



# Convention on the Rights of the Child

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## Committee on the Rights of the Child Ninety-second session

### Summary record of the 2670th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 16 January 2023, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Otani

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*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

### **Consideration of reports of States parties**

*Combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Sweden (CRC/C/SWE/6-7; CRC/C/SWE/QPR/6-7)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Sweden joined the meeting.*
2. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden), introducing her country's sixth and seventh periodic reports (CRC/C/SWE/6-7), said that her Government remained fully committed to protecting and defending international law and to fulfilling its international human rights obligations, including those under the Convention. The Convention's enshrinement in national law on 1 January 2020 had helped to raise awareness of children's rights throughout the public sector and had increased emphasis on the Convention in policy design and execution; the Institute for Human Rights had been established on the same day. Her Government was currently reviewing complaint mechanisms for children. In addition, the scope of an ongoing government inquiry into children's opportunities to claim their rights, scheduled to present its final report in August 2023, had been expanded to encompass whether Sweden should become a party to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.
3. Since the previous dialogue, in 2015, major developments had underscored the importance of children's rights. In 2015, municipalities across her country had welcomed some 160,000 migrants fleeing conflict in Syria and elsewhere, including thousands of children, some unaccompanied. The recent increase in organized crime had severely impacted the lives and well-being of some children in Sweden, in particular those residing in disadvantaged areas; moreover, several children had been killed in clashes between organized criminal groups. While Swedish preschools and primary schools had remained open throughout the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, secondary-school classes had been held online for periods, with a detrimental impact on pupils' mental health and opportunities for recreation. The pandemic had also exacerbated inequality and increased the need to protect children online. Owing to the full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia in February 2022, numerous children had been killed, severely injured or forced to flee their homes, many becoming separated from their families. Outside the Riksdag, in 2018, Greta Thunberg had started what had ultimately become a global youth movement on climate change. All those developments had shown that the need to safeguard children's rights was more urgent than ever and that all stakeholders must continue listening to children's experiences.
4. In recent years, legislative changes had been made regarding the treatment of children in detention, to strengthen the protection of children in alternative care and to improve access to personal assistance for children with disabilities. In 2017, the Government, supported by the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, had launched an initiative to enhance public officials' knowledge of children's rights under the Convention. The recently established Children's Rights Delegation, composed of civil society organizations, played a central role in ensuring the realization of all children's rights. Her country remained a major donor of international development cooperation and humanitarian assistance, with children's rights to health and to inclusive and quality education for all as important priorities; in that connection, her Government partly funded the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) Office of Innovation, established in Stockholm in September 2021.
5. With a view to realizing the rights of all children in Sweden, her Government had a number of priorities. A child-rights perspective should permeate all its work for and with children. A government inquiry would soon be submitting a proposal for a new 10-year national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children. The Government would enhance its support for parents, among other measures, with a view to preventing organized crime groups from recruiting children and young people. Children would be guaranteed mental health support within 30 days; school-based health-care services would be strengthened and made available in every school; and a new national strategy for mental health and suicide would be presented, including the appointment of a national coordinator for suicide prevention. An inquiry had been tasked with proposing measures to improve the

quality of care in foster homes, supported housing, residential care homes and special youth detention centres. A child-rights perspective would be incorporated into national, regional and local emergency response and preparedness plans. Lastly, the Government would fund a 24-hour support hotline for children.

6. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** (Coordinator, Country Task Force), emphasizing that Sweden had been a role model to other countries in respect of children's rights for many years, said that he would nevertheless be grateful for clarification as to whether child-rights impact assessments would be conducted in respect of any legislation resulting from the Convention's enshrinement in national law and whether children would be involved in that process from the outset. In addition, he would welcome further detail concerning the Government's consideration of becoming a party to the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, and in particular on whether it had established a time frame for doing so.

7. In the light of municipalities' increasing power in relation to children's rights in the State party, he wondered whether the Government planned to address the great disparities in the service levels of local authorities, counties and regions and in their capacities to meet their legal obligations towards children and families. He wished to know whether the Government had any powers or tools to ensure that the Convention and other commitments under international law were respected throughout the country. Since the institutionalization of collaboration between municipalities would increase their coordination on issues such as access to *barnahus* (child advocacy centres), which varied significantly from one region to the next, he would like to know whether legislative or other measures were planned to that end. He would appreciate clarification of whether Sweden had a high-level mechanism to coordinate and monitor children's services.

