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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-sixth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE 954th MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,
on Friday, 21 May 2004, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Ms. SARDENBERG
(Vice-Chairperson)

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In the absence of Mr. Doek, Ms. Sardenberg (Vice-Chairperson) took the Chair.

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS OF STATES PARTIES (continued)

Second periodic report of Rwanda (continued) (CRC/C/70/Add.22; CRC/C/Q/RWA/2; CRC/C/RESP/57)

1. At the invitation of the Chairperson, Mr. Hagenimana, Ms. Nyirahabineza and Mr. Nyiringabo (Rwanda) took places at the Committee table.
2. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC wished to know whether the Government intended to introduce a new system of birth registration at the national level. She was also interested in knowing whether any progress had been made in conducting an accurate population census, which would help to determine certain child-related indicators.
3. She expressed concern at the situation of the 1.5 million children orphaned as a result of the 1994 genocide. She was also concerned that a growing number of the children living in institutions were not really orphans but had been abandoned by their mothers for economic or other reasons. The delegation should provide further information concerning the measures that had been taken to improve the situation.
4. Mr. CITARELLA asked when the Basic Law had entered into force in Rwanda. He wondered whether the provision prohibiting the mention of ethnicity in all official documents could be applied retroactively to documents issued before the Law's entry into force.
5. He expressed concern that many children had lost their families in the 1990 war and the 1994 genocide. He was also concerned that some of those children had been given new names by their social workers or foster parents.
6. Rwanda's second periodic report (CRC/C/70/Add.22) indicated that a child born of a Rwandan mother and a foreign father had to choose his or her own nationality. He wished to know at what age a child was considered capable of making such a decision. He wondered whether the same rule applied to children born of a Rwandan father and a foreign mother. He requested further information on the provisions of articles 427 and 428 of the Civil Code, which appeared to accord the father more parental rights than the mother.
7. Ms. ORTIZ said that she shared the concerns expressed by other Committee members about the high number of children in institutional care. She was particularly concerned at the growing number of AIDS orphans. Most financial aid being received by the Government to address the situation of lone children was being used to fund children's institutions. However, institutionalization should be only a last resort, and priority should always be given to family care. The Government should develop a clear policy in that regard.
8. Notwithstanding its difficulties, the Government of Rwanda appeared to be willing to attach priority to children's rights. Efforts should be made to strengthen cultural and institutional structures already in place. She strongly urged the Government to ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.

9. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that the delay in drafting a children's code was due partly to circumstances beyond the Government's control and partly to the fact that the Government had decided to change its methodology in view of the crucial importance of the code. Nevertheless, progress was being made by a special committee responsible for preparing the code and which comprised representatives of several ministries, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and the non-governmental organization (NGO) Penal Reform International.

10. It was clear that many legislative changes were needed to bring current legislation into line with the provisions of the Convention. Efforts were being made to prepare a draft law outlining the conditions for placing children in institutional care; under that law, parents would be prohibited from placing their children in institutions for economic reasons. As part of its national policy for lone children, based on the principle "one child, one family", the Government had launched an awareness-raising campaign to encourage families to provide homes for children who had been orphaned as a result of the genocide. Although the campaign had been relatively successful, certain families had proved to be abusive, and children had run away from their foster homes. Consequently, a law to regulate the placement of children in foster families was also being prepared.

11. The Government recognized that ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption was a sine qua non for the promulgation of a children's code. However, Rwanda was not yet in a position to comply with all of the terms of the Hague Convention. Efforts would be made to amend or adopt the relevant national legislation as soon as possible.

12. Mr. FILALI requested further information on the current system of fostering. He wondered whether foster families received any financial benefits and whether there was a mechanism to ensure that foster children received adequate care. The fact that children had been known to run away from their foster homes led him to believe that certain problems needed to be addressed.

13. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked whether the Government had considered conducting a study or opening a debate at the national level with a view to finding appropriate solutions to the problem of abandoned or runaway children.

14. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that families that offered to care for children orphaned by the genocide did so on a voluntary and informal basis and received no benefits from the State. The centres for lone children were funded primarily by donations. Within the framework of the National Programme for Children, the Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion had been working closely with the centres for lone children, ICRC and NGOs to locate the families of displaced children and to find foster families for orphans. Nevertheless, the number of children in institutions remained alarmingly high. The Government was doing its utmost to address the problem. For example, it was considering the introduction of financial incentives for foster families. Recently, as part of the activities organized to commemorate the International Day of Families, the Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion, in cooperation with various other ministries and NGOs, had launched a campaign to raise awareness of parental responsibilities and to discourage mothers from abandoning their children.

15. The principle of the best interests of the child was guaranteed in general terms in articles 27 and 28 of the new 2003 Constitution and was explicitly referred to in certain legal instruments, such as Law No. 27/2001 on the rights of the child and protection against child abuse.

16. While corporal punishment was strictly prohibited in Rwanda, a few isolated cases had been reported. In the rare event that a member of the national police was found guilty of inflicting corporal punishment against a street child, severe penalties were applied.

17. Ms. SMITH said that the delegation should clarify which piece of legislation expressly prohibited corporal punishment. She wondered whether that prohibition applied to corporal punishment within the family.

18. Mr. LIWSKI asked whether the Government had taken, or intended to take, any steps to prevent institutional violence against children by the police and detention centre officials. In the light of the country's violent history, major efforts might be needed to reverse violent trends.

19. Mr. FILALI said that, according to the report, article 347 of Law No. 42/1988, which contained the introduction and book 1 of the Civil Code, specified that parents had the "right of correction" over a minor child. He wondered whether the Penal Code contained any provisions to punish persons who abused that right.

20. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that there were some limits to acceptable punishment. For example, parents were not allowed to beat their children severely or deprive them of food. However, the National Assembly had recognized that current legislation was somewhat ambiguous and was taking steps to amend article 347 of Law No. 42/1988 and certain provisions of the Penal Code with a view to promoting the best interests of the child.

21. The aim of the legal reforms currently under way was to clarify provisions in order to avoid any ambiguities in interpretation. The reforms had a strong focus on the human rights dimension.

22. The Ministry for Gender and Family Promotion cooperated with the national police in punishing persons who inflicted corporal punishment on children. The two bodies also cooperated in human rights training programmes for law enforcement officers. Once the police force for juveniles was established, its personnel would receive training in children's rights and child protection.

23. The CHAIRPERSON said that the delegation had not yet replied to the questions concerning child participation, the definition of the child and budget allocations for the protection of children's rights.

24. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that children had not been consulted on emergency policies to remedy the most pressing problems that had arisen in the aftermath of the genocide. However, children had played an active part in the preparation of policies concerning orphans and other vulnerable juvenile groups. Children had also had an opportunity to express their views during the drafting of the new Constitution.

25. The Government cooperated with NGOs, most notably the Rwandan Association for Trauma Counselling, in rehabilitation programmes for children who had suffered sexual violence during the genocide. In the light of the extent of the violence in Rwanda, the presence of one trauma counsellor in each hospital was important but clearly insufficient. Participants in the children's summit held in April 2004 had highlighted the need for counselling services in schools. While the Government recognized that need, severe budgetary constraints currently impeded the provision of such services.

26. A multisectoral project had been launched to combat HIV/AIDS in children who had contracted the disease as a result of rape. While the project covered those children's education expenses, the provision of free antiretroviral treatment had proven too costly. She therefore appealed to the international community for financial support.

27. In the past, legislation had distinguished between "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children. In the current legal reforms, such discriminatory terminology would be eliminated.

28. All Rwandan children with disabilities had the right to education, and recent legislation guaranteed free primary education. The enrolment of children with disabilities in specialized educational institutions was regarded as discriminatory and was discouraged. However, regular educational facilities provided special instruction for pupils with hearing and/or speech impediments.

29. Ms. SMITH asked whether Rwandan legislation guaranteed children's right to be heard in all judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them.

30. Mr. CITARELLA asked how inconsistencies between customary and statutory law were reconciled with the principles and provisions of the Convention. He also wished to know what nationality was conferred on children of Rwandan mothers and foreign fathers. It would be useful to learn at what age children of Rwandan fathers and foreign mothers had to choose their nationality, and what the child's legal status was in the years preceding that decision.

31. Mr. FILALI said that eliminating the terms "legitimate" and "illegitimate" children from legal provisions was not sufficient. It was important to address the question of "illegitimate" children's legal status and their right to a name and inheritance, and he asked whether decisions on such matters were taken on the basis of customary law or statutory law.

32. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that, in principle, statutory law was applied to all matters that fell under its purview. If legislation was silent on a matter, customary law was applied, provided that it was in conformity with moral standards and the relevant international legal instruments to which Rwanda was a party.

33. Progress had been made in regulating nationality and inheritance rights. The new legal framework provided for dual nationality, the right to use both the mother's and the father's name, and gender equality in inheritance rights.

34. According to the Criminal Code, under-age children were not allowed to testify in court. However, in cases that affected them directly, children could provide information, which was taken into consideration in the court's ruling.

35. Sustained efforts were being made to eradicate ethnic segregation. Recent legislation prohibited mention of ethnicity in such official documents as passports, identity cards and driving licences. Members of the Batwa ethnic minority lived side by side with other ethnic groups and were treated as equal members of Rwandan society. The Government expended considerable efforts to foster unity, solidarity and peaceful coexistence; the exercise of ethnicity-specific activities was discouraged.

36. Ms. OUEDRAOGO asked what procedure had been followed to eliminate the reference to ethnicity from official documents. She wondered whether all documents containing such a reference had been replaced and whether any charges were collected for the issue of new documents.

37. According to NGO reports, Rwanda had experienced considerable difficulties in its efforts to integrate the Batwa people. The Batwa had been dispossessed of their lands; consequently the unemployment rate for that group was high. The delegation should provide information on the Batwa's origins and the root causes of the problem.

38. Mr. FILALI asked whether educational curricula had been reviewed with a view to fostering a culture of peace and tolerance among young people of different ethnic backgrounds.

39. The CHAIRPERSON asked the delegation to provide information on the situation of households headed by children.

40. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that the situation of child heads of household was a matter of grave concern. Free "catch-up" classes were provided for children who had been forced to leave school to care for younger siblings. Considerable efforts were made to provide health care for such children who were encouraged to join associations in order to gain access to Government-run or international assistance programmes. The Government had designed programmes that gave such child the option to engage in certain income-generating activities. A special support system had been established to enable children to reconcile such activities with their education. In addition, the Government had launched a programme to provide special homes for households headed by children; each home was inhabited by children belonging to the same family.

41. The genocide had sown distrust among Rwandans, and the National Commission for Unity and Reconciliation had been established to address the problem. Unity and reconciliation had been among the topics discussed at a recent children's summit. Awareness-raising campaigns had been launched in schools and public services, since an understanding of the circumstances that had led to the genocide was a prerequisite for peaceful coexistence.

42. Documents with references to ethnicity had been replaced free of charge. While she could not guarantee that all existing documents had been replaced, none of the new identity documents made any reference to ethnicity.

43. Ms. OUEDRAOGO said that, while the elimination of reference to ethnicity in official documents was commendable, it was important to recognize the deep-rooted traditions and customs of the different ethnic groups. An environment of peace, tolerance and national unity was therefore crucial, and the Committee would welcome information on measures taken to that end.

44. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that, in recognition of the difficulty posed by tradition and human resistance to change, the Government had endeavoured to foster a spirit of unity and reconciliation. Although bridging the divide caused by the genocide was a difficult task, measures to reunite families, prevent ethnic segregation in education and give equal recognition to all ethnic groups were the basis for Rwanda's stable development.

45. Ms. SMITH asked whether the subject of human rights, particularly children's rights, had been included in primary and secondary school curricula. Since environmental degradation was a major problem in Rwanda, it was important for Rwandan children to learn about environmental issues and sustainable development. She asked what the Government was doing to increase the number of children's sport and recreational facilities.

46. She wished to know how the judiciary dealt with children under 14 who came into conflict with the law and whether they were placed in institutions. She enquired about the procedure used to determine whether such children were guilty of the crimes of which they had been accused. She requested details on the procedure for dealing with children who had reached the age of criminal responsibility, particularly regarding legal representation, pre-trial detention, sentencing and prison conditions.

47. Ms. OUEDRAOGO wished to know what difficulties had been encountered, particularly in rural areas, in registering births, and what solutions had been envisaged. She asked what had been done to observe the Day of the African Child, which in 2003 had been dedicated by the African Union to the registration of newborn children. She wished to know what efforts the Government had made to deal with children who had been evacuated to foreign countries during the genocide; some of those children had been adopted illegally. She enquired whether negotiations were still under way to obtain the return of such children.

