



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Twenty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD (PARTIAL)* OF THE 677th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 12 January 2001, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Ms. OUEDRAOGO

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* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 10.10 a.m.

COOPERATION WITH OTHER UNITED NATIONS BODIES, SPECIALIZED AGENCIES AND OTHER COMPETENT BODIES (agenda item 5)

1. The CHAIRPERSON invited the speakers whose names were included on the list to give a brief account of the activities of the organizations they represented before engaging in a dialogue with members of the Committee.

2. Ms. MILLER (UNICEF) recalled that more than 1.2 billion people, half of whom were children, were living on less than a dollar a day, that the AIDS epidemic had created 13 million orphans and that 110 million children of school age - mainly girls - were receiving no education. Some progress had, however, been made in terms of the protection and welfare of the child: the Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by almost all countries; poliomyelitis had virtually disappeared; support for children had never been as strong as it was today.

3. In cooperation with other partners in the United Nations system, NGOs and the private sector, UNICEF planned to take advantage of those encouraging trends and launch a movement aimed at creating a world where every child's right to dignity, security and self-fulfilment would be a reality. The catalysts of the global movement for children would be the special session of the General Assembly on children (scheduled for September 2001), the "Say Yes for Children" campaign - based on 10 major principles for defending and protecting children, and the mobilization of partners and personalities such as Mr. Nelson Mandela and Ms. Graça Machel.

4. On the occasion of the special session of the General Assembly, which would be a direct follow-up to the World Summit for Children held in 1990 and the mid-decade and end-decade process, the Secretary-General would be submitting a report based, among other things, on reviews by every country of the results achieved during the decade, particularly in terms of implementation of the Convention. Those reviews - 35 of which had already been communicated to the secretariat - would be very useful to the Committee. The Secretary-General's report would also contain contributions from the Committee on the Rights of the Child, WHO, ILO, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and others. The special session should lead to an increased commitment on the part of Governments to the rights of the child - in the form of increasing the resources allocated to the sector and adopting the necessary legal reforms - and, beyond that, to more active participation by civil society, the private sector and children themselves.

5. At the international level, it was UNICEF and other agencies in the United Nations system, international NGOs, donors and the private sector that would be engaged in advancing the cause of children. Finally, the "Say Yes for Children" campaign would employ traditional means of communication as well as the Internet.

6. Ms. SORGHO-OUEDRAOGO (ILO) emphasized that the campaign for ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 on the worst forms of child labour had been crowned with success since it had been ratified by 57 countries, and 10 other countries had announced their intention of doing so.

7. The global mobilization to eliminate child labour had also led to many countries ratifying Convention No. 138 concerning the minimum age of employment. Those good results were due to the joint efforts of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), the Committee on the Rights of the Child and UNICEF, among others, and also to the new methods used at the national and international levels during the mobilization campaign. In that connection, ILO expressed its gratitude to the Committee for its continued support in recommending countries whose reports it was considering to ratify ILO Conventions Nos. 138 and 182.

8. IPEC had also been engaged in strengthening effective implementation of the Conventions by providing technical assistance. The financing of IPEC - whose programmes brought together more than 100 countries and 25 donors - had made very great progress in the past year. IPEC had drawn up a number of multi-stage programmes to accelerate the process of eradicating the worst forms of child labour. That approach linked action against child labour to the national development effort as a whole: Tanzania, Nepal and El Salvador had already committed themselves to participate.

9. Work relating to the Convention had shown that the developed countries too were concerned by the worst forms of child labour. National surveys had been conducted with the help of IPEC in Portugal and Italy. A seminar on child labour in developed countries was to be held in Portugal in February 2001, and a programme to combat child labour would be drawn up after that. Thanks to the programme for gathering statistics which had been launched in 1998, very detailed information on child labour was now available for more than a dozen countries and that figure should reach 30 by the end of 2001.

