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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Eighteenth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 467th MEETING

Held at the Palais des Nations, Geneva,
on Friday, 29 May 1998, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Miss MASON

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GE.98-16373 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

STATEMENT BY THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS

1. Mrs. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) said that children were one of the highest priorities of her mandate and that the Five-Year Implementation Review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action presented an opportunity to assess progress made in the field of children's rights.
2. The Convention on the Rights of the Child had been ratified by virtually all countries, as recommended by the World Conference on Human Rights. In confirming the indivisibility of fundamental civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights, the Convention laid the framework for a system-wide integrated approach to human rights.
3. As recognized by the World Conference on Human Rights, there was a need for increased cooperation among United Nations bodies active in the field of human rights and for a regular review of the situation of children in accordance with their respective mandates. While there was room for improved interaction between the treaty bodies on the one hand, and the rapporteurs and experts of the Commission on Human Rights on the other, there was a noticeable trend to better integrate children's rights into the special procedures. At its previous session, the Commission had devoted special attention to the question of integrating gender issues into its work. At its next session it might focus on children's rights; if so, the Committee's input would be most welcome.
4. She hoped that the rights of the child and the Committee's own recommendations would be a guiding reference in the efforts to establish an International Criminal Court and approve its statute at the Diplomatic Conference to be held in Rome in June 1998.
5. The Committee's interaction with a number of partners, including UNICEF and the NGO Group for the Rights of the Child, had become a model for other mechanisms. That partnership had contributed to spreading a child-rights culture. In that regard, she stressed a few developments of particular interest to the Committee. Firstly, it had been proposed to prepare, at the forthcoming Annual Conference of the International Labour Organization (ILO), a new Convention on the most extreme forms of child labour, which, when adopted, was expected to reinforce existing international standards on the rights of the child. Secondly, it had been decided to convene, in 2001, a follow-up conference to the World Summit for Children. The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights was considering its own input in that process, including in the area of training, education, and national capacity-building. Thirdly, her Office and UNAIDS had jointly published International Guidelines on HIV/AIDS and Human Rights, which would no doubt be useful for the Committee's forthcoming day of general discussion on Children living in a world with HIV/AIDS.
6. On the subject of children in armed conflict, she shared the view of the Committee and of a majority of Governments and important partners (including UNICEF, UNHCR, ICRC, many NGOs and the Special Representative of the

Secretary-General on children in armed conflict, Mr. Otunnu), that a clear limit of 18 years should be set for all forms of child participation in hostilities, either direct or indirect. National legislation should not be regarded as an obstacle to the elaboration of such new international norms. She was convinced that the Committee's input to the following session of the Working Group would contribute to the desired result.

7. She was particularly concerned by child trafficking and exploitation. All efforts to curb that phenomenon, including follow-up activities to the Stockholm Congress on Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children were to be encouraged. The Working Group of the Commission on Human Rights had not yet completed its work. In any event, full implementation of existing international norms, especially the Convention on the Rights of the Child, had to remain a priority.

8. She was convinced that the continued support provided to the Committee through the Plan of Action to strengthen the implementation of the Convention was highly useful in dealing with its heavy workload. It was her hope that the survey on technical cooperation initiated under the Plan could become, through regular contributions by the Committee's main partners, especially UNICEF, ILO/IPEC, UNHCR, WHO, UNAIDS, the NGO community and her own Office, a conduit for the identification of needs for technical cooperation at the country level, and could facilitate such cooperation and foster increased coordination and complementarity among the various partners.

9. Despite the support provided through the Plan of Action, the Committee still faced difficulties in performing its tasks; the fact that the Committee met for 12 weeks each year, with a limited membership of 10, had sometimes led to difficulties, and required a special effort on the part of each member to ensure its adequate functioning. She would spare no effort to facilitate a rapid entry into force of the amendment increasing the Committee's membership to 18. To date, 60 States (half of the required number) had officially accepted that amendment.

10. The CHAIRPERSON invited Committee members to ask questions or make comments.

11. Mr. FULCI observed that the Committee's proposal to include action to combat violations of the rights of the child in the mandate of the new International Criminal Court had met with fierce resistance. He felt that the High Commissioner's support in that regard could be extremely useful and urged her to speak out on behalf of the rights of children the world over in her statement to the Diplomatic Conference in Rome.

