and the Health Code. The Plan is part of the National Health Policy 2015–2030, which establishes the principles of universality, quality and compassion in the provision of services.

116. The Technical Regulations on Comprehensive Health Services for Adolescents are designed to guide the organization of such services with a rights-based approach. They were developed, reviewed and validated through a series of workshops involving key stakeholders and lay down general criteria for the provision of health services, in addition to defining roles at the various levels of management and establishing guidelines for appropriate follow-up.

117. The Guide to the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Health Services offers practical advice to health professionals on how to provide good treatment and quality of care in their day-to-day work using a rights-based, intercultural and gender-based approach. It is a tool that supports professionals in providing effective responses to possible rights violations.

118. Proprietary and special medicinal products intended for use by minors are registered and controlled by the National Health Monitoring Directorate, must be prescribed by a paediatrician and are sold exclusively in pharmacies by prescription.

Breastfeeding

119. Act No. 5508/15 on Promotion and Protection of Motherhood and Support for Breastfeeding provides explicitly for the protection of pregnant and breastfeeding women in all public and private workplaces. The Act is regulated by Decree No. 7550/17 (annex IV).

120. Paraguay managed to reduce maternal deaths by 15.1 per cent and newborn deaths by 8.5 per cent. Investment in infrastructural improvements, equipment and training of staff involved in maternal and neonatal care has had a significant impact on reducing the number of deaths among persons in these vulnerable groups.

121. A national mobilization campaign was launched in 2014 to reduce neonatal and maternal deaths as part of a national commitment to achieve zero preventable deaths. The initiative brings together actors and institutions to reduce maternal and newborn mortality rates over a four-year period (2014–2018), with the participation of all stakeholders involved in improving health services and in advocacy, education and communication during pregnancy. The campaign prioritized six departments that have the highest rate of maternal and neonatal deaths.

Standard of living

122. Decision No. 269/2007 established the Child and Family Welfare Directorate of the Social Welfare Institute. The Directorate reports to the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare and is responsible for ensuring the optimal functioning of the services it provides in

welfare centres for children and the family, homes and canteens, with the main objective of guaranteeing the health and welfare of the children who use these services.

123. The early childhood development programme has two components: (1) strengthening of childcare centres; and (2) standard of living and measures to ensure the physical, mental, spiritual, moral and social development of the child and reduce poverty and inequality, particularly through material assistance and support programmes related to nutrition, clothing and housing.

124. Under the Act on Guaranteed Early Childhood Nutrition, the Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Programme involves a range of activities whose purpose is to help to improve the quality of life of the population, mainly mothers and children, through prevention, assistance and monitoring in respect of malnutrition in children under 5 years of age and pregnant women who are poor, underweight, malnourished or otherwise nutritionally vulnerable.

125. Through the National Food and Nutrition Institute, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare is responsible for the Comprehensive Food and Nutrition Programme, and, in this capacity, works with other public institutions and independent bodies to coordinate appropriate actions needed to meet the objectives of the Act and the Programme. The Institute implements dietary guidelines as part of a strategy to prevent chronic non-communicable diseases through the provision of counselling by health personnel, for which they receive ongoing training.

126. The dietary guidelines aim to promote a healthy diet and contain recommendations for healthy lifestyles to prevent chronic non-communicable diseases. The dietary guidelines for children under 2 years of age are designed to transmit and disseminate knowledge based on scientific evidence in order to address the main problems related to food and nutrition during the first two years of life.

127. The promotion of a healthy diet in various settings is a cross-cutting theme of initiatives under the National Action Plan for the Prevention and Control of Chronic Non-Communicable Diseases 2014–2024.

HIV/AIDS

128. By decision No. SG 433/06, the Ministry of Public Health and Social Welfare made it compulsory for health professionals to offer free laboratory tests for the detection of syphilis and HIV to women of childbearing age and pregnant women who regularly access health services. By decision No. 396/07, the Programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis was declared a public health priority.

129. This prophylactic approach to mother-to-child transmission of HIV and syphilis is part of a programme whose goals are zero new diagnoses and zero children with HIV. The Programme for the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission of HIV and Congenital Syphilis has been implemented in line with the Ministry's policy of tackling this health issue in Paraguay.

130. Through the National Programme to Control HIV/AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases, the Ministry implements decision No. SG 221/17 approving the HIV Management Handbook and the Guide to Antiretroviral Therapy, which recommends that all persons living with HIV should start antiretroviral therapy, regardless of CD4 cell count. The decision sets out the main lines of action, which include early diagnosis and timely antiretroviral therapy under the Programme. Antiretroviral medication is available free of charge to all those who require it through services provided by the Ministry.

131. Significant efforts have been made to increase the number of public health facilities that offer counselling and voluntary testing for HIV and syphilis. Building on the existing capacity of health services that offer voluntary testing for pregnant women, rapid tests have been made available to the general population, improving the accessibility of these services.

132. To improve access to health services for persons living with HIV, the provision of comprehensive care has been decentralized. By the end of 2018, care was being provided in 12 of the country's health regions thanks to the establishment of a comprehensive care service in each one. These services are provided by professionals trained to deal with HIV, AIDS and sexually transmitted infections who, depending on the division of labour, offer counselling and voluntary testing for HIV and syphilis, in addition to confirmatory testing for diagnostic purposes and prophylaxis and/or treatment for all eligible persons.

VII. Education, leisure and cultural activities

Education, including vocational training and guidance

133. Through the implementation of the Agenda for Education 2013–2018, a planning tool that establishes education policy priorities and that is aligned with and gives effect to the National Development Plan 2030 and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, in addition to international commitments, the Ministry of Education and Science places emphasis on quality assurance and builds on the measures proposed in the National Education Plan 2024.

134. Incentives to keep children and adolescents in school and facilitate their transition from primary to secondary education and the completion of secondary education are detailed below:

- Scholarships are awarded to selected students in vulnerable situations to enable them to pursue secondary and higher education, in accordance with the General Act on Scholarships (No. 4842/12) and the General Act on Higher Education (No. 4995/13) (annex II).
- Significant progress has been made in the development and implementation of the Student Voucher Programme with the support of the Student Voucher Issuing Authority. Vouchers (half-fare passes and student cards) are printed and handed out before the start of the school year and on a quarterly basis. The beneficiaries are students from institutions in Alto Paraná, Itapúa, Paraguari, Cordillera, Presidente Hayes, Central and the capital district.
- Following the enactment of Act No. 5210/14 on school meals and monitoring of health and its implementing Decree No. 2366/14 (annex II), the School Meals Programme was developed, and the technical and administrative guidelines for its implementation were adopted by decisions Nos. 15866/15 and 19275/15. School meals are part of efforts to improve the quality of education under the National Education Plan 2024, which aims to ensure the timely completion of studies by strengthening compensatory programmes. Outside the capital, the Programme is implemented by departmental and municipal governments.
- Student centres: the Ministry of Education and Science promotes the organization of educational communities in institutions to improve the quality of learning on the basis of a vision that includes all members of the community in their various roles.
- Students at all levels and in all types of education (100 per cent of those in State schools and 80 per cent of those in subsidized private institutions) receive school supply kits at the beginning of the school year. Special education supplies are purchased according to needs.

