



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 1655th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 28 September 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Zermatten

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

Consideration of reports of States parties (continued)

Combined second to fourth periodic reports of Seychelles on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (continued) (CRC/C/SYC/2-4; CRC/C/SYC/Q/2-4 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Seychelles took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that each of the country's districts had a task force composed of police officers, health workers, school counsellors and other prominent figures whose role was to discuss various social issues and to take concerted decisions under the supervision of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture.
3. The National Commission for Child Protection was a consultative body composed of representatives from various ministries whose mandate should be re-examined and clarified in order to render it fully operational. The idea of setting up an office of Commissioner of Children's Rights had finally been abandoned owing to insufficient resources. The National Human Rights Commission, established in 2009 under the Protection of Human Rights Act, was responsible for monitoring respect for human rights and the rights of the child.
4. **Ms. Aidoo** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether the Government planned to clarify the attributes and mandate of the National Human Rights Commission so that its function of protecting the rights of the child was clearly set out and that it was able to handle complaints lodged by children.
5. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that the functions which the office of the Commissioner of Children's Rights had initially been meant to take up would be officially assigned to the National Human Rights Commission.
6. Awareness-raising campaigns on the subject of family values were organized in the media, while the National Council for Children had been broadcasting a television programme on child development for several years. Training modules on practical skills, such as managing the family budget, were also offered to families.
7. The social welfare agency, instituted in 2008, provided financial aid to needy parents for expenses such as school supplies. A number of measures had been taken to induce fathers to shoulder their responsibilities and help them to assume their role. For example, the Social Affairs Department offered parenting courses and some fathers had taken the initiative of forming fathers' committees in schools, with a view to discussing topics of common interest regarding children's education.
8. The Ministry of Employment subsidized programmes to help teenaged mothers care for their children, but it was a regrettable fact that many of them did not return to school after giving birth, despite Government incentives to do so. The authorities were aware that financial and social assistance schemes as well as services for young mothers should be improved in order to enable them to continue their studies.
9. Seychelles would seriously consider becoming a party to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption.
10. In order to reinforce the message of anti-alcohol and anti-tobacco campaigns, all advertising of such substances was prohibited in the media and smoking was now banned in public places.

11. There were two taxpayer-funded drug rehabilitation centres, one run by the Catholic Church, which treated minors and adults in accordance with their individual needs. A third centre was due to open shortly.
12. Regarding mental health, the authorities were aware that more psychologists and specialized social workers were needed to meet the needs of the population. The Ministry of Education and the National Council for Children conducted awareness-raising campaigns on sexual violence to teach children to recognize such abuse, how to protect themselves from it and to report any cases. The Social Development Department operated a 24-hour children's helpline through which children could talk to social workers about their problems, and another helpline had recently been set up by the National Council for Children.
13. **The Chairperson** expressed surprise that there were two such helplines and asked how complaints were dealt with and what legal action was taken.
14. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that the helpline operated by the Social Development Department dealt with problems of varying seriousness, ranging from simple requests for advice to complaints of ill-treatment. Social workers assessed the urgency of the case, conducted a more detailed investigation and, if necessary, informed the police, who were then responsible for following up the complaint. The National Council for Children helpline met a similar need but focused more on counselling.
15. **The Chairperson** suggested merging the two lines in order to avoid any confusion and improve service.
16. **Ms. Sandberg** asked if the helplines could receive all types of complaints.
17. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that children could report all types of ill-treatment to which they felt they were being subjected or talk about topics that were important to them. Those services were well co-ordinated, which should prevent any confusion between the two helplines.
18. **Ms. Al-Asmar** asked what steps were taken to protect the privacy of children who called the helplines and guarantee that any personal information would remain confidential.
19. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that calls were answered by professional staff whose code of conduct required them to keep information confidential.
20. He agreed that perpetrators of violence should be prosecuted, but processing cases took a long time in Seychelles. However, the President of the Supreme Court had recently announced his intention to process all pending criminal cases within a year.
21. **Ms. Al-Shehail** asked if Seychelles had requested technical assistance from United Nations organs such as the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), and from non-governmental organizations.
22. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that there was increased cooperation with UNODC. The United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had pulled out of the country a few years earlier, but Seychelles still needed assistance from such bodies, despite having reached middle-income country status.
23. The Labour Code was under review and the authorities would ensure that the new version took account of the concept of dangerous work.
24. Children under the age of 15 were prohibited to work and authorization of the Employment Department was required for minors aged 15–18.