12. Mrs. SARDENBERG, returning to the question of the integration of the rights of the child, pointed out that the Committee had already succeeded in changing attitudes to children throughout the world. All the same, it was equally essential to ensure that the rights of the child were integrated into United Nations activities. The follow-up conference to the World Summit for Children should enable the Committee to assess the progress made by the countries under their plans of action, so that it could be taken into account when those countries' implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was under consideration.

13. Mr. KOLOSOV, referring to the amendment to increase the Committee's membership to 18, asked for an updated list of the States that had accepted it to be distributed to members.

14. Mrs. ROBINSON (High Commissioner for Human Rights) agreed to raise the question of children's rights in her statement to the Diplomatic Conference in Rome. With regard to the integration of those rights, she pointed out that she had established an internal working group, one of whose tasks was to consider ways of further integrating the rights of the child into United Nations activities. She saw no reason why a list of countries that had accepted the amendment should not be made available to members, and added that in such a year of assessment, in which there was greater concern for universal adherence to international instruments, more States should be encouraged to do so.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORT OF STATES PARTIES (item 4 of the agenda) (continued)

Initial report of Maldives (continued) [(CRC/C/8/Add.33 and Add.37; CRC/C/Q/MAL/1) (List of issues to be taken up in connection with the consideration of the initial report of Maldives; written replies by the Government of Maldives to the questions raised in the list of issues, unreferenced document distributed at the meeting)]

15. At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Maldives resumed their places at the Committee table.

Civil rights and freedoms [questions 20 to 25 of the list of issues (CRC/C/Q/MAL/1)] (continued)

16. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) said that a number of awareness-raising programmes had been launched in the archipelago to help parents desist from inflicting corporal punishment on their children. The authorities had published a brochure and organized several radio broadcasts to teach parents to control their anger and frustration. Counselling services and a telephone helpline were also available for parents experiencing difficulties in caring for their children.

17. Ms. YOOSUF (Maldives) said that there was no provision in Maldivian law that contradicted the Sharia.

Family environment and alternative care (questions 26 to 31 of the list of issues)

18. Ms. PALME wished to know how the parents of a child born out of wedlock were treated under Maldivian law. Did the mother receive any support during her pregnancy? Were the parents sanctioned in any way?

19. Mr. RABAH noted that, according to the report, more and more children found themselves in precarious circumstances owing to the high divorce rate. He asked what measures the Maldivian authorities planned to take in order to bring that rate down. Mention was also made in the report of an increase in

the number of cases of abuse in Maldives. He would like to have further information concerning current or planned programmes to combat that phenomenon.

20. Mrs. OUEDRAGO wished to know whether the Maldivian authorities had studied the impact of frequent divorce and remarriage on children's psychological and moral health. The report stated that in the event of divorce, children were taken into the care of a member of the extended family. She asked whether that did not have consequences not mentioned in the report, and wished to know what measures the Government had taken to re-establish parental responsibility and guidance, which in most cases were jeopardized by "multiple" marriages. Were there any parental guidance courses and family counselling services?

21. With regard to the situation of children separated from their parents, she noted that there was a residential institution exclusively for boys. What happened to girls? Were they obliged to remain in the extended family whatever the circumstances? Referring to paragraph 32 of the report (CRC/C/8/Add.33), which stated, in substance, that when a divorced mother was to remarry and have other children, custody of the children of the first marriage was offered to a relative, she asked whether that was the sole solution or whether a divorced woman could, from the viewpoint of Islamic tradition and laws, keep the children of the first marriage. Was the child's opinion taken into account?

22. What measures existed for recovering child support in the event of divorce? Was there any mechanism to ensure that the father fulfilled his obligation?

23. She understood that marriage between blood relations existed in Maldives. Were they voluntary or were they negotiated between the two families? How were they celebrated, according to Islamic law or according to the legislation in force?

24. According to paragraph 59 of the report, there was no "formalized" system of adoption in Maldives. How were a child's interests protected when adoption was authorized by the Ministry of Justice and Islamic Affairs? Did the child have any say in the matter?

25. Lastly, she asked whether the members of the delegation saw any connection between early marriages, multiple divorces, brutality, violence and child abuse on the one hand, and rising juvenile delinquency on the other.

26. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) said that a child born out of wedlock was treated like any other child with regard to education and health services. However, he could not inherit from his father unless the latter recognized his paternity. In the case of offending parents, the mother was placed under house arrest for a year and the father was exiled to another island, also for a year.

27. The high incidence of divorce was certainly one of the most acute problems confronting the Maldivian authorities. In 1995, representatives from all the islands had met at a nationwide conference to adopt a set of measures

to combat the problem. They included, in particular, a programme designed to alert the population to the disastrous consequences of divorce for children, and the adoption of legislation in the field of family law. The Maldivian authorities had repeatedly attempted to conduct a survey on the impact of frequent divorce and remarriage on children, but the project had had to be abandoned owing to the inordinate number of factors at stake. However, she agreed that such a study should be undertaken as a matter of priority.

28. In cases of separation it was the mother who normally took care of the children and there was nothing to prevent her from remarrying and keeping the children of a previous marriage. It was true that custody of a child to a member of an extended family posed certain problems, but it was also a social phenomenon that ensured that the children were protected. What the extended family did generally was to help the mother take better care of her children.

29. The Maldivian authorities provided parental guidance courses and family counselling. When it came to restoring parental responsibility, it was unusual for any member of the family to be unwilling to accept custody.

30. The increase in abuse cases did not necessarily mean that the actual numbers were rising, but rather that Maldivians were more aware that such problems existed and less reluctant to report them. Staff members of the Unit for the Rights of the Child of the Ministry of Home Affairs gave talks on ill-treatment and sexual abuse at educational establishments of all kinds. Their brochures and programmes were also extensively distributed.

31. Under the poster campaigns and numerous programmes, fathers were encouraged to support their children. A project designed to create a home for girls with family problems was being prepared and funds had been sought to implement it. When the problems girls had with their parents could not be solved, they were entrusted, with their consent, to a relative for a limited period. Divorced women who remarried normally kept their children from previous marriages. From the age of seven, the child had the right to choose in whose custody he would remain. In the case of divorce, the courts guaranteed payment of a maintenance allowance. The problem lay not only with fathers who refused to pay the allowance, but also with mothers who did not wish to accept it. For some years now the Unit for the Rights of the Child had been trying to persuade those women to accept the maintenance allowance in the child's interests. Consideration was being given to granting visiting rights to parents who lived apart from their children.

32. All marriages were entered into with free consent and were registered with the court. There being no formalized system of adoption in Maldives, if an orphan could not be placed in the custody of a relative or a friend of his parents, the Government provided financial assistance to the family that agreed to look after him. Furthermore, there were plans to conduct studies on the possible links between multiple remarriages and divorces on the one hand, and child violence and juvenile delinquency on the other. Of the cases of abuse reported to the Unit for the Rights of the Child, 56 per cent were attributable to divorcee households.

33. Mrs. KARP asked what the social and cultural reasons were for the high incidence of divorce, which was all the more surprising since Maldives was an

Islamic country. She queried the compatibility of article 23 of Act No. 9/91 on the protection of the rights of the child with the provisions of articles 5 and 18 of the Convention, which deal with parental responsibilities. She wished to know more about the awareness campaigns concerning sexual violence against children. What measures were taken to assist girls who were victims of sexual abuse?

34. How many family counsellors and specialists were involved in the rehabilitation of abused children? Were there any homes for battered wives? Could the courts issue a restraining order on husbands who beat their wives? Had there been any deaths from violence in the family?

35. Mrs. SARDENBERG asked for clarification of the official notification limiting the number of remarriages for the same couple. In that connection, she underscored the need to draft a law on the family and for education and awareness campaigns to be organized. Had specific measures been taken to prepare such a law? She encouraged the State party to expand its interpretation of the provisions contained in articles 3 and 12 of the Convention. She wished to know what measures were being taken to address the problems of children who spent their time in the streets and formed themselves into gangs. In that connection, she invited the State party to seek international cooperation, particularly from NGOs.

36. Mr. FULCI asked whether the existence of multiple marriages and a "polynuclear" type of extended family did not have undesirable consequences for children and their behaviour. He considered that in the absence of a formalized system of adoption, the State party should take steps to facilitate permanent adoption of children either in Maldives or elsewhere. Had the Government considered adhering to the Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Inter-County Adoption?

37. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in her personal capacity, was of the view that the report of Maldives (CRC/C/8/Add.33) provided insufficient details on the exercise of children's rights regarding, for instance, recovery of maintenance for the child, children deprived of a family environment, and illicit transfer and non-return. She called, in particular, for details concerning the real condition of girls.

38. Ms. YOOSUF (Maldives) replied that girls were more protected than boys and enjoyed less freedom. For example, they could not leave their atolls to study on other islands. At the time when the residential institution for boys was established, it was only boys who came and went freely in the streets. However, cases of girls doing so having been reported, a project for a similar girls' institution had been prepared.

39. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) explained that there was a ban on sexual relations outside marriage, which explained the large number of marriages, followed by divorces, when married couples realized that they were not happy together. The spouses and their respective families did not bear each other any grudge. It was possible that Law 9/91 disregarded the rights of parents with regard to parental responsibility, but if the Government intervened, it did so in the child's own interests, when parents were not in a position to meet the child's health and education needs.

40. Awareness campaigns on sexual violence against children had had positive results because they had been geared to parents from the outset. Parents were averse to reporting cases of sexual violence to the authorities because of the potential social consequences for the victims. The Government had taken pains to see that professions that maintained contact with children were familiarized with the provisions of the Convention and Law 9/91. Training courses had been organized with the cooperation of foreign universities for prosecutors, judges, education advisers and law enforcement officials. Her Government was doing all it could to obtain help from the Centre for Human Rights and from a number of organizations in that field. Seven persons were currently employed by the Unit for the Rights of the Child and four others were being trained abroad. In addition, 150 persons had received rudimentary training on the islands and another 50 were receiving more extensive training in the capital, Malé. In addition to the Unit for the Rights of the Child, two NGOs provided advisory services. The authorities were striving to strengthen the traditional monitoring structures set up for the extended family and the community.

41. Ms. YOOSUF (Maldives) said that there were no homes for battered wives in Maldives. Generally speaking, women did not report that type of situation, and if they did, they tended to withdraw their complaint subsequently. The Ministry of Women's Affairs and Social Welfare did its best to apprise women of their rights and encourage them to file cases of family violence in the courts.

42. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) explained that the same man and woman could marry each other three times running, after which they had to marry other partners. Then they were free to marry again three times. The number of marriage cycles of that kind was limited to three, however, which meant nine marriages for the same couple. In cases of violence within the family, a restraining order could be issued against a husband in order to protect the mother and child. Education and training centres had been opened for boys since 1979 in order to forestall delinquency, because boys were beginning to take to the streets. Nothing had been planned for girls, who did not rebel in the same way and married earlier. However, in Malé, for instance, 70,000 inhabitants were crowded into 2.5 square kilometres. The fact that children swarmed in the streets did not mean that they slept there.

43. Multiple marriages did generate emotional problems and behavioural disorders in children. Handbooks had been prepared both for children and their parents in cases of divorce. While the high divorce rate was regrettable, children did not always appreciate their situation, because it was so common in Maldives. There was no "formalized" system of adoption in the archipelago. That practice had not been welcomed by public opinion, which feared that children would suffer more than if they were placed in a family. Her Government had not yet considered authorizing inter-country adoption of children. It did, however, plan to open an orphanage.

44. Mrs. KARP asked what divorce signified in Maldives and what the power relations were between the two partners. Were women prosecuted in the courts for adultery? Were there any homes for young victims of violence?

45. Ms. PALME noted the disintegration of the extended family in Maldives. She asked whether the Government should not give thought to an effective system for monitoring children placed in families, rather than setting up an orphanage. She asked for details on the size of the planned orphanage.

46. Mr. RABAH asked whether there was any plan to legalize "kafalah", the tutelary system under Islamic law, as a substitute for adoption, which was prohibited by the Koran.

47. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking in her personal capacity, asked whether, in the case of sexual abuse, the child was entitled to file a complaint before a court or whether only parents enjoyed that right. It would be interesting to know the family hierarchical structure, given the frequency of divorce, and the status of the mother-in-law. Was there any youth guidance system that helped people become better acquainted before marrying, and so avoid the infernal cycle of marriage and divorce?