135. Paraguay has intensified its efforts and measures to translate printed materials into the native languages of Indigenous communities. Below is a breakdown of the number of schoolchildren using educational materials in their native and/or second native language.

Number of children in the first and second cycles of basic education using educational materials in their mother tongue

<i>Baseline: 2013</i>	<i>2014</i>	<i>2015</i>	<i>2016</i>	<i>Target: 2018</i>
14 118	20 998	11 300	13 853	23 643

Source: Directorate General for Indigenous School Education, Ministry of Education and Science – 2016.

136. To promote the access of children and adolescents to special and preschool education in rural areas and Indigenous communities, the Ministry of Education and Science has identified strengthening diversity and inclusion in education as a strategic area in the Agenda for Education 2013–2018, with a view to offering quality inclusive education, without discrimination of any kind and taking into account the multicultural nature of the country.

137. The process of strengthening Indigenous schooling has been participatory and has involved working together with Indigenous communities, their leaders, organizations and associations, respecting national laws and ratified international conventions, thanks to which Indigenous schooling can be built from the bottom up, through Indigenous representatives and with the communities themselves, so that it has legitimacy.

138. The Indigenous Education Plan 2013–2018 was drawn up on an inter-institutional basis to improve schooling for Indigenous Peoples and guarantee high-quality education of cultural and linguistic relevance, in accordance with the current legal framework. Fundamental to this process was the role of the National Council for Indigenous Education, which is made up of representatives of the 20 Indigenous Peoples of Paraguay and of other stakeholders, pursuant to Act No. 3231/07 establishing the Directorate General for Indigenous Schooling.

VIII. Special protection measures

Unaccompanied refugee children

139. In all migration proceedings, the Directorate General for Migration fully recognizes and respects the legal provisions, agreements, treaties and international conventions in force for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents in Paraguay.

140. As a result of inter-institutional work carried out within the National Migration Policy Team, the National Migration Policy of Paraguay was adopted by Decree No. 4483/15 (annex IV). One of the cross-cutting themes of the Policy is the need to place particular emphasis on gender equity and on giving priority treatment to vulnerable persons and social and cultural groups, including children, older persons, persons with disabilities and Indigenous Peoples.

141. Furthermore, the Policy provides as follows:

The migration authority shall make arrangements for the entry and settlement of persons or groups displaced from their countries of origin for reasons of internal war, ethnic, political or religious discrimination or natural causes who, individually or collectively, wish to settle in the country. In order to facilitate migration procedures, the mediation of recognized international humanitarian organizations shall be sought, especially those involved in the evacuation of persons displaced for the aforementioned reasons, giving priority to the care of children and women.

142. Paragraph 14 (e) establishes the principle of comprehensive protection and the best interests of children and adolescents, according to which the principle of the best interests of the child must prevail in all decisions of the migration authority that directly or indirectly involve children and adolescents.

143. The MERCOSUR regional guide on identifying and meeting the special needs of child and adolescent migrants for the protection of their rights of the Specialized Forum on Migration of the MERCOSUR States parties and associated States (annex X), which is

currently under consideration, aims to “establish criteria and guidelines for joint actions by State authorities to identify violations of the rights or international protection needs of child and adolescent migrants and coordinate appropriate mechanisms for the referral of child and adolescent migrant protection cases to the bodies responsible for such protection”.

144. The National Refugee Commission is a collegial body created by Act No. 1938/02 whose mission is to decide whether to grant or deny refugee status and deal with aspects related to protecting and assisting refugees in the country. The Commission comprises representatives of various institutions⁵ and is chaired by the Director General for Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

145. In compliance with recommendations on unaccompanied refugee children, the principles and the child and adolescent rights-based approach established in the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the provisions of Advisory Opinion No. 21 on migrant children of the Inter-American Court of Human Rights have been incorporated into the migration bill. Needs and rights have been considered taking into account all aspects of the best interests of the child.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

146. The Government welcomes the Committee’s observations on this subject and has responded through activities under the “Abrazo” programme, whose aim is to reduce and eradicate child labour in rural and urban areas through the immediate protection of children and adolescents who work in public spaces, brick factories, dumps and the agricultural sector (including sugar cane plantations).

147. In 2010, the Government devised the National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers, which includes indicators and the following specific actions:

- Identification of children and adolescents engaged in or at risk of the worst forms of child labour and their families, establishing a baseline and addressing any urgent cases detected, with emphasis on the rural and Indigenous populations
- Comprehensive care for and reintegration of victims
- Strengthening of the family unit as the setting for the protection of the rights of children and adolescents engaged in the worst forms of child labour
- Adaptation of a range of attractive, innovative, high-quality and free education opportunities for children and adolescents engaged in the worst forms of child labour, including in formal and non-formal education
- Social awareness-raising, especially through the mass media, of children’s rights and the worst forms of child labour
- Effective oversight of adolescent labour and promotion of decent work for adolescents engaged in or at risk of the worst forms of child labour
- Institutional strengthening of key actors involved in addressing the worst forms of child labour: the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of Labour, Employment and Social Security, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, the Municipal Advisory Service on the Rights of Children and Adolescents, the Ministry of Education and Science, and employers and workers, especially with a view to the rescue and reintegration of victims, and enhanced inter-institutional coordination among these actors and between them and relevant networks.

148. By decision No. 02/11, the National Council for Children and Adolescents adopted the second National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of Commercial Sexual

⁵ The Human Rights Unit and the Directorate General for Consular Affairs of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs; the Directorate General for Human Rights of the Ministry of Justice; the Human Rights Directorate of the Ministry of the Interior; the Directorate General for Migration; and the human rights committees of both chambers of the National Congress.

Exploitation of Children, for the period 2012–2017. In 2012, the first advances were made under the National Strategy for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Adolescent Workers, and the Act on Trafficking in Persons and the national policy on trafficking were adopted.

149. To obtain reliable information on the number of children engaged in economic activities, in 2011 the Directorate General for Statistics, Surveys and Censuses conducted a national survey of activities of children and adolescents, whose main objectives were:

- To generate reliable, up-to-date statistical information, comparable with that of other countries, on the economic, educational and domestic activities of children and adolescents in Paraguay and on their household demographics and socioeconomic conditions
- To inform and facilitate the development, implementation and follow-up of policies, projects and programmes aimed at children and adolescents.