8. It would be useful to hear of any developments or decisions concerning the new Government's plans for curtailing the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees and migrants and for treating children in conflict with the law, including a lower age of criminal responsibility. Since such measures risked violating the Convention, he wondered whether child-rights impact assessments had been conducted and whether the measures would be in line with the legislation enshrining the Convention in domestic law. Since the Strategy to Strengthen the Rights of the Child in Sweden, adopted in 2010, had no defined duration, tangible action plan or evaluation system and had not been adapted to the Convention's enshrinement in domestic law, he wished to know whether the Government planned to develop a new strategy, incorporating a tangible action plan. He would be grateful for more details of the planned national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children, in particular the time frame and whether it would be based on an evaluation of earlier strategies.

9. He wondered whether the Government would consider incorporating a child-rights perspective into State budget bills, in particular with regard to funding reallocations and cuts. He would welcome information on any steps taken to establish a system for tracking child rights in relation to government expenditure. He hoped to hear whether funds from the budget were allocated to ensuring that children's rights were upheld equally throughout the country. With regard to the allocation of resources at the local, regional and central levels, he would like to know whether any mechanism was in place for listening to children. He would appreciate more information on how budget lines for disadvantaged children, including children with disabilities and from minorities, were protected.

10. It would be helpful to know whether the State party was aware of gaps in its collection of data, in particular on children in vulnerable situations, and whether it planned to fill them. He was concerned that the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden might be under-resourced for its new role of monitoring implementation of the Convention and he would be grateful for clarification concerning the respective roles of the Ombudsman and the new Institute for Human Rights. He would also appreciate additional details of the review of the complaint mechanisms for children. He would like to know whether judges received training on implementation of the Convention and whether any such training had an intersectoral element.

11. He would appreciate confirmation that the State party remained committed to dedicating 1 per cent of its gross national income to international development cooperation. In addition, it would be useful to hear about any plans for child-rights impact assessments for

such development cooperation. He wondered whether a regulatory framework had been established to ensure achievement of the aims of the Action Plan for Businesses and Human Rights.

12. He wished to know whether the Government systematically conducted awareness-raising campaigns to change norms and behaviours contributing to discrimination and which government body was responsible for such campaigns. He would be grateful for more information about the review of the Discrimination Act, in particular whether plans were in place to make the Act more transparent and to incorporate a child-friendly complaint mechanism. More detail of measures that the Government intended to take to train public officials at all levels of government would be useful. He would welcome clarification of how the best interests of the child were taken into account in implementation of the Aliens Act and the Act concerning Support and Service for Persons with Certain Functional Impairments. He wondered whether the legislative amendments required in order to strengthen children's participation and ensure that they were heard had already been enacted. Lastly, he would appreciate information on any policies or programmes intended to strengthen children's rights and to ensure that all municipalities established mechanisms for children's participation in local decision-making.

13. **Ms. Todorova** (Country Task Force) said that children born in Sweden and unable to acquire their parents' nationality were not automatically granted Swedish nationality at birth, as required under several international treaties to which Sweden was a party; the Government's justification was that such acquisition would require a costly and time-consuming procedure. Since those children were at risk of becoming stateless, she would appreciate clarification of that justification. In addition, she would welcome an explanation of what prevented the State party from establishing a legal definition of statelessness and a procedure to establish a child's statelessness. She wished to know what steps were being taken to guarantee access to Swedish nationality for children born in conflict-affected and rural areas abroad, who might be unable to fulfil the administrative requirements for recognition as Swedish citizens. She wondered how the State party's new citizenship policy would affect children's other rights; for example, failure to attain sufficient Swedish language skills by 2 years of age – when stateless children often lacked access to the relevant courses – could be considered lack of integration.

14. The Committee would be interested to hear more about any regulations or policies that the Government had adopted to protect the rights of children and ensure their safety in the digital environment, including any special regulations for Internet service providers. It would also be useful to know what measures were being taken to improve the digital literacy of children, parents and schoolteachers.

15. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** (Country Task Force) said that it had been reported that coercive practices were still being used on children at certain psychiatric hospitals and that the staff at those facilities were not adequately trained. She would appreciate information about the outcome of any investigations that might have been conducted into such practices. She also wished to know what measures had been taken to ensure that coercive practices were employed only under close medical supervision and as a method of last resort, to improve the training of staff at psychiatric hospitals and to ensure that the cases of all children interned at psychiatric hospitals were closely monitored.

16. She wondered whether any preliminary results were available from the investigation into violence against children in Sweden, which had been scheduled to take place between 2020 and 2023. She asked why so few complaints had been made and prosecutions brought concerning cases of violence against children when, by the Government's own admission, many people in Sweden were still affected by violence during their childhood. The Committee would like to know if any progress had been made with the adoption and implementation of a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children, including honour-based violence and oppression. Information on the allocation of funding and the establishment of coordination mechanisms for that strategy would be of particular interest, and it would be helpful to hear what specific measures had been taken to combat sexual violence committed against children online.

17. She wished to know what steps had been taken to ensure that children enjoyed the right to express an opinion, particularly when they were exposed to domestic violence. Since some children had reported that it was hard for them to contact the social services, the Committee would also welcome further information on any measures taken to strengthen the social worker system and ensure that it had access to adequate resources.

18. It would be interesting to hear more about the outcome of the education efforts regarding honour-based violence and oppression and its various forms of expression, which had been carried out by Barnafriid for Sweden's child advocacy centres. The Committee would appreciate being updated on the status of the proposal to make honour-based violence a stand-alone offence and the measures aimed at bringing an end to the practice of performing unnecessary surgical procedures on intersex persons. She wished to know what measures were being taken to ensure a minimum standard of care, support and rehabilitation for child victims of violence, including access to *barnahus*, and to establish a dedicated helpline for those children.

*The meeting was suspended at 3.55 p.m. and resumed at 4.15 p.m.*

19. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in April 2022, an inquiry had been launched to assess whether the country should ratify the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure. The final report from that inquiry was scheduled to be published in August 2023. The inquiry team had been tasked with investigating and submitting proposals on a number of issues related to the capacity of children to file complaints and exercise their rights. One of the aims of the inquiry was to weigh up the advantages and disadvantages of the State helping to set up specific functions within civil society organizations tasked with providing support to children who were in contact with the courts and administrative authorities. Such functions would be intended to supplement the support provided by other organizations but would not go so far as to provide legal representation in individual cases. The report on the inquiry would include recommendations on the nature of the proposed new functions and how they should be funded and administered.

20. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that there were still certain disparities in the extent to which children's rights were upheld in different municipalities. However, the Government was committed to eliminating those disparities and to ensuring that all children, especially the most vulnerable, enjoyed the rights afforded to them under the Convention. The incorporation of the Convention into national law was one of the key pillars of the Government's strategy for achieving that goal.

21. **A representative of Sweden** said that responsibility for implementing the Convention was in practice shared throughout the public sector, including at the local and regional levels. Municipalities and regions had far-reaching autonomy with respect to the development and funding of their activities, including those aimed at ensuring respect for human rights. As a result, the Government did not have any role in deciding on or accounting for the resources allocated to upholding children's rights at the local and regional levels. Ensuring effective cooperation with municipalities and regions was nonetheless an important element of the Government's strategy to guarantee compliance with international conventions and treaties. In that regard, in 2014, it had signed an agreement with the Swedish Association of Local Authorities and Regions to strengthen efforts to protect and promote human rights at the municipal and regional levels.

22. The Government had tasked the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden with supporting regional authorities and municipalities on the implementation and integration of the Convention and on assessing the best interests of the child. The Government had also produced guidance for legal professionals and decision makers on how the Convention could be interpreted and applied. Moreover, 27 government agencies were currently participating in the Government's so-called knowledge boost initiative, which was aimed at enhancing the practical application of children's rights in the public sector.

23. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that she wished to emphasize the importance of *barnahus*. The Government had the intention to see to it that all municipalities in Sweden had the possibility to use *barnahus*.

24. **A representative of Sweden** said that, under the Social Services Act, it was the responsibility of municipalities to ensure that children who had been exposed to violence or had witnessed violence by or towards a relative received the support and assistance they needed. To support health-care staff in that regard, the National Board of Health and Welfare had published regulations and general advice on working with violence in close relationships. According to those regulations, when the social welfare committee became aware that a child might have been exposed to violence or other abuse by a relative, or have witnessed violence involving a relative, the committee would launch an investigation into the child's need for support and assistance without delay.