48. Mr. KOLOSOV asked whether polygamy was accepted in Maldivian society, as in other Islamic countries.

49. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) said that men were more likely to seek divorce than women. However, studies conducted for the Conference on the Family (1995) showed that men often sought divorce under pressure from their wives. Divorced women were, by and large, supported by their families and were not socially stigmatized. The question of adultery was governed by the Shariah. Advisory services were open to all, but provided no follow-up unless those involved voluntarily returned for consultation.

50. Ms. YOOSUF (Maldives) acknowledged that the placement of children in institutions was not an ideal solution. According to the ancestral culture of Maldives, placement of a child in a family or his community was always preferable. Indeed, members of Maldivian society tended to help and take care of one another, with or without family ties. The elderly therefore remained in their families, even though an old people's home did exist.

51. In response to Mr. Kolosov, she said that polygamy was accepted, although not encouraged. The practice was not intended to discourage divorce, as in other Islamic countries. Women perceived it as a negative experience.

52. In response to Mr. Rabah, she said that it was not unusual for people to foster a child. "Kafalah" was envisaged in the context of Maldives in parallel with the question of adoption.

53. On the subject of sexual abuse, she said that children often preferred to turn to teachers rather than to their parents. However, teacher training in the subject was limited.

54. In general, couples wishing to marry or divorce did not seek advice from anyone. The Government had intended to set up a family guidance body, but the plan had had to be shelved owing to lack of funds and qualified personnel.

Basic health and welfare (questions 32 to 36 of the List of issues)

Education, leisure and cultural activities (questions 37 to 40 of the List of issues)

55. Mr. FULCI asked about the measures taken by the Maldivian Government to combat malnutrition and growth retardation. Was there a nationwide plan of action to reduce the incidence of malnutrition? What was the Government doing to protect children from sexual tourism and the risks of exposure to drug abuse and HIV/AIDS infection associated with that phenomenon? Were children alerted to the risk involved? Was the evolution of this scourge monitored and what could the international community do to help eliminate it?

56. Ms. PALME endorsed the questions raised by Mr. Fulci on malnutrition and the impact of tourism on the problems of sexual exploitation of children and the spread of HIV/AIDS. She wished to know whether the school results of children, particularly girls, placed as servants in families living far away were as good as those who remained in their own families. Were the problems of child development linked to early marriages, the frequency of divorce or the nutritional situation? Had the Maldives sought international cooperation in its quest for solutions to those problems?

57. Mrs. KARP wished to know how many children were currently housed in institutions. It appeared from the report (CRC/C/8/Add.33) that the policy on disabled children was community-based, which was laudable. But were schools equipped to deal with disabled children? How were children with mental problems treated in the community? Were there any studies or statistics on the subject? Was anything being done to prevent disabilities, particularly through information and education of parents? Were adolescents with special problems, such as drug abuse, looked after? Since there was no university in Maldives, how were specialists, such as psychologists, social workers or probation officers, recruited? Did young people wishing to continue their studies beyond the twelfth year receive any financial assistance to study abroad? Lastly, had any cases of female sexual mutilation been reported in the country?

58. Mrs. OUEDRAOGO wished to have more information on the practice of abortion, the existence or otherwise of family planning services, breastfeeding, and the effects of early weaning. Did children and parents play any role in establishing educational standards, and were children heard before disciplinary action was taken against them? Were classes overcrowded because of the small number of schools? Were human rights, more particularly the rights of the child, taught?

59. Mrs. SARDENBERG wished to know whether there was a breastfeeding promotion policy, and whether any sign language had been devised for deaf mutes.

60. Ms. SHIHAM (Maldives) said that malnutrition in the country was not caused by food shortage, but rather by an unbalanced diet. In that connection, there had been numerous cases of adolescents fainting or feeling unwell at school after skipping breakfast. The Government had developed a nationwide plan of action on malnutrition, as well as an information campaign

on proper diet. It was preparing a marketing code for breast-milk substitutes. A study on vitamin A deficiency was in progress. Growth retardation was a major problem and efforts were being made countrywide to identify affected children and offer them a more balanced diet for a period of time in order to put them back on the right track. The widespread drop in consumption of fresh vegetables was due less to progressive water salination, which reduced arable land, than to the economic development of Maldives, which had engendered in the population an excessive taste for imported products, especially tinned goods. UNICEF was involved in an information campaign on the virtues of eating fresh vegetables.