150. Following the 2011 survey, the Government recognized the need for deeper knowledge about the reality of many children and adolescents living in rural areas and decided to conduct a sectoral survey in this regard.

151. Accordingly, with a view to enriching and consolidating information on child labour within the national statistics system, in 2015 the Directorate General for Statistics, Surveys and Censuses, with technical and financial support from the International Labour Organization, conducted a survey on the activities of rural children and adolescents. This research complemented and deepened existing information by accounting for the prevalence, extent, characteristics and consequences of child and adolescent labour in the rural agriculture, forestry, fisheries and fish-farming sectors.

152. Based on the list of dangerous forms of child labour established by Decree No. 4951/05 (annex IV), for the first time it became possible to calculate the scale of dangerous child labour, including forms considered likely to occur in the agriculture sector. It is hoped that the findings of this research will assist government agencies, non-governmental organizations, the media, academia and the general public by minimizing information gaps for the design of policies and actions aimed at eradicating child labour in the agriculture sector.

153. Act No. 5407/2015, the Domestic Labour Act (title II, art. 5, on capacity) sets the minimum working age at 18 years, thus protecting children and adolescents from employment in any type of domestic work.

154. In response to the Government's request for civil society organizations, the International Labour Organization and UNICEF to provide technical assistance for the eradication of child labour, the documents *Situación del derecho a la protección infantil y adolescente en Paraguay* (Status of the right to protection of children and adolescents in Paraguay), *Situación actual de la primera infancia* (Current situation of early childhood) and an early childhood development plan have been drafted and published.

Practice of *criadazgo*

155. In legal terms, significant progress has been made in this regard with the adoption of the Domestic Labour Act, which protects children from employment in domestic labour in all circumstances (art. 5). A draft bill has been prepared which would amend the Code on Children and Adolescents in order to define the deep-rooted practice of *criadazgo* and make it an offence, enabling the prosecution and punishment of those responsible for it.

The 2011 national survey of activities of children and adolescents, conducted by the Directorate General for Statistics, Surveys and Censuses, included a section on child labour, dangerous child labour, domestic child labour and an experimental approach for measuring *criadazgo* and dangerous unpaid domestic work in the child's own home (labour-intensive domestic tasks) as a means of collecting reliable information on the specific situation of *criadazgo*.

156. In 2015, the National Commission for the Prevention and Eradication of Child Labour developed and adopted a protocol for addressing *criadazgo* within the framework of an inter-institutional guide on assisting children and adolescents engaged in child labour. This process involved compiling the information contained in various laws, holding two workshops in order to test the protocol's clarity and effectiveness, and conducting awareness-raising.

157. The Commission also worked on the preparation of the final draft document for the expansion of Decree No. 4951/05 on dangerous child labour.

158. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has established a coordination office that works in the specific area of eradicating child labour. Awareness-raising activities, such as training workshops for civil society organizations and public and private institutions, and the national campaign "No to *criadazgo*, respect my rights", have been carried out. The National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2014–2024 addresses the situation in respect of *criadazgo*.

Children in street situations

159. The Government has redoubled its efforts to address the problem of children in street situations through the following programmes of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents:

- The Comprehensive Care Programme for Children and Adolescents Living on the Street, under which assistance is provided to children who have lost touch with their families or whose family relations, for various reasons, have deteriorated to such an extent that they have decided to risk living on the street. The aim of this programme is to gradually resolve the problem by creating mechanisms that afford emergency protection, reduce harm and address the structural causes of children's living on the street, allowing them to start new lives. Care is provided by four shelters and protection centres, in Asunción, Lambaré, San Lorenzo and Ciudad del Este, which meet children's needs for food, shelter, health care, hygiene, psychological support, recreation, education and training, among others.
- The "Abrazo" programme, whose aims are to reduce poverty, eradicate all forms of child labour and ensure compliance with the rights of the child by providing comprehensive health, education and protection services for children who work in public spaces, guaranteeing their rights to grow up healthy, to attend school and to live under the protection of a family.
- The "Pueblos Originarios" (Indigenous Peoples) programme administered by the Directorate for the Promotion of *Buen Vivir* of Indigenous Children and Adolescents of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents. Created for the advancement, participation and comprehensive protection of Indigenous children and adolescents through a community-based approach, the programme addresses the problem of Indigenous children in street situations by providing comprehensive care that disconnects them from their lives on the street. Indigenous children and adolescents and their families benefit from assistance and services that focus on the restitution, protection and promotion of their rights.

160. The Government has undertaken to continue improving the existing process whereby children and adolescents exercise their right to participation and have their proposals taken into account, with a view to the design of public policies that ensure the full enjoyment of their rights. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has a Directorate of Proactive Participation, which since 2011 has held annual workshops, seminars and talks, among other events, to promote the proactive participation of children and adolescents in various programmes.

161. The national mechanism for the prevention of torture, fulfilling its monitoring role, has issued recommendations concerning police intervention with children and adolescents at risk and in conflict with the law. The Office of the National Police Commander (under the Ministry of the Interior) and other State institutions, including the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, have adopted two protocols for the special protection of children

and adolescents: one on the police protection of children and adolescents and one on intervention with adolescents aged 14 to 17 years in conflict with the law. Officers of the National Police are obliged to observe these protocols in their procedures.

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

162. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, with financial support from UNICEF and the European Union, launched the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2012–2017, adopted by the National Council for Children and Adolescents. The objective of the Plan was to devise, implement and coordinate institutional strategies for the protection and comprehensive care of children and adolescents and the prevention and punishment of commercial sexual exploitation in order to contribute to its eradication. In 2014, the Plan's operational framework was reviewed and the implementation period was extended until 2019 in order to meet the targets.

163. Another initiative is the establishment of the National Board to Prevent and Address Violence against Children and Adolescents, which has held a series of regular meetings to consider and discuss its mandate and activities, drawn up operational strategies and goals, and drafted and proposed a decree to ensure its continuity and sustainability. The National Commission against Violence, coordinated by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, was established pursuant to Decree No. 1156/13.

164. The Government – represented by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the National Secretariat of Information and Communications Technologies – has joined the WeProtect Global Alliance. This is a United Kingdom-led initiative that was launched in 2013 with the aim of tackling the growing offence of online child sexual exploitation and sexual abuse.

165. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has conducted training in different public and private educational institutions on the prevention of sexual abuse. Workshops were aimed at adolescents and teaching staff. Participants discussed topics such as the violation of rights, the duty to report, complaints mechanisms and their responsible use, and the free 147 helpline. In total, 1,140 adolescents and adults were trained in the cities of Luque, Yaguarón, Julián Augusto Saldívar, Mariano Roque Alonso, Capiatá, Asunción, Lambaré and Bella Vista (Itapúa Department) (annex V).