10. ILO intended to play an active role in the General Assembly's special session on children, and had contributed to the draft "outcome document" by way of a report recapitulating the activities it had undertaken in the areas of child labour and the protection of children. ILO was concerned that the document did not give sufficient consideration to child labour issues. It would be making its views known at the forthcoming meeting of the preparatory committee, and would be participating in the Second World Congress against Commercial and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children.

11. Mr. STAHLHOFER (WHO) recalled that his organization regularly transmitted to the Committee information on the health of children in States parties whose reports the Committee was considering. WHO was keen that its staff should be better prepared to contribute to implementation of the health element of the Convention, and was in the process of providing it with information documents on the subject and organizing seminars on the Convention aimed at its regional staff and representatives of ministries of health and other ministries concerned. A three-day seminar had been held in April 2000 at WHO's Regional Office for Europe in Copenhagen, with the participation of Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, and another seminar had been held in September 2000 at the Regional Office for South-East Asia; others were to be organized in collaboration with UNICEF. In conjunction with various NGOs, WHO had also undertaken a project for planning and programming in the health area based on the Convention. The broad outlines of the project, which would last two to three years, would be presented to the Committee at its twenty-seventh session for comments.

12. WHO was participating very actively in the preparations for the General Assembly's special session on children, and only a few days before it had been studying the draft outcome document of the session with UNICEF. The two organizations did not consider that health had been given the attention it deserved in the document, and had therefore decided to act together to remedy the situation and draw up more appropriate health indicators.

13. Ms. THEYTAZ-BERGMAN (NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child) said that the Group intended to ensure that the rights of the child and the Convention were at the heart of the General Assembly's special session on children. The Group had met during the first preparatory committee session and established an Internet discussion group (<http://www.crin.org>) which was open to all and already had 150 participants, both individuals and NGOs.

14. The Group had transmitted to the Committee a document entitled "Child rights agenda for the coming decade", which was to serve as a basis for discussions with Governments and in which it was emphasized that, from the NGO perspective, the special session should be used to define practical and sustainable ways of fully implementing the Convention as rapidly as possible worldwide. That needed to be achieved by making the provisions of the Convention more binding, and reinforcing the means of implementing them and monitoring mechanisms.

15. The Group was also working on a text, which could be consulted on the above-mentioned Internet site, highlighting the strengths and weaknesses of the draft outcome document "A world fit for children", and which contained a number of recommendations for improving it. It was also drafting a parallel outcome document which would be distributed to Governments. In collaboration with UNICEF, the Group would be collecting comments on the draft from young people, and would summarize them in a paper which it would be submitting to the preparatory committee.

16. As a prelude to the preparatory committee's session, a two-day meeting would be held to prepare children to participate in the special session. In that connection, UNICEF had prepared a guide for young participants, and a letter had been sent to all Governments asking them to ensure that young people were included in their delegations attending the meeting.

17. Lastly, the Group considered that the Committee had not so far been adequately associated with preparations for the special session, and would like it to make observations on the draft outcome document and recommendations to the preparatory committee.

18. Ms. SACKSTEIN (NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child) said that the Group had developed a programme with a view to preparing, in close collaboration with various United Nations agencies, including UNICEF, ILO, WHO and UNESCO, for the Second World Congress against Commercial and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children, to be held in Yokohama (Japan) from 17 to 20 December 2001. The international preparatory committee had already met twice and would ensure that the Congress took into consideration the results of the various events that would be taking place in 2001 and in various respects concerned children, particularly the General Assembly's special session on children and the World Conference on Racism.

19. The international preparatory committee had set four main objectives for the Congress: increasing political commitment to implementing the plan of action adopted at the first Congress and the Convention on the Rights of the Child; evaluating progress made in implementing the plan of action and sharing competencies and good practice; identifying the main difficulties and/or shortcomings in implementation of the programme to counter commercial sexual exploitation of children; strengthening the follow-up process of the World Congress, particularly by defining regional priorities with a view to extending the support given to local initiatives.