61. On the subject of sexual exploitation of children by foreigners, she explained that tourists to Maldives had virtually no contact with the population. They arrived at an international airport on an uninhabited island, whence they were immediately transferred to the various beach resorts, where they lived quite self-sufficiently for two or three weeks. The atolls that housed those resorts were not inhabited by the indigenous population and most employees there were immigrant workers. No children worked on those islands. When tourists left their hotel complex to visit Malé or other islands, they were always accompanied by a guide, who ensured that they respected a code of conduct. All travel had to be approved by the Ministry of Tourism. Most of the population, therefore, rarely saw foreigners, and there were probably some remote atolls still on which no tourist had ever set foot.

62. The drug consumption problem was extremely acute. Maldives was a transit point for large numbers of travellers to other countries. An anti-drugs agency and a treatment centre had been set up to halt the proliferation of drugs. The centre currently attended some 15 patients, some of whom had voluntarily sought treatment. When treatment was voluntary, the patient's identity was not communicated to the authorities. A court could order a delinquent to register for a detoxification cure by putting him on probation for a period not exceeding three years. Drug trafficking was an offence governed by separate legislation.

63. An inter-ministerial council was responsible for determining the policies and programmes to be prepared in the fight against AIDS and to identify infected individuals. Only eight HIV-infected persons had been discovered in the country so far, none of whom were children. However, the Government was not relaxing its vigilance. A massive information campaign was being conducted, using posters and radio and television broadcasts. Immigrant workers and seamen and students returning from abroad had to undergo a compulsory screening test. The same was true of pregnant women and all patients about to undergo surgery. The very high incidence of thalassaemia, a blood disease that required child sufferers to have a monthly transfusion, meant that the health authorities needed to be extremely careful in selecting blood donors.

64. All the authorities, the Unit for the Right of the Child, the anti-drug agency, and the social security service had been collaborating for three years under a prevention programme alerting parents and students to the dangers of drug abuse. Counsellors, mainly volunteers, went from school to school, distributing brochures and leaflets informing parents of the measures they could take and the assistance they could receive for treatment.

65. Many children from other islands worked in Malé as domestics. They were supposed to participate in the life of the household just as their employers' children did. No special study had been carried out to determine whether their school results were affected. It should be observed that many persons employed in the central administration came from remote islands.

66. There was an institution for disabled children which currently cared for 68 boys. A study was in progress on some islands, but the exact number of disabled children was not known because they were traditionally cared for by their families. Government action was restricted to the provision of financial assistance for procuring the necessary materials and equipment, and medical assistance to mentally handicapped children. One school in Malé had a special class for deaf-and-dumb children. However, no sign language had been devised. It was not known whether there was a connection between mental disability and early marriage. However, marriage between blood relations on some islands would seem to be a determining factor.

67. Students leaving secondary school were obliged to go abroad for university education. They received scholarships from the Government, which benefited from bilateral aid and World Bank assistance to that end. The reason there was no university in Maldives was that the likely number of enrolments each year was much too small to make it feasible. Pupils who did not complete their secondary studies could enrol in vocational training in the fields of primary education, management, or health and hotel services, or they could follow technical education. Doctors were trained in neighbouring countries like Australia.

68. No case of female sexual mutilation had been reported in Maldives. Abortion was illegal. Family planning services were being developed for some years now, because of the high birth rate. Breastfeeding was encouraged, and easily so, since it was practised by 90 per cent of the population.

69. At school, children took part in the deliberations of the school boards and helped, for instance, in the preparation of leisure facilities and in the selection of some of the subjects taught. The curriculum was modelled on the British system. The Government was sparing no effort to raise the quality of teachers and recruited for that purpose a number of foreign teachers who taught in Maldives; however, it had found it difficult to attract the best, since it was not in a position to offer them competitive conditions of employment. Most schools had a disciplinary board, which examined any serious infringement. Classes had an average of 30 pupils. With regard to human rights education, she referred the Committee to paragraph 38 of the written replies, which stated that a national curriculum had been developed and implemented in 1984 and that efforts were made to review curricula, giving more emphasis to the rights of children.

The meeting rose at 1.02 p.m.