Sale and trafficking

166. By decision No. 660/2015, the coordination office on child trafficking and sexual exploitation of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents was renamed the Programme on Comprehensive Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, becoming a specialized interdisciplinary structure that aims to meet the demand and need for comprehensive assistance among adolescent victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. The Programme includes prevention and awareness activities in relation to trafficking in persons and sexual exploitation and is aimed at children and adolescents, key actors and the general public. It also provides for the comprehensive care of children and adolescents who are rescued during court-ordered searches and police operations in Paraguay and abroad, including follow-up of their cases and psychological and social support until such time as they are reunited with their families.

167. Given the need for an appropriate specialized facility for the protection for girls and adolescent girls who are victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation, in October 2015, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents signed a framework agreement with the Good Shepherd Sisters, an NGO, to strengthen the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents. As a result of this partnership, the "Rosa Virginia" shelter was established as the first residential centre run by the State, in coordination with the Good Shepherd Sisters, for child victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation.

168. The “Rosa Virginia” shelter affords protection and care for victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation with a view to their family and/or social reintegration. It is designed to provide a safe, trusted temporary space in which victims receive the care essential for their emotional recovery and the restitution of their rights on the basis of a respectful, timely approach that meets the criteria of quality and credibility. The shelter is a place where victims are protected, can rest and receive support in the form of clothing, meals, psychological assistance, health and hygiene services, remedial education and the opportunity to participate in dance, cookery, computing and handicraft classes.

169. The Public Prosecution Service has a Victims Care Centre that provides psychological and social support for victims and it runs a victim and witness protection programme. In addition, it has a Special Unit on Gender and Children and Adolescents and a Deputy Prosecutor’s Office that oversees proceedings involving children and adolescents.

170. The Public Prosecution Service Training Centre delivers training at the national level on trafficking in persons, including through a virtual platform for the training of officials in different fields. Training on trafficking in persons is organized outside the capital, while psychologists from the Victims Care Centre attend a postgraduate course in legal and forensic psychology. There is also an educational programme called “Fiscalía en las Escuelas y Colegios” (The Prosecution Service in Schools), which covers the subject of child sexual abuse.

171. The Public Prosecution Service’s Special Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents has produced a guide to services for victims of trafficking in persons, which maps out the services required by victims and analyses the existing services available in the country. This Unit has a technical support directorate with three departments (psychological care, social work and legal assistance), which is working to strengthen the organizational structure with a view to establishing strategic mechanisms for the prosecution of offences related to trafficking in persons and the sexual exploitation of children and adolescents.

172. In 2012, the Ministry of the Interior set up an Anti-Trafficking in Persons and Related Crimes Department within the National Police.

Helpline

173. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents operates the 147 helpline, which specializes in providing psychological, social and legal counselling in cases of physical and sexual abuse, sexual and labour exploitation and other violations of children’s rights. Users can access the helpline service free of charge by dialling 147 from any telephone line.

174. The service is staffed by a highly qualified multidisciplinary team, including lawyers, psychologists and social workers, who work rotating shifts to provide coverage 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. The team provides the necessary counselling and support and refers cases to the competent authorities. All calls are confidential and data are stored exclusively for institutional use and handled only by helpline staff.

175. The team coordinates with the 911 service of the National Police to support procedures for the protection of children and adolescents at risk and in cases of domestic violence. There is constant communication and exchange of information between the two teams on complaints and cases involving children and adolescents.

Administration of juvenile justice

176. The Adolescent Offenders Welfare Service of the Ministry of Justice is in charge of the design, implementation and monitoring of public policies for the prevention of juvenile delinquency and is responsible for the comprehensive welfare and social integration of adolescents who have been prosecuted for or convicted of criminal offences. It is the driving force behind an inter-institutional working group that is developing an intervention pathway from arrest to the completion of non-custodial measures within the concept of restorative

juvenile justice. In this regard, one of the Service's fundamental objectives is the restoration of family ties, which it works to achieve through programmes of supervised visits and a semi-open regime in which juvenile offenders interact with the community.

177. The Service's efforts have led to the following significant achievements:

- (a) The drafting of the Care Plan for Adolescents in Conflict with the Law, based on a restorative justice approach and centred on adolescents deprived of their liberty;
- (b) The Restorative Juvenile Justice Plan;
- (c) Cooperation with the Terre des Hommes International Federation;
- (d) The promotion and establishment of an inter-institutional working group;
- (e) The drafting of the first inter-institutional handbook on monitoring compliance with alternative and non-custodial measures;
- (f) The full provision of computer equipment for all educational centres for young offenders administered by the Service;
- (g) The development, in conjunction with the National Centre for Addiction Control, of a care plan for drug-dependent adolescents and the hiring and appointment of the necessary staff for each educational centre.

178. The Supreme Court has set up a restorative justice programme for adolescents in conflict with the law. Under this programme, juvenile offenders enter a specialized criminal justice system with its own dedicated officials and the involvement of prosecutors, defenders, mediators and members of the National Police.

179. An inter-institutional working group made up of juvenile criminal court judges and specialized public defenders prepared a draft protocol for the application of non-custodial measures.

180. Moreover, the National Restorative Justice Plan, which gives a structure to and expands the restorative justice tools available to adolescents, was drawn up. This initiative of the Ministry of Justice benefited from technical assistance provided by the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation and was led by experts in the field. The Plan includes comprehensive health care for 200 families, talks on addiction, vocational training and prevention work in schools.

181. Regarding access to formal education, adolescents deprived of their liberty in educational centres for juvenile offenders participate in literacy programmes, bilingual basic education, secondary education and vocational training (including courses and workshops on plumbing, cookery, computing, digital literacy, life skills, horticulture, jewellery, bakery and confectionery and motorcycle mechanics, among other subjects). Of the 285 young persons living in educational centres for juvenile offenders, 78 per cent are enrolled in school.

182. Social reintegration programmes for young persons released from educational centres include the "Casa Madre de Tupãrenda" programme, under which they receive psychological and social support and undertake paid vocational training in bakery and horticulture, which enhances their career prospects, increases their incomes and helps them to gradually reintegrate into society. This project is implemented jointly by the Ministry of Justice, the Fundación para la Promoción de Valores y Prevención de la Violencia (Foundation for the Promotion of Values and Prevention of Violence) and the Schoenstatt movement.

183. The National Policy for the Care of Adolescents in Conflict with the Law is geared towards the best interests of these adolescents. It defines the actions that should be carried out, from preventing the commission of offences to directly meeting the needs that arise from the adolescent's contact with the justice system (in the form of police officers, prosecutors, judges, instructors in educational centres, probation officers, etc.).

