



ngo group for the crc

50TH SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD 12-30 JANUARY 2009

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The 50th session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) took place from 12 to 30 January 2009. Under the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) the Committee examined the second periodic report of the DRC, Malawi and Chad, the second and third periodic report of Moldova, the third periodic report of the Netherlands, and the fourth periodic report of the DPRK. Under the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC), the Committee examined the initial reports of Maldives and the Netherlands. Under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC) the Committee considered the initial reports of Maldives, Republic of Moldova and Tunisia.

Opening and Adoption of the Agenda

On 12 January 2009, Ms. Yanghee Lee, the Committee Chairperson, opened the 50th session of the Committee. She expressed deep concern over the situation of children in the Gaza Strip and called on all parties to comply with the UN Security Council Resolution 1860 calling for an immediate ceasefire.¹

Ms. Lee highlighted that 2009 was remarkable as it would celebrate the 20th anniversary of the adoption of the Convention. A lot had been achieved since the adoption of the Convention in 1989, yet challenges remained for the full implementation of the Convention and its Protocols. The Committee had evidenced devastation of child rights in countries such as the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Uganda, Sierra Leone, Colombia and Sri Lanka.

Ms. Jane Connors, Chief a.i. of the Human Rights Treaties Branch of OHCHR, drew the attention of the Committee members to a number of important new developments taken place since the last session in October 2008. She informed the Committee members that on 10 December 2008, the General Assembly (GA1) adopted by consensus the Optional Protocol to the ICESCR on individual complaint mechanisms. The Committee on the ESCR started discussing the OP 20 years ago, and finally in June 2006, the new Human Rights Council mandated an open-ended Working Group to draft this new instrument. The text of the OP was adopted by the HRC by consensus in June 2008. Ms. Connors mentioned that the OP was of particular interest to the Committee as there were links between the two treaties pertaining to, *inter alia*, the right to health, education and child labour. She emphasised the important role

¹ See the CRC Press Release available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/NewsEvents/Pages/media.aspx>.

the Committee could play in promoting the ratification of the OP and serve as an interesting precedent for the Committee given that the Committee supported the possible elaboration of a complaint mechanism to the CRC.

Among other developments Ms. Connors mentioned the recent establishment of the **Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD)** on 3 November 2008. The Committee will hold its first session in Geneva between 23 and 27 of February 2009. She assured the Committee that the collaboration between the two Committees would be very valuable as there were many references to children in the CRPD.

With regards to the GA Resolution on the Rights of the Child (63rd session), Ms. Connors noted that the Resolution on the Rights of the Child adopted by the GA in December 2008 requested the Secretary General to submit a thematic report on national progress in tackling child labour and in meeting the target of eliminating the worst forms of child labour by 2016.

Turning to Elections of the Committee held in December 2008, Ms. Connors congratulated the re-elected three members of the Committee (see the section on Election below) and expressed her appreciation for the important contribution and hard work of the outgoing members of the Committee.

The Secretary of the Committee, Ms. Andrijasevic-Boko, noted that the Committee had received 15 reports since the last session in September, including 10 on the Convention, 3 on the OPAC, and two on the OPSC. The Committee had considered 389 reports prior to the 50th session.

Regarding the Optional Protocols, as of 9 January 2009, there had been 126 ratifications of the OPAC and 130 of the OPSC with Uzbekistan the most recent State to ratify. Ms. Lee concluded the opening session by adopting the agenda on items and activities.

Examination of State party reports under the Convention²

All the members of the Committee attended the session, with the exception of Ms. Aluoche (Kenya), Ms. Al Thani (Qatar). In addition, most of the States parties sent high-level delegations to answer the questions of the Committee. Although NGOs can only attend as observers, they continue sharing their perspectives during the sessions, if necessary by approaching the members of the Committee and sharing their views on different issues. The representatives from national NGOs were from the following countries:

NGO attendance during the session

Country	Number of NGO representatives
Netherlands	13
Malawi	0
Moldova	3
DRC	2
DPRK	3
Tunisia	0

² All the country reports prepared by the NGO Group on the individual sessions can be found on: <http://www.crin.org/resources/infoDetail.asp?ID=7599&flag=report>.

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Malawi

For the examination of the 2nd periodic report of Malawi, there was a high level delegation of 7 representatives headed by the Minister from the Ministry of Women and Child Development. The Committee welcomed the well-written, self-critical, analytical report and noted that Malawi was facing many challenges, such as a high poverty and HIV/AIDS rates, which led to a large number of orphan and vulnerable children (OVCs). There were programmes in place for OVCs and social cash transfer schemes for poor families.

In terms of legislation, the main challenges were the lack of a legislative framework for child rights and the important influence of common and customary law. Although many bills had been drafted, including the ones on birth registration, children and child protection, they were unable to be passed through parliament due to the political deadlock. There were great hopes that this political impasse would be resolved following the May 2009 elections.

