



## Convention on the Rights of the Child

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### COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-third session

### SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 868th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,  
on Wednesday, 21 May 2003, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. DOEK

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The meeting was called to order at 3.10 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (agenda item 6) (continued)

Second periodic report of Cyprus (continued) (CRC/C/70/Add.16; CRC/C/Q/CYP/2; CRC/C/RESP/32; HRI/CORE/1/Add.28/Rev.1)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Ms. Koni, Ms. Koursoumba, Ms. Lanitou-Williams, Ms. Loizidou and Ms. Nicolaou (Cyprus) took places at the Committee table.
2. The CHAIRPERSON said that a supplementary report by the Government of Cyprus, which did not have a document symbol, had been distributed in the meeting room in English only.
3. Ms. KOURSOUMBA (Cyprus) said that there was no particular explanation as to why the birth rate was in decline, other than the fact that more women were working and there was a growing trend towards smaller families. On the issue of pre-school education, she said that, although such education was not compulsory, the Government considered it to be an integral part of primary education and in 2003 had allocated 3 million Cyprus pounds to the development of that sector. However, the needs of pre-school education were met in large part by the private sector.
4. The definition of the child in national legislation varied, depending on what the law was designed to regulate. For example, the law on sentencing procedures stipulated that courts should take into consideration the age of persons under 21 and impose sentences accordingly. The aim of that provision was to provide greater protection for young people. Any person over the age of 18 could legally marry without parental consent. For girls between 16 and 18 years of age, consent was required. Girls under 16 could marry only if they were granted special permission from the church on grounds of pregnancy.
5. The various definitions of the term “minor” that appeared in paragraph 109 of the second periodic report were used for the sole purpose of paying out social insurance benefits. Additional information on the subject could be supplied, but it would first be necessary to consult with the relevant authorities. The statistical data that had been provided applied to all children up to the age of 18, in accordance with the definition of “minor” as contained in the Convention.
6. The right of children to express their own opinion on issues that affected them was adequately guaranteed in a number of different laws, particularly in the Relations between Parents and Children Law of 1990. A number of regulations stipulated that the views of children had to be taken into account at school, particularly in connection with disciplinary measures. Pupils were entitled to representation on staff committees, and to file complaints to the education authorities and issue publications. The Government had established a technical committee to make proposals regarding the revision of school regulations. The technical committee also had the task of communicating its proposals to all interested bodies, including teachers’, parents’ and

students' unions, before submitting them for adoption. Moreover, a decision had been taken by an inter-ministerial committee established by the Council of Ministers to review all child-related legislation with a view to incorporating the provisions of the Convention, including the right of the child to express his or her views, into the new school regulations.

7. Although it would take time to change traditional attitudes, the new legislation should be instrumental in that regard. The Government of Cyprus was particularly pleased with the positive changes that had been brought about as a result of the adoption of the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law of 2000, which provided for the protection of witnesses and made the reporting of cases mandatory. As a result of the Law, an increasing number of women were coming forward to report cases.

8. The death penalty, which had previously been applied only in cases of high treason, had been abolished in 1999 by the same law that had increased the age of absolute non-criminal responsibility from 7 to 10 years.

9. As part of a government strategy for the period 2004-2006, efforts would be made to increase spending in the areas of education, health and psychiatric services. All children in Cyprus would benefit from such measures, regardless of their nationality, religion or ethnic origin.

10. In reply to a question about minorities, she explained that, when the Constitution had entered into force in 1960, all citizens had been asked to decide whether they wished to belong to the Greek or the Turkish community. In addition to those two communities, the Constitution recognized three religious groups, namely the Armenians, the Maronites and the Latins. All members of those religious groups had chosen to be part of the Greek community, thereby acquiring the same civil and political rights as Greek Cypriots, including the right to vote. The Constitution also guaranteed the representation of those groups in Parliament and safeguarded their culture. In that regard, efforts were being made in the fields of education and research to improve Greek Cypriots' knowledge of different cultures. All textbooks used in public schools presented minority cultures in a positive way.