20. Six major themes would be dealt with at the Congress: trafficking in children with a view to their sexual exploitation; legislation and law enforcement; prevention, protection and reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation; the profile of the sexual exploiter; child pornography; the role and participation of the private sector.

21. The Group considered that an examination should be made of the environment in which sexual exploitation of children took place, and measures should be taken to make such practices an offence at the global level and to prevent child victims being punished. There should also be a more vigorous commitment to combating sexual exploitation of children from sectors other than those in which substantial progress had already been made, particularly tourism and the Internet. The international preparatory committee had also considered that it was necessary to strengthen cooperation and coordination in the areas of prevention, protection, rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims of sexual exploitation.

22. Finally, it would be a good idea if the Committee on the Rights of the Child were to meet representatives of various Governments before the Congress in order to consider what measures to take in order to strengthen enforcement of the articles of the Convention concerning the exploitation of children.

23. Mr. DOEK emphasized that, when considering periodic reports, it would be useful if the Committee had at its disposal up-to-date information on IPEC programmes in the State party whose report was being considered, particularly information regarding the possibility of reproducing those programmes in other regions with similar conditions. The information provided by WHO about the various countries was also very useful, both for the Committee's preparatory session and for the consideration of periodic reports.

24. He noted with satisfaction the contribution NGOs had made to the preparations for the special session of the General Assembly on children and their compilation of a programme concerning the rights of the child for the forthcoming decade. The Committee would consider that document and the draft outcome document during the current session, so that it could submit its comments before the preparatory committee's second session. The Committee would circulate its comments as widely as possible in order to stimulate a constructive debate between all the parties concerned.

25. Mr. RABAH asked whether NGOs were considering the establishment of a coordination and cooperation mechanism which would enable them to combine their efforts with those of the specialized agencies of the United Nations and the Governments concerned. Were conferences being organized at the regional or international level to lay the foundations for cooperation and coordination of the various activities?

26. Ms. KARP welcomed the work undertaken by NGOs in anticipation of the special session of the General Assembly and the fruitful collaboration by all parties in that process. That collaboration, which she would like to see continued after the special session, should concentrate on implementation of the Convention.

27. The CHAIRPERSON said that consideration should be given to the contribution the Committee should make to initiatives planned by NGOs.

28. Ms. RILANTONO emphasized that, in order to yield sustainable results, the struggle against child labour should be placed in the broader context of social development; she asked whether ILO was collaborating with the Economic and Social Council in that respect and whether the IPEC programme was helping to reduce the number of children in the world who were working. Did WHO have any plans in the short term to launch a mental health programme for adolescents, particularly with a view to preventing suicide? And had it established indicators for assessing the mental health of adolescents as it had done for their physical health?

29. Ms. KARP said she wished to know whether WHO regarded the maltreatment of children within the family and corporal punishment as a health problem. Did WHO take such questions into account when drawing up and subsequently evaluating its various country programmes, such as mother and child programmes? Had WHO developed prevention programmes based on public education to combat such phenomena? What criteria would be used by the NGO Group to select the children who would be taking part in the Yokohama Congress against Commercial and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children? Would the children chosen be victims of commercial sexual exploitation?

30. Ms. TIGERSTEDT-TÄHTELÄ requested up-to-date information regarding the revision of ILO Convention No. 103 concerning Maternity Protection (1952).

31. Ms. MILLER (UNICEF) considered that it was very important for the draft outcome document of the special session of the General Assembly to cover the situation of children both in the industrialized countries and in the developing countries. The former countries had very much taken to heart the process of evaluating progress made with a view to achieving the objectives of the World Summit for Children: for them it was an opportunity to take stock of the assistance they were giving to the developing countries and of the impact of their national policies on children's welfare.

32. The draft outcome document "A world fit for children" had been drawn up by the bureau of the preparatory committee for the General Assembly's special session and reflected the opinions of Governments and the bureau. The document should address the industrialized countries and make reference to their development assistance policies.