48. The Government Council had recently approved a bill protecting foreign refugees, including children, in Rwanda and she wished to know whether that bill had been adopted by the National Assembly and had entered into force. She enquired whether the Government intended to ratify the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights. She asked what measures had been taken to obtain the return of Rwandan refugees from abroad and to facilitate their reintegration into society. She wished to know whether the Government was assisting Rwandan refugees in reclaiming their lands that had been occupied in their absence, and whether it was helping young returning refugees to recuperate their belongings.

49. She wished to know whether the cases of child ex-combatants who had been demobilized and disarmed had been followed up sufficiently in order to ensure that such children were not recruited again for combat. She asked how many children belonging to armed gangs had been

captured by the Rwandan army in neighbouring countries and placed in solidarity camps for rehabilitation, and how long they were expected to remain in those camps. She wished to know what measures the Government was taking to reunite such children with their families, and whether it had encountered any difficulties. She wondered whether the Government had formulated an integrated policy to deal with such cases.

50. The Government's policy of automatically tracing the parents of street children was commendable; however, failure to address the cause of a child's departure reduced the chances that that child would remain with his or her family. She asked whether the Government had taken any steps to strengthen the family, since poverty and family disintegration were the two main reasons why children decided to leave home. The delegation should indicate what results had been obtained by the awareness-raising campaign conducted in 2001 concerning street children.

51. Mr. KRAPPMANN commended the State party for its progress in the area of education. He wished to know what factors had been responsible for the sharp increase in enrolment rates in pre-primary and primary schools, and what proportion of that increase corresponded to primary school enrolment. The delegation should comment on the reasons for the high dropout and repeat rates in 2002/2003 and should provide disaggregated statistics on the number of primary and secondary school students who had completed their schooling.

52. According to information that he had received, there were hidden costs associated with school attendance, which could pose an obstacle for some children. Moreover, many girls were leaving school owing to their household responsibilities. He was concerned that very few girls had enrolled in secondary schools especially since vocational training had been integrated into secondary education. It appeared that most adolescents in Rwanda failed to complete even primary education and had few job prospects. It was important to support young people during the crucial period between the ages of 14 and 18, when adolescents were preparing to enter adult life.

53. He wondered how the Government had managed to accommodate the increasing numbers of children enrolled in school in 2003/2004 when there had not been a similar increase in the resources allocated to education. The fact that the teacher/pupil ratio was extremely high pointed to the urgent need for increased spending on education. If the needed resources were not available in Rwanda's general budget, the State party should seek international assistance.

54. Ms. AL-THANI asked whether any measures had been taken to assess the number of children with disabilities, which was likely to be relatively high, and whether the Government planned to introduce legislation to prevent discrimination against the disabled. She wished to know what was being done to deal with the problem of integrating children with disabilities into mainstream education, and to eliminate their social stigmatization and marginalization.

55. Despite the adoption of a national health policy in 2002, there had been few improvements in the provision of basic health services to the population: health centres lacked proper staff and equipment; many services were not free; and infant, under-five and maternal mortality rates were alarmingly high. She wished to know whether local midwifery programmes had been set up, and whether specific measures were being taken to improve the health system in order to ensure that high-quality basic health services were provided to everyone free of charge.

56. She was concerned at the high percentage of children suffering from malnutrition, stunted growth and failure to thrive, and requested information on the practice of breastfeeding in Rwanda. Given the increase in the adolescent fertility rate and the fact that abortions in Rwanda were illegal, she asked whether any steps had been taken to address the needs of girls imprisoned after having an illegal abortion. She enquired whether Rwandan adolescents were aware of their reproductive rights and the options available to them. Although drug, alcohol and tobacco use had not reached great proportions, the Government should not delay in addressing those problems. She wished to know what was being done to deal with the increase in prostitution among 12- to-14-year-olds, particularly in view of its relationship to the rise in HIV/AIDS among that age group.