184. Emphasis is expressly placed on a restorative juvenile justice approach based on the adolescent's responsibility for his or her acts, redress for the victim and the involvement of the community in the re-education process. The scope of this approach extends to the social reintegration of the adolescent into the family and/or community, prioritizing his or her personal development.

185. Regarding the organization of training activities for all juvenile justice professionals, between 2015 and 2017 the Office of the Coordinator of Children's and Juvenile Court Judges delivered training on specific topics pertaining to juvenile justice in places such as Ciudad del Este, Caacupé, Encarnación, Misiones, Santa Rosa del Aguairay, Asunción and Ypacará. This training is aimed exclusively at justice officials in order to broaden their knowledge in matters related to children and adolescents.

186. Since 2014, the Inter-Agency Commission for Monitoring and Visits to Juvenile Detention Centres, which is composed of various public- and private-sector institutions and is coordinated by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, has been working in accordance with the principle of the best interests of the child. This principle defines the approach that must be taken in everything related to adolescents in conflict with the law, especially those who have come under the direct care of the State, including those who, unfortunately, have restrictions imposed on their liberty.

187. In keeping with this approach, each year the Commission makes two rounds of visits to the country's nine educational centres for juvenile offenders, during which it interviews adolescents and prison authorities, checks documents and inspects facilities, thus making a comprehensive assessment of the situation of deprivation of liberty so as to ensure that it complies with the standards required by the Convention and the Code on Children and Adolescents, especially the provisions set forth in book V of the Code.

188. The Public Prosecution Service has a strengthened institutional structure, with special units to address issues related to adolescents in conflict with the law, that is made up of the Directorate of Criminal Complaints, the Directorate of Human Rights, the Directorate of Ethnic Rights, the Victims Care Centre and the Directorate of Witness Protection.

Protection of witnesses and victims of crimes

189. The Witness Protection Programme of the Public Prosecution Service is a crucial tool in the State's policy for combating crime and organized crime (drug trafficking, terrorism, money-laundering, corruption, etc.), offences against human rights (torture, enforced disappearance) and other major offences that require this type of protection mechanism.

190. The main activities carried out under the Witness Protection Programme include raising awareness of its role in collaboration with the deputy prosecutors of Villarrica, Coronel Oviedo and Pedro Juan Caballero, developing ordinary and extraordinary processes for security measures, designing and creating a cover sheet for files of the Witness Protection Programme, and formulating a proposal for the inclusion of protection variables on the form used by the Directorate of Criminal Complaints.

191. Work has also been undertaken to adopt a guide to the functions of the Witness Protection Programme, to prepare lists of self-protection measures for public servants and to adopt the draft versions of the Gradual and Progressive Plan for the Implementation of the Witness Protection Programme, including its draft financial plan, and a protocol on self-protection measures in case of abduction and the sharing and handling of confidential information held by the Witness Protection Programme.

192. Services provided to witnesses include psychological support and assessment, food, clothing, accommodation, communication, transport, support in the giving of evidence prior to trial, and legal assistance; arrangements for obtaining and furnishing housing on an usufruct basis for one year, renewable for another year; assistance with finding employment, legal assistance, police protection, protection of family members, non-disclosure of residence, and practical advice.

Indigenous children

193. Coverage of improved water and sanitation in rural areas was strengthened through the construction of drinking water systems connected to homes in rural and Indigenous communities. Priority was given to the most vulnerable people, including the target population of children under the age of 18 and older persons, and training on hygiene

(handwashing, responsible water use, etc.) was provided at the same time as the works were carried out. Basic units consisting of ventilated sanitary latrines and modern toilets with flushes and cesspits were installed in houses in the communities. A total of 76,750 people benefited from water systems and 20,906 people benefited from sanitation systems.

194. The National Environmental Sanitation Service has worked in coordination with community sanitation boards supported by departmental and municipal governments, which created water and sanitation units to ensure the sustainability of the works.

195. The Secretariat for Social Action promotes nutrition, health and education, above all for children, through the Tekoporã (*Buen Vivir*) conditional cash transfer programme. The target population includes families caring for persons with disabilities, including Indigenous children. In 2015, there was a drive to include more Indigenous families in the programme while respecting their cultural diversity and autonomy and ensuring their participation in the process. The programme reached approximately 44 per cent of the country's Indigenous families in 360 communities.

196. Aimed at strengthening development and providing social support in urban or suburban settlements and population centres, the Tekoha Programme is intended to ensure access to land ownership for families living in poverty and vulnerable situations by regularizing and formalizing the occupation of housing plots in urban social territories and providing support for families and communities, including families with female heads of household, children and persons with disabilities.

IX. Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

National action plan

197. The aim of the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2012–2017 of the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents is to design and develop institutional strategies for prevention, the protection and comprehensive care of child and adolescent victims and the punishment of offenders, in order to help eradicate sexual exploitation in Paraguay within the framework of the comprehensive protection doctrine.

198. The functions of the National Council for Children and Adolescents include overseeing implementation of the National Plan and requesting progress reports from relevant State institutions and departmental and municipal governments, with a view to making any adjustments that may be deemed necessary.

199. In accordance with the National Plan, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has developed a comprehensive care programme for child and adolescent victims of trafficking and sexual exploitation. Since 2015, the resources allocated to this programme have been clearly identified in the budget, which reflects the adjustments and modifications made, thereby enabling independent monitoring of the investments made on an annual basis.

Coordination and evaluation

200. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, which chairs the National Council for Children and Adolescents, increased the frequency of its meetings between 2016 and 2017 with the aim of strengthening the National System for the Comprehensive Protection and Advancement of Children and Adolescents. The Council's members include other relevant institutions such as the judiciary, represented by the Supreme Court, the National Secretariat for the Human Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Ministry for Women and UNICEF. In 2014, the Council approved the creation of the Network of Departmental Secretaries for Children and Adolescents, with representatives from each department. So far, 117 offices of the Municipal Advisory Service on the Rights of Children and Adolescents have been opened nationwide.