11. Primary and secondary education was compulsory and free for all children. Boys and girls were taught the same subjects. As instruction was provided primarily in Greek, children belonging to different religious groups or to the Turkish community received assistance from the State to attend a private school of their choice in order to learn Greek. The Government also subsidized the cost of religious education for such children, who were not obliged to attend the compulsory religious instruction classes for Greek Orthodox children. Further information on the subject was contained in the supplementary report. Sex education was taught in schools under the general subject of health training.

12. Ms. SARDENBERG asked whether there was any religious discrimination in Cyprus and whether it was true that a Turkish Cypriot could not enter into a civil marriage with a Greek Cypriot.

13. Ms. KOURSOUNBA (Cyprus) said that the Constitution prohibited all forms of discrimination and that she was not aware of any religious discrimination. The problems facing Cyprus were traditionally of a political - not religious - nature. However, in 1960 a provision

had been included in the Constitution at the insistence of the Turkish community, prohibiting marriages between Greek and Turkish Cypriots. For political reasons, the Government had not taken any action to change that provision. As a result, many couples had been forced to get married abroad. That provision was clearly contrary to many of the international human rights instruments to which Cyprus was a party, and a new draft law to amend it was currently under consideration.

14. It was purely coincidental that all the members of the delegation were women; until very recently, a number of important posts in departments dealing with children's rights had been occupied by men. Although women had traditionally played a larger role in child-rearing, attitudes had changed and men were now equally involved. A bill was currently before Parliament to introduce paternity leave on an equal basis with maternity leave, which would allow fathers to take up to a year off work.

15. Ms. AL-THANI asked whether maternity leave was fully paid.

16. Ms. KOURSOUNBA (Cyprus) said that women were currently entitled to four months' fully paid maternity leave. They could take a further eight months' leave, which would soon be extended to a maximum of two years. Under the new legislation, such leave would not necessarily have to be taken immediately after the birth of a child. All the legislation in that field was in conformity with European Union standards.

17. The most basic principle in the legislation and practice of the Department of Social Welfare Services was the best interests of the child. In particular, the Adoption Law of 1995 included that principle as a basic prerequisite for the adoption process. Furthermore, the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law provided that the best interests of the child should be the primary consideration when deciding whether or not to prosecute.

18. In reply to the question about the status of children born out of wedlock, she said that the Children (Relationship and Legal Status) Law of 1991 provided that a father could voluntarily recognize his child, or a court could order such recognition. In such cases, the child acquired all the rights of a legitimate child. The Law also contained provisions to safeguard the name of the child. The amendment of the Citizenship Law in 2001 made it possible for an illegitimate child born of a Cypriot mother to acquire Cypriot citizenship automatically, without the approval of the Minister of the Interior.

19. She was not aware of any recent incidents of torture or ill-treatment by Cypriot police officers. The Committee against Torture had recently reviewed the situation in Cyprus and had noted with satisfaction that there were no reported cases of torture or ill-treatment in Cyprus.

20. There were no domestic workers in Cyprus under the age of 18. Despite the fact that in Cyprus it was illegal to employ persons under the age of 15, there was a growing trend to employ domestic help from abroad. All foreign domestic workers were required to be at least 18 years old.

21. For many years, corporal punishment had been considered an offence under the ordinary Criminal Code. It was strictly prohibited in schools.