25. **Ms. Aidoo**, noting that most job applications by minors were for employment in the tourism industry, said that it was important to ascertain the nature of the tasks they were asked to perform.
26. **The Chairperson** asked what steps could be taken to ensure that children did not work in the fishing industry which, along with tourism, was one of the mainstays of the Seychelles economy.
27. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) explained that children did not work in the industrial or semi-industrial fishing sectors but, rather, in traditional fishing, which was more a form of apprenticeship than full-time employment.
28. Children had an awareness of the tourism industry in Seychelles, given its significance for the country. Tourism was part of Seychellois' environment and was not perceived as a danger for the population, but the Government should remain vigilant in order to avoid any risk of exploitation.
29. The rehabilitation centre for young offenders had not yet been built. Seychelles' current main problem was piracy, and a high-security wing for detaining pirates had been added to the prison, with assistance from the UNODC.
30. The age of criminal responsibility was set at 12, although it could, in certain cases, be lowered to 7; however, he was not aware of any cases involving children under 12.
31. **The Chairperson** requested Seychelles to revoke the clause making it possible to lower the age of criminal responsibility.
32. **Mr. Gastaud** asked what the remit of the Family Tribunal was, whether it could try criminal cases and how it was connected with ordinary courts.
33. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) replied that the Family Tribunal, which came under the Social Development Department, heard domestic violence and child protection cases. It ruled on issues relating to children, such as custody, visiting rights and maintenance payments.
34. The social services section of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture was responsible for implementing the provisions of the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction.
35. Military training, which included a module on human rights and humanitarian law, could be undertaken by minors, provided that they were at least 17 years old and had parental consent.
36. **The Chairperson** noted that Seychelles had signed and ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which set the minimum age of enrolment in the armed forces at 18.
37. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that an amendment to the Children's Act which would cover the issue of child abduction was being drafted.
38. **Ms. Sandberg** asked if any of the additional provisions related to trafficking.
39. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) replied that the provisions covered all forms of trafficking in persons, even if that specific term was not used.
40. As to the protection of children, a child testifying in court could receive support from the social services, which explained how the hearing would unfold and arranged a visit to the courtroom. The child could also be accompanied to court by a social worker.
41. Many campaigns were run to raise awareness of HIV/AIDS, and therefore the issue was not one of lack of information but of individual behaviour. A campaign to promote

breastfeeding was under way, and Seychelles' main hospital had set itself the goal of becoming a "baby-friendly" facility.

42. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that the number of persons living with HIV/AIDS was especially high for a country as small as Seychelles and, recalling that it was an incurable disease, urged the State party to adopt a more comprehensive prevention programme, particularly since transmission of the virus was largely a matter of behaviour, such as sexual intercourse at a young age. Moreover, mother-to-child transmission of HIV was a serious violation of a child's rights.

43. Having received reports that a large number of mothers spontaneously chose to breastfeed after the birth of their child but were being persuaded, through intensive advertising and free samples, to use maternal milk substitutes, she said that the health-care authorities must step in to ensure that mothers were not exposed to that type of advertising.

44. **Ms. Herczog** asked what had prevented Seychelles from establishing a "baby-friendly" hospital sooner. She recalled that "baby-friendly" hospitals had to meet a certain number of standards in obstetrics and prenatal and postnatal care and to provide conditions conducive to forging a deep emotional bond between mother and child. They should also offer prenatal care for high-risk pregnancies and services for the parents of children with disabilities and teenaged mothers.

45. **Ms. Aidoo**, stating that she was in favour of the adoption of a multisectoral and multidisciplinary approach to preventing the spread of HIV, enquired about the status of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2005–2009, whether its results had been assessed and if a new plan was being formulated.

46. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that the public fully understood the basic principles of the "baby-friendly hospitals" initiative, owing to extensive coverage in the media.

47. The assessment of the National HIV/AIDS Strategic Plan 2005–2009 had highlighted the need to place greater emphasis in the next plan on the risks run by men who had sex with men.

48. Children with disabilities were not more likely to be placed in an institution than other children: only 1 of the 43 children currently in an alternative care facility had a disability.