57. The delegation should comment on whether the Government's strategy and its National Commission to Combat AIDS were expected to lower the incidence of HIV/AIDS in Rwanda. She requested details concerning the findings of a pilot study to stop mother-to-child transmission of HIV/AIDS. She asked whether the Government provided antiretroviral drugs to pregnant women and HIV/AIDS patients; if so, she wished to know whether the drugs were provided free of charge and throughout the patient's life. She noted that, of the 1.5 million orphans in Rwanda, 264,000 were AIDS orphans, who were doubly stigmatized for having lost one or both parents to HIV/AIDS and for being orphans. She wished to know whether any of the objectives to provide sanitation and safe drinking water had been achieved.

58. Ms. LEE asked what the Government was doing to address the high illiteracy rate, particularly among the Batwa community, where that figure had reportedly reached 77 per cent. She enquired what efforts were being made to encourage the enrolment of Batwa in education and to discourage early marriages. Apparently, 79 per cent of the Batwa community had never attended school and 57 per cent married between the ages of 15 and 20.

59. Mr. CITARELLA said that the delegation should explain the relationship between the two constitutional provisions according to which primary education was free and compulsory and parents had the right and the duty to raise their children. He asked whether the Government planned to increase the upper age limit for compulsory schooling, which currently stood at 12 years. Since the minimum age for employment was 14, that left a two-year gap in the lives of adolescents who completed compulsory education. He wished to know whether the Government intended to address that situation.

60. He enquired whether children who had committed the crime of genocide or crimes against humanity when they were between the ages of 14 and 18 underwent the same court procedure as adults. While it was commendable that Rwandan legislation had set the minimum age of criminal responsibility at 14, the lack of a special juvenile justice system and the fact that children were prosecuted under the same procedures as adults and placed in the same prisons were very worrying. He requested statistics on the number of children who had been convicted of a criminal offence, the number of children currently in Rwandan prisons and the number of children in other correctional facilities. In the areas of education and juvenile justice, there appeared to be a discrepancy between the enactment of legislation and its application. That was an area in which the Rwandan Government needed to improve.

61. Mr. LIWSKI said that the resources allocated to primary health care appeared to be insufficient to meet the current needs of the Rwandan population. Moreover, the fact that health services were not available to all posed a major obstacle to reducing child mortality. The delegation should provide accurate figures for the previous year's budget allocation for health, and indicate whether the Government had placed reduction of child mortality at the centre of its national strategy. In the light of the current situation in Rwanda, the reporting State should indicate the amount of international cooperation required to reduce child mortality.

62. Mr. FILALI requested further information on the gacaca justice system. Since judges appointed within that system had not been trained to deal with the offences with which they were presented, it was difficult to understand how they could try crimes such as genocide. It was unclear how minors who had been involved in the genocide would be tried. The fact that the gacaca system did not allow representation by a legal adviser appeared to constitute a violation of the right to a fair trial. From the perspective of human rights, it was difficult to understand how the system could help to solve the problems confronting the country. Moreover, gacaca judges passed sentence on the accused and had the right to order their imprisonment. He wished to know whether there was an appeal process and, if so, how it worked.

63. The reporting State should clarify how common law was organized, whether special judges were employed and whether children's rights were upheld. Information should be provided on whether children were held in the same detention centres as adults, and on conditions in those centres; whether children who were detained were made aware of their rights; and whether the staff in detention centres were properly trained. He requested additional information on the types of crime committed by pregnant women who had received prison sentences. He wished to know whether pregnant women constituted a large percentage of the prison population, and what happened to their babies when they were imprisoned for more than two years. He asked what measures the Government was taking to address the problem of the lack of qualified staff and the lack of equipment and infrastructures in most State institutions.

64. Ms. VUCKOVIC-SAHOVIC requested information on the number of people attending university, and on young people's interest in gaining degrees in medicine and law, since such training was important for the development of the State party.

The meeting was suspended at 5.20 p.m. and resumed at 5.35 p.m.

65. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that the Ministry of Education had developed a curriculum in conjunction with the National Human Rights Commission for the teaching of human and children's rights at primary and secondary schools.

66. In the past, the majority of school dropouts had been girls whose families required them to work at home. The dropout rates for boys and girls were currently equal, and the high incidence of dropouts could be explained by the fact that many families could not afford to give their children enough food to get through the school day. The Ministry of Education had implemented a programme to provide children with at least one school meal a day in order to encourage them to continue their education. The high dropout rate among primary school children had also been recognized, and the Government was currently advocating free primary

and secondary education. While that would be difficult to achieve owing to a lack of financial resources, it was the only way to provide all children with access to education. Since there were no resources to build more schools, no solution had been found to the issue of overcrowded classrooms.