22. After the invasion of Cyprus in 1974, a third of the population had been forced to move to the Government-controlled area. A decision had been taken to grant those who had been displaced from their father's side the status of internally displaced persons in order to enable them to receive benefits. There were no internal refugees in Cyprus. The Refugee Law of 2000 provided for the recognition of refugees and for the better implementation of international instruments relating to the status of refugees. The Law had been prepared in accordance with a European Union directive and had been approved by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees.
23. Male homosexuality had, for a long time, been considered a criminal offence; however, following a 1993 decision against Cyprus by the European Court of Human Rights, legislation had been amended to decriminalize homosexual sex between two consenting adults. Under the new legislation, homosexual sex was considered to be an offence only if it was committed in public, involved a minor, or was violent.
24. The Committee had asked whether there was any contact between young people from the two communities. For some time, inter-communal meetings had been held between groups of young people. It was those people who were paving the way for the reunification of the island.
25. The Government attached great importance to providing training on the implementation of the new legislation. The police, in particular, received special training.
26. Those present at a child's birth had the legal obligation to register the child. Failure to do so was punishable. As birth certificates were required for all official matters, registration was difficult to avoid.
27. Mr. KOTRANE said that, according to the report, only children of internally displaced persons had the right to protection under the Refugee Law. In that regard, he wished to know whether children of internally displaced men were guaranteed the same protection as children of internally displaced women.
28. The fact that domestic work had not been prohibited was not inconsistent with the Convention. However, the same value had to be attached to domestic work as to any other form of work. In that regard, he wondered whether the Government had taken measures to ensure that domestic workers received social security.
29. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that there were no Cypriot refugees in Cyprus. Cypriots who had been forced to leave their homes as a result of the Turkish invasion did not have the status of refugees under international law and were called "internally displaced persons". Only children of male internally displaced persons received benefits. Persons who arrived in Cyprus as refugees under international law were dealt with in accordance with the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and with the Refugee Law of 2000.
30. Under the Refugee Law, any person under 15 years of age was forbidden to work. Persons employing domestic workers had to pay substantial contributions towards their employees' benefits. A number of requirements, such as minimum age, welfare, leave and medical benefits, applied to all types of employment. Persons under 18 years of age were prohibited from engaging in domestic work. While there were measures to ensure that violations

were reported to the authorities, no cases had been reported to date. The Government had enacted a law on sexual exploitation and trafficking in persons in compliance with its obligation to harmonize its legislation with that of the European Union.

31. Ms. LOIZIDOU (Cyprus) said that a comparative legal study, undertaken in 1998, had commended Cyprus's approach to combating domestic violence, which combined criminal sanctions, protection orders and property provisions. For example, the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law provided for more severe penalties for violence within families than for other forms of violent crimes punishable under the Criminal Code.

32. Ms. SARDENBERG asked how the implementation of the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law was being evaluated.

33. Ms. LOIZIDOU (Cyprus) said that the objective of the Law was to help to change public attitudes towards domestic violence. The Law recognized the impact of such violence on children, and any act of violence committed in the presence of a child was an offence, punishable by five years' imprisonment. In cases of domestic violence, the Attorney-General had primary responsibility for initiating criminal prosecutions. In June 1998, a team of prosecutors at the Office of the Attorney-General had been assigned to deal with those cases. All officials of government departments, as well as the police, social workers, teachers and doctors, who became aware of cases of domestic violence, must submit a report to the Attorney-General within seven days; failure to do so could lead to disciplinary action. The team of prosecutors examined such reports, gave instructions on how a case should be handled and took measures to protect victims of violence.

34. Domestic violence was considered an offence against the State. The Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law contained provisions to ensure confidentiality in investigations and the hearing of cases. Thus, receipt or publication of any statement of a victim or witness in a case of domestic violence by a person unauthorized to do so was punishable by up to five years' imprisonment. Disclosure or publication of any other information that could reveal the identity of the victim or perpetrator was punishable by two years' imprisonment or a fine.

35. Ms. SARDENBERG asked whether any information campaigns and education programmes had been conducted in order to raise public awareness of family violence and help prevent that phenomenon.

36. Ms. KOURSOUNBA said that the Ministry of Education and parents' associations held lectures for parents on rights of children.