Dissemination and awareness-raising

201. The National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has carried out the following campaigns specifically aimed at raising awareness of and disseminating the rights of children and adolescents:

- The “Green Ribbon” (Lazo Verde) Campaign, launched in 2012 and designed to raise awareness of child and adolescent sexual abuse among public and private institutions, the media and adult citizens as well as among children and adolescents themselves. The country has proclaimed 31 May as the National Day against the Mistreatment, Sexual Abuse and Labour Exploitation of Children and Adolescents
- The “True Friend” (Amigo Real) Campaign, launched in 2016 to raise awareness of the rights of children and adolescents and encourage use of the 147 telephone helpline in order to help child and adolescent victims to escape continuing violence
- The “Hot Clothing” (Prendas Eróticas) Campaign, launched in 2016 with the slogan “Some adults make innocence a commodity”. The campaign purportedly introduced the world’s first range of “hot” clothing for children, although the range was not actually sold anywhere in the world but was intended to highlight the humiliation to which thousands of girls were subjected
- The Operation Trans-Chaco Rally Prevention Campaign, which has been running since 2008 and was launched in response to frequent complaints, received via the 147 helpline, of rights violations and sexual exploitation in the area surrounding the route of the Trans-Chaco Rally
- The “Connect Safely” (Conéctate Seguro) Campaign, launched in 2014, aimed at both children and adults and designed to protect Internet users while surfing, to cast the spotlight on cyberbullying, grooming and sexting and to promote good practices on social networks (annex V)

Training

202. During the 2016 school year, the Public Prosecution Service allocated logistical and human resources for the implementation of its “Public Prosecutor with the People” (Fiscalía con la Gente) policy on civic engagement. Its main objective was to raise awareness among children and young people about the harm caused by drug use and the social and legal consequences of small-scale trafficking, cyberbullying and other cybercrime.

203. As well as the aforementioned topics, educational talks were held to inform students about the Public Prosecution Service’s role as a representative of society, how to file a complaint, who is involved in criminal proceedings and other information that will help children and adolescents to identify the correct course of action when faced with this type of situation. The talks were given by specially trained employees of the Service who had volunteered to become instructors. The Ministry of Education and Science, by its decision No. 1077, declared the programme to be of educational interest.

204. To strengthen training on all the issues covered by the Optional Protocol, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents has delivered various presentations on trafficking and sexual exploitation to district representatives and volunteer coordinators of the Peace Corps. Key stakeholders in the departments of Alto Paraná, Boquerón and Amambay received training as part of the “No to child labour, no to *criadazgo*” Campaign. Key stakeholders in the department of Itapúa received training as part of a campaign on strengthening efforts to combat trafficking in children and adolescents. Representatives of the departments of Caaguazú and Ñeembucú received training as part of the “Arapoty” Project.

Resource allocation

205. Regarding the resources allocated for research and data collection on the themes of the Optional Protocol, the Ministry of Finance works to strengthen and develop the State's financial information system and improve the efficiency and effectiveness of public spending, including spending on social programmes designed to guarantee the rights of children and adolescents.

206. The Programme on Comprehensive Assistance to Victims of Trafficking and Sexual Exploitation, run by the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, is aimed at prevention and the protection, physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation. The Public Prosecution Service has a Special Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents, which is responsible for the investigation and prosecution of the offences covered by the Optional Protocol.

Civil society

207. The Technical Planning Secretariat and the National Evaluation Council report regularly to Congress and civil society on the results achieved and progress made with respect to the goals set out in the National Development Plan 2030.

208. Members of the National Council for Children and Adolescents and representatives of civil society organizations participated in designing and drafting the National Policy for Children and Adolescents 2014–2024, as well as constructing the National Plan for the Prevention and Eradication of the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents 2012–2017 with the support of UNICEF, the European Union and the NGOs Centro de Educación, Capacitación y Tecnología Campesina (Centre for Rural Education, Training and Technology) and Base Educativa y Comunitaria de Apoyo (Community Educational Support Foundation), among others.

Measures adopted to prevent offences prohibited under the Optional Protocol

209. The action taken to prevent the offences covered by the Optional Protocol has included awareness-raising activities and detection, assistance and reparation measures for situations of this nature.

210. In order to prevent the involvement of children and adolescents in the production of pornographic material, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and the National Secretariat of Information and Communications Technologies initiated a campaign entitled “Connect Safely” (Conéctate Seguro), which has been renewed every year since 2014.

211. Regarding investigations into the nature and extent of the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, a study on the criminal offence of trafficking in persons with Paraguay as a country of origin was conducted by the Public Prosecution Service, the Technical Planning Secretariat and the Spanish Agency for International Development Cooperation in 2011.

Adoption

212. Under Act No. 5576/16, the National Commission for the Study and Reform of Matters Relating to Childhood and Adolescence was established to draft proposals for amendments of the laws regulating this area. One of the proposals considered by the Commission is a bill on the rights to family life, alternative care and adoption, designed to enshrine the principle that the best interest of the child with respect to his or her access to a family must take precedence over the adult's right to adopt.

Child sex tourism

213. To prevent and eliminate child sex tourism, the National Secretariat for Tourism, with the support of the Women's Association of Tourism Company Managers, has carried out a campaign to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in relation to travel and tourism. All the taxi drivers' associations in the city of Asunción took part in the launch of the campaign in order to raise taxi operators' awareness of the importance of preventing crimes that may be committed against minors.

214. In February 2016, the National Secretariat for Tourism signed a cooperation agreement with the Cooperativa 11 de Noviembre in Asunción and the Cooperativa Teletaxi del Sur in Encarnación to secure their commitment to the long-term implementation of the prevention campaign.

215. By its decision No. 567/16, the National Secretariat for Tourism decided to implement the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism of the World Tourism Organization, which it promotes through its various programmes, projects and activities. In addition, a commitment to ethics in tourism was signed by 14 tourism associations at an event attended by the Secretary-General of the World Tourism Organization in October 2014.

216. The National Secretariat for Tourism organizes training days at the triple border (Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay) as part of campaigns to combat the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and to prevent the commercial sexual exploitation of children and adolescents in relation to travel and tourism. Furthermore, audiovisual materials have been produced for display at land and air transport companies and terminals.

217. In August 2017, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents signed a memorandum of understanding with the Brazilian and Argentine authorities to establish immediate protection mechanisms for children and adolescents in vulnerable situations at the triple border.

Programmes for specific groups

218. An increase in the budget for children's affairs made it possible to expand the coverage of programmes for children and adolescents in vulnerable situations, including the "Abrazo" programme, the Comprehensive Care Programme for Children and Adolescents Living on the Street and other programmes carried out by the Special Protection Directorate and the Directorate for the *Buen Vivir* of Indigenous Peoples.

219. In order to improve socioeconomic conditions, the Secretariat for Social Action has made a concerted effort to implement programmes designed to protect the rights to health, food and housing, as well as the social inclusion and advancement of vulnerable population groups, with a special emphasis on children and adolescents.

220. Tekoporã provides conditional cash transfers in the areas of health and education and offers a life microinsurance programme for low-income families. Tenonderã supplements Tekoporã and promotes income generation by providing start-up capital for productive enterprises, along with training. Tekoha provides plots in urban areas and facilitates the enjoyment of other rights, such as access to water, sanitation and electricity, as well as to roads and adequate housing. Since 2016, the Support Project for Community Canteens has provided inputs for food delivery to canteens set up by community organizations.