Despite having a ministry addressing children's issues, it had the lowest budget and limited human resources. There were also problems of coordination, data collection and a lack of monitoring. Discrimination was also a big issue, mostly against girls in schools, traditional harmful practices, as well as early and forced marriage. Furthermore, children born to a foreign father were not necessarily entitled to the nationality. Meanwhile, there was no policy and limited assistance for children with disabilities. Malawi also had one of the lowest levels of birth registration, a low age of criminal responsibility (set at 7 years old), a high rate of international adoption, high levels of malnutrition and no free and compulsory education.

The Committee had an open and frank discussion with the delegation. However, quite a few questions were not answered in great detail. The concluding observations reflected the progress made, as well as the many issues that needed addressing by the government. The Committee recommended Malawi to ensure the ongoing independence of the Malawi Human Rights Commission in accordance with the Paris Principles, to eradicate discriminatory laws, to ensure that primary education was compulsory and free. It urged the Committee to prevent child trafficking and hold perpetrators accountable. The Committee invited the State party to submit its combined 3rd, 4th and 5th periodic report by 31 October 2013.

The Netherlands

The large and high-level delegation of the Kingdom of the Netherlands was headed by the Minister for Youth and Families of the Netherlands and accompanied by 36 multi-sectoral senior representatives from the Netherlands, the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba.

The Committee members hoped that the reservations of the Netherlands to the CRC will be withdrawn and that the next report would be a unified one, which would make it relatively easy to obtain a comprehensive picture and draw a comparative analyses of the situation throughout the country. Other important issues included the independence and mandate of the children's Ombudsman; the reasons beyond having long waiting lists for children registered for mental health institutions and long-term solutions for these lists; drug and alcohol policies for adolescents; measures to better promote language acquisition among migrant children; and an increase in the number of juveniles being held in "closed" facilities. Such concerns as the situation of children with disabilities; the holding of minors and adults together in

detention facilities; high school drop-out rates and illegal adoption were raised with regards to both the Netherlands Antilles and Aruba. The Committee was concerned about the radicalisation among young people some of who rejected the idea of pluralistic and tolerant society.

It is worth mentioning that the Netherlands was one of the countries reviewed by the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) of the Human Rights Council (HRC), a new mechanism of the HRC, under which the human rights record of all UN member States will be examined once in four years. As far as the recent examination of the Netherlands was concerned, Mr. Krappman and Mr. Parfitt made references to the commitments and pledges taken by the government, *inter alia*, in relation to the protection and promotion of children's rights, as well as to the withdrawal of the reservations to the Convention. The Committee recommended the Netherlands to strengthen its efforts to prevent cases of sexual exploitation, child sex tourism and trafficking of children through undertaking a comprehensive study and data collection; training law enforcement officials, social workers, prosecutors and child care professionals on how to proceed the complaints on child rights related matters.

The Committee asked the State party to submit its 4th periodic report by 6 March 2012.

Chad

During the examination of the 2nd periodic report, the head of the delegation highlighted serious challenges in implementing the CRC, including the fact that 53% of the population was under 18; the ongoing conflict; the high level of poverty and the high number of refugees. The delegation composed of 7 delegates included the Minister of Social Action and the Family and representatives from the ministries of human rights and public health. Unfortunately, the representatives of influential ministries were not present.

Since the previous examination in 1999, Chad had ratified many international instruments including the OPs to the CRC and the ILO Conventions 138 and 182. However, they were often not known, understood or applied by relevant stakeholders. There were many action plans related to children's issues, an inter-ministerial committee to supervise the application of the CRC, presidential projects (e.g. to build schools), but there were concerns about the coordination of these efforts. Due to the conflict, the outreach to different regions of the country was limited.

One of the issues of concern was discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, Sudanese refugees, Bouvier children, beggars. Discrimination against girls included access to school, violence, child marriage (an estimated 60% of girls were married before 16), FGM and inheritance laws. The delegation noted that the State was trying to address these issues by engaging with religious and community leaders to encourage them to align customary law with the CRC (e.g. definition of a child, banning harmful practices). Other issues included child soldiers, harassment in refugee camps, lack of access to and poor quality of education, low birth registration, high child and maternal mortality rates, and deterioration of health and nutrition indicators. In terms of juvenile justice, children could be sentenced to 10 years of imprisonment and were often imprisoned with adults.

The delegation was frank about the difficulties and limitations it was was facing. Many questions were either unanswered or lacked detailed information. The Committee

recommended that Chad expand its awareness-raising campaigns for the populations in rural areas. It recommended that corporal punishment be explicitly prohibited by law in all settings. The Committee urged Chad to ensure that the minimum age of 18 for recruitment into military forces was observed, and asked the State party to facilitate contact between armed groups operating in Chad and the UN in order to demobilize and prevent recruitment of children.

The Committee invited the State party to submit its combined 3rd, 4th and 5th periodic report by 31 October 2012.

Democratic Republic of Congo

A large and high level delegation attended the examination of the 2nd periodic report on the CRC, despite the absence of the *Conseil National de l'Enfant* (CNEN). The sixteen-member delegation was headed by the Minister of Human Rights and included representatives from the Ministries of Gender, Family and the Child, Justice, Health and International and Regional Cooperation. Six national NGOs also attended the session.