25. The final report of the inquiry aimed at proposing a national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children was due to be submitted in two days' time. The opinions of children had been sought as part of the inquiry, which had focused on questions such as how easy it was for them to access protection, support, rehabilitation and treatment. The report would contain proposals on a number of areas, including: how to strengthen measures to prevent, detect and combat all forms of violence against children; how to prevent and counteract exposure to violence among children from particularly vulnerable groups; how to improve knowledge of violence and abuse among children and professionals in relevant sectors; how statistics could be used to monitor the exposure of children to violence; how to coordinate and evaluate the actions carried out under the strategy, including by establishing a dedicated authority; how to strengthen children's rights in the judicial context; and how to strengthen the *barnahus* system.

26. **A representative of Sweden** said that her country did not have a high-level mechanism to ensure that all children enjoyed equal access to their rights. However, specific government agencies such as the Health and Social Care Inspectorate and the Swedish Schools Inspectorate were tasked with ensuring that activities in their sectors complied with both domestic law and the country's international human rights obligations.

27. **A representative of Sweden** said that the National Board of Health and Welfare had been tasked with increasing the consistency and quality of the social care provided to children and young people. As part of its efforts, several handbooks had been produced and general advice had been issued to support the work of social services. The Board had also been made responsible for strengthening cooperation between social services, the police and other relevant actors. The Board had been working on the assignment since 2018 and its final report would be submitted in March 2023.

28. In June 2022, an inquiry had been launched with the aim of strengthening the capacity of the Health and Social Care Inspectorate to intervene when it detected deficiencies in the services provided under the law on support and services for persons with certain functional impairments. Those carrying out the inquiry had been asked to analyse and take a position on whether the Inspectorate needed expanded or clearer powers to intervene when shortcomings were detected. Their report and recommendations were due to be submitted before March 2024.

29. In March 2022, Sweden had submitted a 10-year national action plan to implement the Council of the European Union recommendation establishing a European Child Guarantee. It was stated in the action plan that the country's domestic legislation provided the basis for all children to have effective access to the key services referred to in the recommendations. However, certain groups of children still did not have access to those services, including socioeconomically disadvantaged children, children living in inadequate housing, homeless children, children with disabilities and children in care. Ten targets had therefore been identified under the action plan, and the Government would submit a progress report on them every two years.

30. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that the Government had very high ambitions with regard to children's issues, including in the areas of mental health, suicide prevention and the equality of schooling. It also placed particular importance on the need to work with young children and to take preventive measures in order to reduce the number of young people who became involved in criminal activities.

31. **A representative of Sweden** said that, under the terms of the Tidö Agreement, Sweden would continue to abide by its obligations under European Union legislation and

legally binding international agreements. Several inquiries relating to issues such as migration and asylum would be launched. The Government's terms of reference for such inquiries generally required an assessment of the impact on children.

32. **A representative of Sweden** said that the results of an audit by the Swedish National Audit Office of government measures related to the Convention and children's rights would be published in November 2023. An evaluation of the knowledge boost initiative was also currently under way. The Government would await the results before deciding what mechanisms or action plans to implement in pursuit of the strategy to strengthen the rights of the child.

33. **A representative of Sweden** said that Sweden was unable to track the resources allocated and used for the benefit of children or any other specific group because the State budget was based on thematic expenditures, rather than population groups, and because certain public services were provided and financed by the municipalities and regions. The Government did not decide on or keep an account of how municipalities, which were largely self-governed, allocated resources for the implementation of children's rights.

34. Education spending had totalled 435 billion Swedish kronor (SKr), or 8 per cent of the country's gross national product (GNP), in 2021. Primary education accounted for 31 per cent of that amount, preschool education for 19 per cent and higher education for 18 per cent. The budget allocation for primary education had increased from 2.2 per cent of GNP in 2011 to 2.6 per cent in 2020, largely owing to an increase in the number of children enrolled in primary schools.