221. In recent years, the Secretariat for Social Action has significantly expanded investment in its programmes. The budget allocated for Tekoporã in 2013 was doubled in 2018, bringing the number of families covered to 95 per cent compared with 2013 and covering 100 per cent of the national territory.

222. The coverage of Tenonderã has increased almost 20 times in terms of families assisted. During its first year (2014), the programme covered 1,465 families in nine districts of six departments. In 2018, it benefited 8,536 families; since its inception, it has reached more than 26,500 families nationwide.

223. Between 2002 and August 2013, Tekoha signed 12,500 contracts for the sale of property in 195 social territories; in 2018, 27,700 households signed contracts. From 2013 to 2018, the number of beneficiary families doubled.

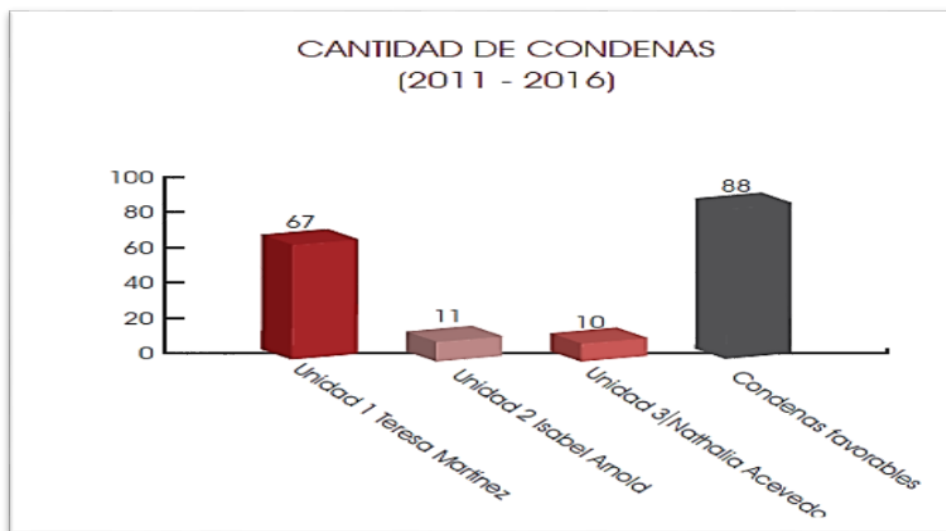
Prohibition of the sale of children, pornography and child prostitution and related matters. Existing criminal laws and regulations

224. The Criminal Code has been amended to define the offences covered by the Optional Protocol with more precision and to provide for harsher penalties. Thus, Act No. 3440/08 introduced an amendment to article 135 of the Criminal Code on the sexual abuse of children and, in 2017, the applicable penalty was increased to a prison sentence of 20 years, reflecting the commitment of the Paraguayan State to imposing appropriate penalties in accordance with the provisions of the Optional Protocol.

225. In the Paraguayan legal system, trafficking in human organs and tissues is criminalized under Act No. 1246/98; under article 25 (f), “any compensation or other benefits received in exchange for the donation of organs and tissues, whether living or after death, and the intermediation thereof for profit” are prohibited.

Impunity

226. The State has taken the necessary measures to ensure that the offences covered by the Optional Protocol are investigated, including by creating the Special Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons and Sexual Exploitation. The Unit is staffed by highly specialized technical professionals who have received international recognition for their work, including from the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) and the Spanish Government. Statistical data on the number of convictions for offences within its jurisdiction are provided below.



Liability of legal persons

227. Under title II, Offences, chapter I, Elements of offences, article 16, of Act No. 1160/97 on the Criminal Code, legal liability is personal to whoever acts on behalf of a legal person or as part of an organ thereof, as a partner or authorized proxy or as a legal representative of a third person.

Jurisdiction and extradition

228. Paraguay is governed by international law on extradition. Therefore, political offences are not extraditable under any circumstances, and all offences considered common and ordinary are extraditable.

Measures adopted to protect the rights and interests of child victims of offences prohibited under the Optional Protocol

229. The following are among the measures taken to protect against acts prohibited under the Optional Protocol:

- National Constitution, article 54 and others.
- Act No. 1680/01 on the Code on Children and Adolescents.
- Criminal Code of the Republic of Paraguay.
- Act No. 2298/03 approving and ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.
- Act No. 2396/04 approving and ratifying the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children.
- Act No. 3440/08 amending articles 125, 129, 139 and 140 of the Criminal Code.
- Act No. 4439/11 amending article 140 of the Criminal Code.
- Act No. 4788/2012, the Comprehensive Act on Combating Trafficking in Persons.
- Decree No. 6285/16 adopting the National Strategy for the Prevention of Forced Labour 2016–2020 (annex IV).

Recovery and reintegration of victims

230. The Paraguayan State is responsible for providing comprehensive assistance to children and adolescents who are victims of the offences prohibited under the Optional Protocol through the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents, which works in coordination with the Public Prosecution Service’s Special Unit to Combat Trafficking in Persons and the Sexual Exploitation of Children and Adolescents to offer psychological support to victims during judicial proceedings. Once rescued, children and adolescents are transferred to a temporary shelter for their protection, where they receive psychological assistance and medical attention and where the necessary steps are taken to facilitate their return to school and reintegration into the community.

Helpline

231. The 147 helpline is available 24 hours a day; all local telephone companies offer calls to the number free of charge, and the helpline is operated by people who are highly qualified to deal with children and adolescents.

Multilateral, bilateral and regional agreements

232. Paraguay took part in the Regional Strategy to Combat the Trafficking and Smuggling of Children for Sexual Exploitation in MERCOSUR, also known as the “Twin Cities” Project, funded by the Inter-American Development Bank and involving 15 border municipalities⁶ in Brazil, Argentina, Paraguay and Uruguay. The project was launched in

⁶ Chui (Brazil), Chuy (Uruguay), Santana do Livramento (Brazil), Uruguiana (Brazil), Paso de los Libres (Argentina), Puerto Iguazú (Argentina), Ciudad del Este (Paraguay), Foz do Iguaçú (Brazil),

2009 within the framework of MERCOSUR, and the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents is the government agency responsible for follow-up.

233. In October 2012, a joint transnational training course was held in the city of Foz de Yguazú for key actors and members of the local commissions in Paraguay, Argentina and Brazil. Subsequently, the three countries drafted a transnational plan of operations with a view to signing a transnational pact to combat abuse, sexual exploitation and trafficking of children and adolescents in Puerto Iguazú (Argentina), Ciudad del Este (Paraguay) and Foz do Iguacu (Brazil).