37. Ms. LOIZIDOU said that an advisory committee had been set up under the Violence in the Family (Prevention and Protection of Victims) Law with a view to raising public awareness of the problem and preventing it. The advisory committee had organized numerous seminars for teachers, police, prosecutors, judges and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) as well as interdisciplinary meetings. The committee's publications, such as a guide on dealing with and avoiding violence and a guide on the protection of children from sexual abuse in the family, had been widely disseminated. Churches had held conferences at which members of the advisory committee discussed ways of preventing violence against children. In 2002, psychologists had

organized a conference on aggressiveness, which had dealt with a wide range of subjects, including bullying at school, the role of the family in preventing the aggressive behaviour of students, and juvenile delinquency.

38. Ms. NICOLAOU said that, in Cyprus, children were rarely available for adoption. There were only two known cases where the child's mother knew who had adopted her child. Both cases involved foreigners who had abandoned their children in Cyprus. As they came from countries that had signed the Hague Convention on Intercountry Adoption, the children would be adopted in accordance with that Convention. The Adoption Law of 1995 safeguarded the best interests and respected the views of the child. In certain circumstances, in order to safeguard a child's welfare, the law permitted adoption without the parents' consent.

39. Social welfare services were the central authority in matters of adoption. Children could be adopted in countries with which Cyprus had bilateral agreements. If a child was adopted in a country with which no such agreement had been concluded, the adoption was carried out through the embassy of the country in question.

40. With regard to the issue of placement, she said that group foster families were sometimes preferable to institutions. For example, placing siblings in a group foster home prevented their separation. Before placing children with a foster family, social workers had to consider the possibility of placing them with their extended family. Children's homes were governed by special regulations, which were contained in a manual of operations.

41. Ms. SARDENBERG asked whether Cyprus recognized a child's right to the periodic review of his or her placement.

42. Ms. NICOLAOU (Cyprus) said that the manual of operations safeguarded the views of children in care. Some children had already been transferred from one foster home to another at their request. The number of children in institutions had tripled. The authorities did not consider that increase to be a trend and had therefore not yet studied the reasons for the increase. If the number of children in institutions continued to rise, a study would be carried out.

43. Ms. KOURSOUNBA (Cyprus) said that under Cypriot legislation both parents were obliged to maintain their children to the best of their ability until the children were 18 years of age. Parents were jointly responsible for parental care, the designation of a name and the representation of their children.

44. The CHAIRPERSON asked how children were involved in court procedures and requested information about the children's parliament.

45. Ms. ALUOCH asked whether there was a system of legal aid for children.

46. Mr. FILALI wished to know if Cyprus had a system of legal aid for children in cases where families could not afford a lawyer.

47. Mr. KOTRANE wished to know what happened if parents failed to pay child maintenance. He wondered whether there was a State fund to provide maintenance, as required by the Convention. He asked whether, under the Cypriot legal system, parents were obliged to give children a name, particularly in view of the fact that children born out of wedlock ran the risk of being deprived of an identity.

48. Mr. FILALI asked what legal proceedings, if any, were taken against parents who failed to pay child maintenance.

49. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that any parent who failed to pay child maintenance when he or she had the means to do so faced legal action and penalties including imprisonment. Children who did not receive maintenance from their parents were helped by the Public Assistance Fund. Under Cypriot legislation, parents were jointly responsible for naming their children and were obliged to register the names of their children with the authorities. If the father was absent or unknown, children were automatically given their mother's surname. All children in Cyprus had a name and an identity.

50. Ms. LOIZIDOU (Cyprus) said that the children's parliament had first met in 2001, in a meeting chaired by the speaker of the House of Representatives. At a national meeting of the children's parliament held earlier in 2003, it had been decided that the parliament would meet on a quarterly basis. District parliamentary committees would meet more frequently to discuss a variety of issues. The children themselves had decided on their own election and working procedures.

51. The CHAIRPERSON invited the Committee to ask questions concerning basic health and welfare, education, leisure and cultural activities and special protection measures.