35. In 2023, the national Government had allocated some SKr 62 million for measures specifically aimed at strengthening the rights of the child, including a national helpline, an additional SKr 20 million for child rights organizations, to be disbursed through 2024, and SKr 27 million in annual funding for the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden. An inquiry had been launched in 2022 to ensure that municipalities and regions were equally able to ensure the welfare of their inhabitants.

36. **A representative of Sweden** said that Statistics Sweden had been collecting data on the living conditions of children between 12 and 18 years of age since 2001. A review had been conducted in 2021 to determine how the amount of data on children in vulnerable situations could be increased. Statistics Sweden had been tasked in 2022 with introducing an alternative method that had been shown to lead to greater equality in data collection and would issue a report on the process in March 2024.

37. **A representative of Sweden** said that a national public health survey had been conducted in 2021, outside the survey's regular biennial cycle, owing to the COVID-19 pandemic. Between 8 and 9 per cent of 11-, 13- and 15-year-old girls had reported recently experiencing verbal abuse at school because of their ethnic background, with most of the girls experiencing such abuse once or twice and 3 per cent experiencing it at least two or three times per month. Eleven per cent of 11-year-old boys and 13 per cent of 15-year-old boys had reported experiencing such abuse, with 6 per cent of the 15-year-olds experienced it repeatedly.

38. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden was an independent government agency tasked with promoting children's rights on the basis of the Convention. It monitored the implementation of the Convention in the country's municipalities and regions and by government agencies.

39. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in order to safeguard the independence of the Ombudsman for Children in Sweden, any special assignments given to it by the Government were given in consultation with it, accompanied by special funding and consistent with its mandate. In addition, the Government did not decide how the Ombudsman's annual funding would be allocated among its programmes. The Ombudsman was authorized to make requests for information and summon parties for discussions but could not interfere in individual legal cases. It must report any signs of abuse or neglect detected in children to the social services. The inquiry that had been launched into opportunities for children to assert their rights would review children's complaint mechanisms generally but not the Ombudsman's mandate specifically.

40. **A representative of Sweden** said that the mandate, organization and operation of the Swedish Institute for Human Rights were governed by law. In compliance with the Paris Principles, the Government's ability to direct the work of the Institute was limited. The Institute's mission was to promote and protect human rights in Sweden and, rather than taking tasks from other human rights institutions, it aimed to enhance their efforts. The institutions decided how they would cooperate among themselves.

41. **A representative of Sweden** said that the courts were not involved in the knowledge boost campaign related to children's rights. Any mandatory training for judges could be seen as running counter to the principle of judicial independence. The Swedish Judicial Training Academy, which was independent of the Government, provided voluntary training for judges and regularly offered courses on the rights of the child. It had held a day-long event on the Convention and a two-day course on children's rights in legal proceedings, and other courses had addressed topics related to child victims and witnesses of violence.

42. **Ms. Waltersson Grönvall** (Sweden) said that her Government had decided to allocate SKr 56 billion to international cooperation each year for the following three years, replacing the percentage it had previously used – 1 per cent – with a fixed amount.

43. **A representative of Sweden** said that it was too early to define how the Government's thematic priorities for Swedish international development cooperation, which included poverty reduction and the right to health, would be translated into budgets. The toolkit that the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency had developed provided for regular dialogues with civil society on the subject of children's rights and had made child rights an integral part of the Agency's work. An evaluation conducted in 2020 and 2021 had documented how human rights, including children's rights, had been integrated into the Agency's projects, but it had been more difficult to demonstrate what the actual impact had been in terms of an enhanced enjoyment of those rights.

44. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs led an interdepartmental working group that was responsible for coordinating implementation of the Action Plan for Businesses and Human Rights. That action plan was not tied to any broader framework.

45. **A representative of Sweden** said that the Equality Ombudsman would increase the number of complaints of discrimination that it investigated and the number of requests for compensation that it made, following changes that it had begun making in 2021 to how it carried out its work. The Convention would be taken into consideration in cases involving children that the Equality Ombudsman brought to court. The Equality Ombudsman was involved in the knowledge boost or capacity-building initiative on the rights of the child, and it had carried out an assessment of how it implemented the Convention in practice. Although child-friendly material was already available on its website, it had identified steps that would make its communications more child-friendly.