234. Within the framework of the aforementioned Project, a social compact was signed on 8 February 2013 by representatives of the national Government, the departmental government of Alto Paraná, the municipal government of Ciudad del Este, the Municipal Advisory Service on the Rights of Children and Adolescents, civil society organizations, civic leaders, companies, trade unions and others to support the implementation of the local plan of operations to combat trafficking in children and adolescents for the purpose of sexual exploitation.

235. In August 2017, the National Secretariat for Children and Adolescents and its equivalent institutions in Brazil and Argentina signed a memorandum of understanding on the development of a protocol for addressing, in the triple border area, the issues of children in street situations, Indigenous children and the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children.

X. Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

Training

236. In the National Strategy for the Prevention of Forced Labour 2016–2020, adopted by Decree No. 6285/16, the section on child labour clearly defines all forms of slavery, such as the sale and trafficking of children, debt bondage, serfdom and forced or compulsory labour, including forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict, as criminal offences. This document has been disseminated through digital media and at workshops (annex IV).

Data

237. The Acosta Ñu Military School, the only State institution under the direction of the Armed Forces Chief of Staff, keeps age-disaggregated data on minors under the age of 18.

Prevention. Age verification procedures

238. The Directorate General of the Civil Registry is in the process of fully decentralizing its services. Of the 17 departmental capitals, 14 are permanently connected to the head office and can thus issue birth, marriage and death certificates throughout the country. The legal framework and coverage have been improved to ensure timely registration, with the number of registrations increasing by 18.5 per cent between 2013 and 2016.

Bella Unión (Uruguay), Barra do Quaraí (Brazil), Santo Tomé (Argentina), São Borja (Brazil), Río Branco (Uruguay), Jaguarão (Brazil).

Number of children under 1 year of age registered in the civil registry

Baseline: 2013	2014	2015	2016
80 208	82 971	91 673	95 054

Source: Department of Vital Statistics – Directorate General of the Civil Registry – Ministry of Justice – 2016.

239. By Decree No. 3238/15, the executive branch adopted a plan for the mass issuance of identity cards for school-age children, enabling campaigns to be conducted in regions previously identified as priority areas. Plans have also been made for a central register in which all the information on each person would be stored in a single database.

Military schools

240. Aspiring cadets under 18 years of age submit applications to the Acosta Ñu Military School on a voluntary basis. They must be between the ages of 14 and 18 at the time of application and must have authorization from their father, mother and/or legal guardian. The Acosta Ñu Military School has its own internal regulations, based on the Constitution, Act No. 1115/97 on the regulations governing military personnel and the Code on Children and Adolescents.

241. To ensure compliance with the Optional Protocol, the Ministry of Education and Science develops plans and programmes for secondary education institutions run by the armed forces and is responsible for their pedagogical and administrative supervision. These are secondary-school programmes that include the same cross-cutting themes addressed in all areas and disciplines. Secondary education in Paraguay is built around four cross-cutting themes, one of which is education for democracy.

Human rights and peace education

242. In accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and the Optional Protocol, the vision of the Ministry of Education and Science is to promote understanding of the concept of true freedom of religious worship by fostering interreligious dialogue and promoting education for a culture of peace while respecting religious diversity. To that end, it has developed support tools for teachers containing specific proposals and a calendar of values with pedagogic guidelines.

243. These materials present a series of activities for students on values, relating each activity to the corresponding unit and competencies. In 2013, the cross-cutting theme of the activities was “non-violence, dialogue and peace”, designed to strengthen attitudes that promote a culture of peace.

Prohibition of recruitment

244. With respect to the recruitment or use in hostilities of children under the age of 18 by State armed forces and non-State armed groups, subparagraph (a) of the National Strategy for the Prevention of Forced Labour 2016–2020 identifies the forced or compulsory recruitment of children for use in armed conflict as one of the worst forms of child labour.

245. The Code on Children and Adolescents provides for the right of children and adolescents to protection against all forms of exploitation and engagement in activities that may be dangerous, impede their education or be harmful to their health or their full and harmonious development. It also expressly prohibits the sale and supply of arms, ammunition and explosives to children and adolescents.

246. Act No. 4733/12 establishes the rank of professional soldier as a troop category in the National Armed Forces and further stipulates that one of the core requirements for attaining that rank is to be between 19 and 26 years of age.

247. The first White Paper on National Defence sets out a proposal for a permanent defence policy that is respectful of human rights and international humanitarian law. Drafted in times of peace, it emphasizes that Paraguay reserves the right to legitimate self-defence, rejects intervention of any kind and stresses the need for public investment in defence.

248. The official websites of the military institutions provide information on the entry requirements for joining the military forces, including the age restrictions and the need to present a birth certificate or identity card to comply with the application procedure and provide proof of age.

Extraterritorial jurisdiction and extradition

249. Article 147 of the Criminal Code provides that “the extradition of an accused or convicted person shall be subject to current international law, domestic laws or international practices, or to rules on mutual assistance in the absence of applicable norms”. Thus, political offences are not extraditable under any circumstances, but all offences considered common and ordinary are extraditable.

Protection measures

250. Regarding the measures adopted by the State for the protection of children living in the northern part of the country, including children attending school, the Joint Task Forces have developed intervention and action protocols (rules of engagement) that are designed to preserve the life and physical integrity of members of the general population and to protect them from acts of violence at the hands of criminal groups.

251. The permitted and authorized protocols set out all the different types of intervention carried out by the Joint Task Forces. The protocols stipulate that these forces are not authorized to circulate in the vicinity of schools during school hours or to display materials containing images of children and adolescents, since the identity of children and adolescents must be protected.

Measures adopted to protect the rights of child victims

252. By decision No. SG 330/16, the Ministry of Health and Social Welfare adopted the Guide to the Rights of Children and Adolescents in Health Services, which is a practical document reflecting a rights-based, intercultural and gender-sensitive approach that offers guidance for health professionals on their everyday work.

253. The purpose of the Guide is to prescribe techniques for good treatment and high-quality care, so that health professionals can contribute to facilitating and guaranteeing the rights of children and adolescents. The document also serves as a support tool to help professionals to respond appropriately when faced with potential rights violations.

254. In terms of infrastructure and multidisciplinary medical care, the Acosta Ñu paediatric hospital is the country’s specialist paediatrics facility and has nationwide coverage.

255. The National Refugee Commission has no records of any unaccompanied children or adolescents among refugees and asylum-seekers. All the children who have been granted refugee status in Paraguay are with their families. Some of the families with children have come from Syria, fleeing from the armed conflict. None of the children were victims of forced recruitment or otherwise directly involved in the armed conflict.