52. Ms. SARDENBERG asked for information about Cyprus's policy on the integration of disabled children into society, and society's attitudes towards disability. She enquired whether Cyprus planned to expand mental health services for children and adolescents and to integrate them into the general health system. She wished to know whether the authorities were contemplating any initiatives or programmes to teach children to live in a multicultural environment, and whether there were any educational initiatives for improving relations between the Greek and Turkish communities.

53. Since immigration was on the rise, she wished to know what steps were being taken to avoid discrimination with respect to access to education. In view of the absence of comprehensive immigration policy, she wondered how the authorities were ensuring that the rights of immigrant children were being fully respected. She enquired about initiatives that enabled schoolchildren to participate in decisions affecting them, for example in cases of expulsion. She wished to know why so many students were receiving psychiatric care, and how the question of students with psychological problems was being addressed.

54. She requested information on the measures that were being taken to prevent drug and tobacco addiction among children. Finally she asked what measures Cyprus was taking to bring its juvenile justice system into line with the Convention.



55. Mr. AL-SHEDDI asked what provisions were made for students who reached the age of 15 without completing elementary school. He asked whether children who did not speak Greek received any special assistance at school and enquired what was being done to integrate children with special needs into the general education system. He asked whether any studies had been carried out to determine whether the legislation banning corporal punishment in the home and at school was effective. He was concerned that strong family values might lead to tolerance of corporal punishment at home.

56. In her 1999 report, the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography had expressed concerns that Cyprus was being used as a transit point for young women from Eastern Europe being trafficked to countries of the Middle East, particularly Israel, and that some of those young women might be minors. He asked what measures Cyprus was taking to stop such trafficking.

57. Ms. AL-THANI asked what was being done to give disabled children access to sport, leisure and cultural activities. She enquired whether there was any legislation to provide disabled children with access to public buildings and transport. She found it difficult to believe that there had been no cases of HIV/AIDS among adolescents since 1987, especially since the Committee had received information about a 9-year old and a 13-year old who had been diagnosed with HIV/AIDS. She asked whether there were HIV/AIDS education campaigns for adolescents. Noting that mother-to-child transmission of the virus had been limited, she wondered whether the Cypriot health services had targeted other forms of transmission. In the light of the excellent results of the Cypriot health system, she asked why there were plans to switch over to a new system, which would be based on the United Kingdom's health service, by the year 2006. She asked what measures were being taken to combat drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse.

58. Mr. CITARELLA said that, although the minimum age of criminal responsibility had been raised to 10 years, that age was still far too low by international standards. He sought confirmation that Cyprus still had no specific juvenile courts that offered professional representation. He noted that, in Cyprus, children aged 17 were considered as adults and treated as such in the legal system; under the Convention, that age should be 18 years. He wished to know why courts had been recommended to send sentenced minors to police stations rather than to prison.

59. Ms. KHATTAB asked whether the family court system dealt with child and juvenile delinquency or whether such cases were brought before the ordinary criminal courts. In view of the strength of the Cypriot economy, she had been surprised to learn from the concluding observations of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights that the legal minimum wage in Cyprus did not guarantee an adequate standard of living. She requested an explanation of an entry in the International Labour Organization's Yearbook of Labour Statistics 2001 stating that, in the year 2000, 12,691 children aged 15 to 19 years had been economically active. She asked what measures Cyprus was taking to prevent trafficking in women, especially minors.

60. Ms. Yanghee LEE asked whether the absence of data on disabled children living at home referred only to children with severe disabilities. She noted that the Ministry of Education and Culture had decided that, from September 1998, the minimum age of enrolment in elementary

education would rise from 5 years and 6 months to 5 years and 8 months. She asked whether that was because pre-school had been extended or because the decision was intended to reduce the number of pupils starting elementary school.

61. Mr. KRAPPMANN asked whether adolescents who dropped out of school or left school without any qualifications faced economic problems. He wondered whether Cyprus suffered from the problem of youth unemployment.

62. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC said that she had been surprised to learn that Cyprus faced no real problem of drug trafficking. She wondered whether the Cypriot authorities took part or intended to take part in regional cooperation to combat drug trafficking, as well as trafficking in human beings, especially minors.

63. Ms. ALUOCH welcomed the decision automatically to grant Cypriot nationality to a child born in Cyprus to a Cypriot mother, and enquired whether the same applied to a child born outside Cyprus to a Cypriot mother.

64. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that a child born to a Cypriot mother abroad was automatically granted Cypriot nationality.

65. Mr. FILALI requested information about the membership of courts that heard children's cases. He asked how children born in prison were dealt with under Cypriot law.

66. Mr. LIWSKI wondered whether the low rate of abandonment of children by their mothers was attributable to traditional values or to a deliberate State policy, such as the encouragement of breastfeeding.

The meeting was suspended at 5.05 p.m. and resumed at 5.20 p.m.

67. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that the supplementary report contained information on children with disabilities, the new legislation and regulations pertaining to them, and up-to-date statistics concerning the integration of disabled children into ordinary and special schools.

68. The CHAIRPERSON asked how children with disabilities were integrated into society and whether measures had been taken to facilitate their access to buildings, public transport and so forth.

69. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that all public buildings, including schools, were required to provide facilities for disabled persons. For schools, that meant special school buses, lifts, ramps and toilets for disabled children. Cyprus was making efforts to integrate children with disabilities. Every year it held a highly publicized special olympics event that was attended by the President and members of the Cabinet. There were also other publicity and fund-raising events for the benefit of disabled children.

70. Although the current health-care system was good, a new law would gradually be implemented to create a national health system based on the British model. The new system would cover the whole of the population, whereas the current system covered only 75 per cent and subjected entitlement to means testing. The Government was aware of the shortcomings of

the British system, which was why the new system was being carefully prepared and implemented. A board had been appointed along with a special task force to ensure the training of general practitioners, develop management information systems and draft new regulations.

71. Children and adolescents with mental health problems were cared for by the community, and social integration was encouraged. Under the new health-care system, Cyprus's only mental institution would be closed and cases requiring hospitalization would be referred to general hospitals.

72. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that the statistics provided on the number of HIV/AIDS cases were reliable. There was a high level of awareness about the disease, and many training programmes and campaigns had been conducted in schools and the media. Although some HIV/AIDS-related cartoons and public service announcements, as well as the distribution of free condoms to young people, had been considered shocking, they had ultimately been accepted as the population realized the risks involved.

73. In Cyprus, all children under the age of 18, including children of immigrants, were entitled to free education. Programmes were in place to provide additional support and free Greek lessons to children from other countries in order to enable them to attend ordinary public schools. The underlying philosophy of education in Cyprus was one of tolerance and respect for the world's cultural, linguistic and religious diversity. That was reflected in textbooks and school curricula.

74. Schoolchildren had the right to express their views and participate in decisions concerning them. In cases of expulsion, a pupil had a right to be heard, but the headmaster or other authorized person could nevertheless enforce the expulsion. Children could speak for themselves or make their views known through their parents or through a school psychologist. A technical committee appointed by the Minister of Education to review school regulations had examined article 12 of the Convention and had proposed its incorporation into those regulations; in any case, the aim of article 12 had already been achieved in practice.

75. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether psychological counselling in schools for pupils with psychosocial problems was provided by school staff or by external professionals?

76. Ms. KOURSOMBA (Cyprus) said that, while there had always been a sufficient number of school counsellors, the new Government had developed a programme to increase the number of educational psychologists for schoolchildren.

77. Although there was a great deal of legislation on addiction to drugs and other substances, the process of harmonizing Cypriot legislation with the European *acquis communautaire* called for new drug prevention legislation, the establishment of a drug council and special regulations to enable Cyprus to participate in a national drug documentation and information centre, which was linked to a similar European central body. Under the new legislation, drug policy would be set by a national committee headed by the President and implemented by various ministries. The new legislation also established a drug council, which would be composed of ministers, NGOs and members of civil society who had competence to approve, fund and implement programmes, promote legislation and raise public awareness about the problem of drugs and other addictive substances including alcohol and tobacco.