67. The Government had continued to encourage Rwandan refugees living abroad to return home. Many had returned, and children had been reunited with their families. Despite allegations to the contrary, the property of people who had fled the country had been returned to them. All returning refugees, whether members of the former Rwandan armed forces (FAR), former combatants or persons suspected of genocide, were presumed innocent until proven guilty.

68. Ex-combatant children were placed in solidarity camps for one month for re-education and preparation for their reintegration into society. The Rwandan Demobilization Commission monitored the progress of children who had left the camps and returned to live with their families. The programme for ex-combatant children, co-sponsored by the Demobilization Commission, the World Bank and the Department for International Development, aimed to get the children back into school, where they would learn to read and write and be taught a trade.

69. In Rwanda, both maternal and child mortality were high. There were plans to conduct a vaccination programme that focused on pregnant women. Women were being urged to join the Government-funded mutual health insurance schemes under which they had access to health care for at least one year. The Government had financed a training programme for midwives and hoped to receive support from the Department for International Development. Campaigns had been conducted to raise women's awareness of reproductive health issues, since many women died after giving birth. Women also required information on family planning.

70. The child's right to be breastfed was recognized under Rwandan legislation, except when the mother had a disease, such as HIV/AIDS, that could be transmitted to her child through her milk. If mothers could not breastfeed, there were programmes to provide children with formula milk and other nutritional supplements.

71. After much consideration, the Government had decided that abortion should remain illegal in Rwanda. It was considered that, if abortion was legalized, many women would allege that they had been raped in order to obtain an abortion.

72. Prostitution among girls between the ages of 12 and 14 was common, owing to their socio-economic situation. The Government was encouraging them to return to school by providing free primary education.

73. The National Commission to Combat AIDS had conducted campaigns in association with several government departments. There were plans to conduct further awareness-raising campaigns in both rural and urban areas. Owing to the costs involved, not all HIV/AIDS patients had access to antiretroviral drugs. While the Government was grateful to those countries that had donated such medicine, more international aid was required in order to make antiretroviral drugs freely available to all Rwandans with HIV/AIDS.

74. The CHAIRPERSON said that the reporting State should clarify whether there were different justice systems for juveniles and adults.

75. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) said that, since children under 14 who committed offences were not criminally responsible, they were sent to re-education centres for a short time. A special criminal judge and jury had been set up to try minors over the age of 14 who were guilty of crimes against humanity or the crime of genocide. There was no separate court for minors who committed common law offences. Although there were no special prison facilities for minors, minors did not share cells with adults.

76. Ms. OUEDRAOGO, speaking on behalf of the Committee, thanked the delegation of Rwanda for its informative replies. She commended the Government on its programme for reconciliation, justice and sustainable development, in which children were a priority. Rwanda's major challenges were to bring its legislation into line with the Convention and to adopt a children's code that should cover all areas of the Convention. A single mechanism should be established to coordinate all activities concerning children, and a body should be set up to monitor the implementation of the Convention. Data collection should be centralized and systematic, and data should be disaggregated. The National Human Rights Commission should be given independent status and its human resources strengthened. The Government should address the problem of insufficient financial resources by seeking international assistance. Caution should be exercised in order to ensure that privatization did not adversely affect the rights of the most disadvantaged sectors of society. Cooperation with civil society should be intensified.

77. The family should be strengthened as an institution and the problem of abandoned or runaway children should be addressed. The Committee strongly recommended that Rwanda should take steps to encourage children to remain with their families.

78. The Government should gain access to international programmes that provided inexpensive or free AIDS treatment.

79. Ex-combatant children, child heads of household and returned child refugees required a great deal of attention, as did juvenile victims of sexual or economic exploitation and minors in conflict with the law. The system of justice for children should be improved. The Government of Rwanda should seek technical assistance from the United Nations and other bodies in order to facilitate the implementation of the Convention.

80. Ms. NYIRAHABINEZA (Rwanda) thanked the Committee for its recommendations and said her Government would do all it could to improve the situation of children in Rwanda.

The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.