33. At its meetings, the preparatory committee would deal particularly with the prevention of juvenile delinquency which was a major problem in the industrialized countries. That subject would be taken up in the 10-point programme of action being drawn up in collaboration with the NGO Group for the Convention.

34. As part of the United Nations reform process, there was now greater cooperation among the specialized agencies and between them and various partners. No decision was taken without consulting Governments and, increasingly, NGOs.

35. The Committee could make its contribution to the work of UNICEF by participating in the regional preparatory meetings. Where scheduled conferences did not deal solely with the rights of children, UNICEF intended to steer the participants in various discussion meetings towards such questions. Four meetings would be held in the coming months: a consultation organized by the Southern Africa Development Community; a preparatory meeting for the Ministerial Consultation on Children, scheduled for 14-16 May 2001 in Beijing; the Special African Summit of Heads of State and Government on HIV/AIDS; the Arab High-level Conference on Children, for the Middle East and North African region.

36. Ms. SORGHO-OUEDRAOGO (ILO) said that she would soon be sending the Committee details of the content of the IPEC programme. Three countries had launched a multi-stage programme under which they were committed to cutting the number of children working in mines and agriculture by 80 per cent in five years, and to reducing the sexual exploitation of children. Programmes of that sort had so far been launched in only three countries because they required very extensive prior analysis and considerable financial resources. Another path taken had been to regroup a certain number of modest, scattered programmes into more ambitious subregional programmes with more visible impact. It had been ascertained that some very encouraging experiments had not received much notice, and accordingly a third approach had been to find ways of getting the media and other channels of information, both national and regional, to report on every experiment that had been successful.

37. Cooperation with the other bodies within the United Nations system was developing apace and ILO was now in almost daily contact with its partners, the chief advantage of which was the avoidance of duplication. It was thus working with UNICEF on data collection, and was involved in a joint study and research project with UNICEF and the World Bank on child labour. Although it was true that IPEC had always focused on legislation and consciousness-raising, an increasing number of IPEC initiatives were incorporating economic and social development policies. In fact, a meeting was scheduled with the World Bank to take up the issue of combating child labour as part of the fight against poverty.

38. In 2000, some 100 projects had enabled 260,000 minors to be withdrawn from the labour market. In 2001, statistics for over 30 countries would be available for consultation on the ILO Web site. The international community must be patient because the data collection methodology on child labour had been put in place only in 1998 and the collection process was a long one, since at least nine months elapsed between the start of data collection and the receipt of the raw data, which then had to be analysed in order to be usable.

39. The question of revising ILO Convention No. 103 concerning Maternity Protection had been taken up in the ILO report to the special session of the General Assembly, which would be transmitted to the Committee along with specific information on the matter. Further information might subsequently be available on the ILO Web site.

40. Mr. STAHLHOFER (WHO) said that his organization was engaged in many joint projects with UNICEF and the World Bank, and had begun to work with ILO. A great many activities were planned in the area of mental health, and a report on the matter, containing many references to the Convention on the Rights of the Child and extensive coverage of the issues of stigmatization and discrimination, was in the process of completion and should be issued very shortly.

41. In December 1999, WHO had organized a seminar on corporal punishment and sexual violence to increase the awareness of its personnel and to consider ways in which WHO could help to combat such practices. The point was still being discussed. WHO had a programme for the prevention of family violence, and its regional offices did a great deal of work in that field; the Regional Office for Europe, specifically, had set up a major programme for the prevention of neglect and violence and drawn up guidelines on the question.

42. Ms. THEYTAZ-BERGMAN (NGO Group for the Convention on the Rights of the Child) said that some 100 children would take part in the Second World Congress against Commercial and Other Forms of Sexual Exploitation of Children; 70 would be selected by the NGO Group, with the others chosen directly by the Japanese Government. The children taking part in the Congress would be expected to be fluent in one of the official languages and have a certain familiarity with the problem, either as former victims of sexual exploitation or as activists.

The meeting rose at 12.05 p.m.