78. Cyprus's comprehensive immigration policy had recently come under close scrutiny as a result of efforts to harmonize it with the European *acquis communautaire*. Human rights, including the rights of the child, were major elements of that policy. In 2000, the Government had adopted the European Resolution on Unaccompanied Minors Who are Third Country Nationals.

79. The juvenile justice system was in need of revision. Although there were no special juvenile courts, when children were tried district court judges sat separately and there were special provisions for confidentiality. If needed, legal assistance was provided for minors in criminal cases. New legislation would extend such assistance to civil cases. Family courts did not deal with juvenile delinquency, but were limited to family matters.

80. Pregnant women prisoners were allowed to keep their children until the termination of breastfeeding. In point of fact, there had only been one case of a pregnant woman prisoner.

81. Ms. ALUOCH asked whether women prisoners were allowed to keep children who were no longer being breastfed and, if so, up to what age.

82. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that current legislation required that children of women prisoners should be entrusted to other family members or to the social welfare services. Since there had been so few cases of women prisoners with children, the question had probably not been brought to the attention of the Government.

83. There were no statistics on unemployed children between the ages of 15 and 18. However, unemployment in Cyprus was only about 3 per cent for the population as a whole.

84. The CHAIRPERSON asked if there were statistics on children who dropped out of school or who had to repeat a year. He also enquired about the reason for changing the age of primary school enrolment from 5 years and 6 months to 5 years and 8 months.

85. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that the primary school enrolment age had been changed because experience showed that younger children were not mature enough to start school and often developed reading and writing difficulties. While education was compulsory until the age of 15, free education was provided up to the age of 18 or beyond, with special permission for children who had repeated a year. There were not many instances of dropouts. Children who decided to drop out of school before the age of 15 could be taken to court for violating the law. Parents who did not allow their children to go to school could also be prosecuted.

86. The CHAIRPERSON requested information on the sentencing and custody in detention centres for children.

87. Ms. KOURSOU MBA (Cyprus) said that children were taken into custody in detention centres before trial, where they were kept separately from adults. Convicted children received prison sentences, although imprisonment was a last resort and rarely imposed on minors. There were no separate prisons for children because there were very few children in prison. The new prison under construction would contain separate cells for children under 18.

88. The CHAIRPERSON asked whether trafficking was a problem in Cyprus.
89. Ms. KOURSOUNBA said that drug trafficking was considered a serious crime and was severely punished by the courts. Cyprus was not affected by trafficking in persons. It had harmonized its legislation with all international instruments regarding trafficking and with the European *acquis communautaire*, and applied the relevant provisions of such instruments as a precautionary measure.
90. Ms. ALUOCH wished to know how parents who failed to send their children to school or to pay their child's maintenance were penalized.
91. Ms. KOURSOUNBA said that parents who did not comply with their legal obligations towards their children received counselling from the social welfare services which usually produced the desired result. In some instances, a fine was imposed; however, even in cases of family violence, counselling was provided before legal action was taken against the parents.
92. Ms. KHATTAB said that it was her impression that all the laws of Cyprus were being respected fully and that Cypriots had no problem abiding by the law.
93. The CHAIRPERSON said that he doubted that that was the case. In every country there were situations in which neither the law nor its implementation could solve certain problems.
94. Ms. SARDENBERG, speaking on behalf of the Committee, thanked the delegation of Cyprus for its highly informative and useful discussion. The Government of Cyprus should take advantage of its forth-coming accession to the European Union as an opportunity to deepen its commitment to the Convention, which should be used as a political tool to strengthen the concept of the child as a subject of rights.
95. The CHAIRPERSON said that he hoped that Cyprus's next report would include information concerning all children in Cyprus.

The meeting rose at 6.00 p.m.