46. A government grant had increased the opportunities for child victims of discrimination to receive counselling and support. The country's 18 local anti-discrimination agencies had developed information material for children and disseminated it through their website and other channels. Supplementing the national plan to combat racism, similar forms of hostility and hate crime, the Government had adopted programmes of action for the period 2022–2024 to raise awareness of and combat Afrophobia, Islamophobia, anti-Gypsyism, anti-Semitism and racism against the Sami people. Representatives of youth organizations whom the Government had consulted while preparing the programmes of action had said that it was difficult for victims of rights violations or harassment to know where to turn for help. The Equality Ombudsman had then been tasked with producing information material on the protection available to children against discrimination under the Discrimination Act and against abusive treatment under the Education Act, highlighting the resources that children could turn to if they experienced discrimination or abusive treatment. The Equality Ombudsman was to work with the student representatives at the Swedish Schools Inspectorate in carrying out the task.

47. **A representative of Sweden** said that, in 2017, the Swedish parliament had set as an objective that persons with disabilities should have equal living conditions and participate fully in society. Under a 10-year strategy adopted by the Government in 2022 to follow up on that objective, government agencies must carry out consultations with organizations of



persons with disabilities and other relevant actors in preparation for an action plan to be developed in 2026. The Swedish Agency for Participation would provide support to agencies, municipalities, and regions in their efforts to implement the strategy and the Government's disability policy in general, one focus area of which was the countering of discrimination.

48. **Ms. Aho**, noting that the State party's delegation comprised mostly women, said that she wondered to what extent men were involved in matters related to children. She wished to know what policies and strategies had been developed to address female genital mutilation, child marriage and obstetric fistula; what had prompted the setting up of the hotline for children; and how children had lodged complaints of violence and sexual violence and exploitation prior to the establishment of the hotline. It would be useful to know whether the public was aware of the 1979 legislation that banned corporal punishment, whether that legislation was fully enforced and how the State party ensured that corporal punishment was prohibited in practice.

49. **Mr. Jaffé** said that he would welcome information on the involvement of children, including survivors of abuse, in drawing up the national strategy to prevent and combat violence against children.

50. **Mr. Gudbrandsson** said that clarification was required as to whether the Discrimination Act was under review; while the Act was comprehensive, it did not address fully all the rights enshrined in the Convention. He would like to know whether the Government was aware of a recent study, which had found that a quarter of child deaths in the State party were due to external, ill-defined or unknown causes and had recommended systematic inter-agency reviews of each death.

51. **Mr. Van Keirsbilck** said that it would be useful to hear what support had been given to unaccompanied children who had fled to Sweden to escape the war in Ukraine, including social support and efforts to trace their families and ensure that they remained in contact with them.

52. **Ms. Todorova** said that she would appreciate clarification as to whether gaps in legislation and implementation regarding the status of children in custody disputes had been closed by the legal amendments introduced in July 2021. It would be useful to have examples of instances in which, under the Parental Code, it was considered inappropriate for children to be heard during custody disputes, and to know why children did not have direct access to the courts during such disputes. She wished to know whether parents could prevent children from being heard; why the law deemed the hearing of children to be harmful; and how the Government viewed calls for separate representation for children during custody disputes. Although the emphasis placed on out-of-court agreements between parents on contact and custody matters was welcome, she wondered what the position of children was in respect of those agreements; how their right to be heard was guaranteed; whether parents received information on children's rights and interests during the process; and how children's best interests were determined in agreements and court decisions. She also wished to know how the right to contact between children and parents who were perpetrators of domestic violence or abuse was determined; whether children could be forced to have contact, or reside, with abusive parents; how children were heard by the courts in such cases; and whether judges received training on hearing children.

53. With regard to alternative care, she asked why residential care was preferred over foster care for babies and why the foster care system seemed unable to accommodate more children. The Committee had received reports of systematic and widespread violence in compulsory care institutions, particularly those run by the National Board of Institutional Care. She would therefore welcome information on plans to address those severe violations of children's rights in State-run compulsory care institutions. Furthermore, children were reportedly not heard during the process of placing them in care and were frequently moved between placements. They also lacked contact with social workers, information, access to health examinations and to psychiatric and school support that was appropriate to their needs. She wished to know how the State party would address the persistent legal gaps that hindered the enjoyment of rights by children in care and the ability of municipalities and social workers to provide high-quality care. In particular, information would be welcome on any plans to implement national care quality standards, establish a complaints mechanism for children in

care, ensure their equal access to health care and school support, and address the shortage of social workers trained in working with children.