49. The Seychelles Government attached considerable importance to inclusive education and teachers, including educators in preschool facilities, were given training on its basic tenets. Since 2010, children with a hearing disability had been educated in mainstream primary schools thanks to the elaboration of a Seychellois Creole sign language.

50. Sex education classes were already given in schools, including the school for the exceptional child, which catered to students with disabilities, but the sexual and reproductive health policy currently being formulated would place still more emphasis on the subject.

51. Students who had difficulty in following the conventional curriculum could shift to work-study vocational training whereby they could attend theoretical classes part of the year and gain professional experience the rest of the year. A broader range of technical courses would be designed shortly, with a view to meeting the needs and varied interests of students. Though there were, broadly speaking, fewer girls than boys in technical schools, particularly in construction industry studies, they now outnumbered boys in certain courses that prepared students for careers in the merchant navy.

52. **Ms. Nores de García** (Country Rapporteur), noting the high dropout rate at the secondary level, asked why children who did not meet the required standard were obliged

to undertake technical training concurrently, thus adding to their workload. She also wished to know what measures the Government was considering to improve teacher training.

53. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that the educational reforms included diversifying curricula and improving the quality of instruction, but that the process would take time. Stressing the importance of familiarity with new technologies, he said some primary school pupils had access to computers.

54. **Ms. Wijemanne** said that early education was key, given that a child's future ability to learn was largely determined in that period of life.

55. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that playing outdoors on the beach was part of Seychelle children's daily lives. However, they should not be left alone and parents should be made aware of the need for supervision. Parents' behaviour should therefore be modified and social workers could play a part in that connection, for example through the social renaissance initiative under way in the country. Furthermore, cultural and artistic activities were planned for children and young people under the Culture Department's strategic plan for 2011–2015.

56. **The Chairperson** requested clarifications on the planned amendments to the Adoption Act and asked if the social services section of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture was the central authority responsible for adoption, as was the case for child abduction.

57. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that the measures Seychelles had to take pursuant to the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Co-operation in respect of Intercountry Adoption had not yet been incorporated into domestic legislation and that the central authority for adoption was indeed the social services section of the Ministry of Social Development and Culture.

58. **Ms. Nores de García** expressed concern about the fact that Act No. 4 of 2006 did not prohibit discrimination on grounds of social origin.

59. **Ms. Aidoo**, specifying that Seychelles did not have an actual problem of extreme poverty, said that the assessment conducted in 2010 by the United Nations country team had nonetheless indicated that Seychelles should pay close attention to poverty indicators in order to prevent the population's standard of living from slipping. She asked if the Government had taken the country team's recommendations on board and whether measures had been introduced to assist single parents.

60. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that there was no overt or institutionalized discrimination in Seychelles, but that the Government nonetheless needed to remain vigilant in that regard. No ministry was charged specifically with elaborating poverty indicators, but he assured the Committee that the matter would be looked into more fully.

The meeting was suspended at 4.30 p.m. and resumed at 4.45 p.m.

61. **Ms. Nores de García** said that Seychelles should incorporate the fundamental principles of the Convention in its domestic legislation and that all forms of violence against children should be explicitly prohibited by law.

62. **Ms. Aidoo** said that, in order to fully incorporate the provisions of the Convention into domestic legislation, Seychelles needed to complete legislative amendments currently under way and to promulgate new laws. The country should also tackle the root causes of violations of children's rights, inform children of their rights and more actively combat ill-treatment, school dropout and drug use. Specific budgets should be allocated to children's affairs in every sector, even in times of economic crisis. The Committee believed that Seychelles could serve as a model of implementation of the Convention and eagerly

awaited the follow-up to its concluding observations. Seychelles could apply to any United Nations body for technical assistance to implement the Convention.

63. **Mr. Shamlaye** (Seychelles) said that he had taken note of the issues that Seychelles needed to address, such as strengthening capacity for data collection and analysis, targeting resources and adopting an integrated approach. The social renaissance initiative launched in 2011 would provide an opportunity to assess the various measures introduced and formulate an action plan to be implemented in the coming years.

64. **The Chairperson** thanked the head of delegation for his receptiveness to the Committee's recommendations and expressed the hope that Seychelles would put them into practice.

The meeting rose at 5.05 p.m.