54. It would be useful to know how the State party would address the reported failure to consider the opinions of children with disabilities on matters affecting them and to give them sufficient appropriate information on their situation. Cuts in personal assistance for children with disabilities had resulted in more children being placed in out-of-home care. She would like to hear the outcomes of the inquiry into personal assistance for those children and any plans to restore the right to such assistance. The Committee had been informed that there was a lack of a strategic plan for inclusive education, that some children with disabilities were placed in special schools and that significant numbers, including many with cognitive disabilities, remained at home owing to a lack of support, stigma and mental health problems. She wished to know how the State party planned to address the lack of funding for pupils with disabilities and its failure to implement universal design for learning.

55. **Ms. Ayoubi Idrissi** said that she would welcome information on the specific measures adopted to tackle differing standards in education across municipalities and the failure of school authorities to address discrimination, violence and harassment, which were sometimes perpetrated by teachers. Children appeared unaware of the various complaints mechanisms available to them, and she wondered whether those mechanisms were sufficiently child-friendly and how children could be informed of them. She would also welcome information on the State party's response to the April 2020 report of an inquiry on more equal schools. She wondered what impact human rights education had had on children's awareness of their rights, as well as on knowledge of the Convention and its Optional Protocols, both among children and among teaching and administrative staff in schools. It would be interesting to hear what measures had been taken to ensure inclusive access to leisure activities for children from disadvantaged backgrounds, girls and children with disabilities.

56. **Mr. Nelson** (Country Task Force) said that he wished to know how the State party addressed the obstacles to health care experienced by some groups of vulnerable children, promoted breastfeeding and the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes, and tackled the high rates of depression and suicide among children. In particular, it would be useful to know whether mental health services were provided in schools and, if so, how; whether they catered to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children and children with disabilities; whether there were sufficient child psychologists and psychiatrists; and whether studies were undertaken to identify and address the underlying causes of depression, suicide and other mental health problems. He would also welcome information on steps to reduce drug and alcohol abuse in schools and children's use of prescription drugs for conditions such as attention deficit hyperactivity disorder or depression without a medical assessment; to improve sex education, which reportedly did not cover sexual diversity or gender equality; and to address gaming and gambling addiction among children.

57. Clarification was required as to whether climate policy action plans took children's views into account; whether climate change awareness and preparation was part of compulsory school curricula; and whether teachers were trained in delivering those messages. He also wished to know whether the climate policy council was operational and what type of work it undertook. What progress had been made towards the State party's goal of covering 100 per cent of energy needs using renewable sources by 2040? Information would be welcome on the steps taken to deal with homelessness and inadequate housing, particularly with regard to children living on the street and children involved in immigration proceedings.

58. There was concern that the Tidö Agreement would significantly infringe the rights of asylum-seeking and refugee children. He wished to know when the planned inquiries into the Agreement would be carried out and how the State party could guarantee children's rights under the Convention while implementing the Agreement. In particular, he wished to seek assurances that children's best interests would be upheld in all cases and their views heard and taken into account during asylum processes. He would also welcome an update on efforts to address disappearances of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

59. Under the Tidö Agreement, the State party would consider lowering the minimum age of criminal responsibility; the Committee was strongly of the view that any such moves

should be discouraged. He would be interested to know whether research had been undertaken into the root causes of the State party's high youth crime rate, how those causes would be addressed and the extent to which non-judicial measures, such as mediation, were applied in cases of children in conflict with the law. He wished to know why so many children were in pretrial detention; the maximum interval for detention hearings of two weeks seemed excessive. He also wished to know whether judges received sufficient training on child justice and whether such training was given to other judicial officials.

60. Turning to the Optional Protocols, he wished to know whether Internet service providers were required to block and remove online sexual abuse material and what progress had been made towards an inquiry into protection under criminal law for children aged 15 to 17 years against sexual violations, particularly in relation to purchasing sex. He would welcome information on any reviews of live firearms training for minors by voluntary defence organizations and on steps to repatriate the remaining Swedish children being held in camps in the Syrian Arab Republic.

*The meeting rose at 6.05 p.m.*