The head of the delegation acknowledged the existence of human rights due to the conflict. He noted that a new law on child protection was passed on 9 January 2009 and the OPAC report was submitted prior to the session. Since the previous report, the DRC had ratified the OPs to the CRC and the ILO conventions and the definition of the child in the Constitution was in line with the CRC. He also acknowledged the existence of such challenges as the recruitment of children by armed groups, the lack of resources, access to education and health as well as cases of abuse and exploitation.

The Committee was concerned about the DRC's ability to implement the CRC in the situation of conflict; the worst forms of child labour; the degrading conditions of detention for minors; the inconsistent definitions of the child in different laws. There were serious issues of discrimination against girls, children with disabilities, children accused of witchcraft (some of them were killed by their families) as well as the Batwa-Pygmee population. The best interest of the child and the right to life were not respected in relation to street children, IDPs and children involved in the armed conflict. In addition, there was a decreasing rate of birth registration and vaccination of children, high levels of infant mortality, decreasing resources for health care and education. The education sector was suffering from low school enrolment, high drop-out rates, unqualified and/or underpaid teachers, and hidden costs for education.

The Committee urged the DRC to initiate awareness raising activities, to expedite the effective implementation of the Child Protection Code and to ensure adequate human and financial resources for their full implementation. It asked the DRC to prioritise and systematically increase budgetary allocations for children at national and local levels, to strengthen its collaboration with civil society and to adopt a strategy to eliminate discrimination on any grounds and against all vulnerable groups.

The Committee asked the State party to submit its combined 3rd, 4th and 5th periodic report by 26 October 2012.

Democratic People's Republic of Korea

For the examination of the 2nd periodic report, a delegation of 14 members from various ministries attended the meeting. The head of the delegation emphasised the efforts made to

ensure that all children enjoyed their rights, as the head of the State, Kim Jong-Il considered children to be the future of the country. He noted that there had been tense international situation and economic difficulties, but underlined the strong commitment of the government and the people to children's rights. After the first round of questions, the head of the delegation noted that he would leave the meeting, so the rest of the delegation could answer the questions more openly. He also remarked that while some questions had the purpose of promoting the well-being of rights in the DPRK, others were unfriendly or biased. The Chairperson assured him that this was a forum for the Committee to reflect their genuine interest in children.

The Committee was quite tactful in its discussion with the delegation. It noted that it was difficult to get a clear picture of the rights of children in the country due to the lack of available data. It asked about the existence of a comprehensive legislative act on child rights, the reasons for a different definition of a child, the lack of progress in ratifying international instruments, the existence of a complaints mechanism for children and the principle of non-discrimination. The Committee enquired about the use of the political classification system and its impact on children. There were also questions on school enrolment, literacy rates, poverty, access to health care, children in institutions and so on. Some of the most sensitive issues including the data on HIV/AIDS, the full enrolment of children in school, food shortages, children in alternative forms of care, juvenile justice, adolescent health and absence of sexual exploitation, was difficult to address as the delegation officially denied their existence.

The Committee recommended the DPRK to ensure that its complaint mechanisms were independent, accessible and used-friendly to all children. It urged the country to increase its budget allocations for the realization of rights under the Convention, as well prioritise budget allocations for the realization of economic, social and cultural rights of all children including those disadvantaged.

The Committee recommended the State party to ensure the allocation of financial resources for the full implementation of the legislation on child rights protection. It urged the government to adopt a National Plan of Action on Children and to collaborate with civil society. The Committee asked the State party to submit its combined 3rd, 4th and 5th periodic report by 26 October 2012.

Moldova

The delegation from Moldova was composed of the Minister of Social Protection, Family and Child of the Republic of Moldova; the Deputy Minister of Defence and other governmental officials.

One of the priorities had been set to restructure the boarding system and de-institutionalisation. While commending on the progress made, the Committee noted that the report did not reflect Moldova's willingness and ability to deal with the root causes of some concerns. The Committee noted the lack of ability in the areas of data collection, assessment, evaluation and solutions provided to resolve child rights issues.

The Committee noticed that despite legislative guarantees, discrimination still existed in Moldova especially against social orphans left behind by their migrating parents; children with disabilities, children from different ethnic groups, minorities and especially Roma children. It was concerned that there was no information on infant mortality rates on Roma in the report, the high poverty rate among children was consistent, and that corporal punishment

was a common practice. Other concerns were about the large number of children placed in institutions where they were reportedly ill-treated and neglected.

The Committee recommended to develop policies and programmes to prevent the placement of children in institutions and to ensure that professionals working with children received training. The Committee raised further concerns regarding increasing alcohol consumption and drug abuse among adolescents; high rate of teenage pregnancies, including HIV/AIDS as well as low levels of education among Roma children. As far as the birth registration in rural areas and the Roma community were concerned, the delegation did not respond to any of the inquiries. The Committee asked the State party to submit its 4th and 5th periodic report by February 2015.

Examination of State party reports under the OPSC

The Netherlands

The Committee was concerned that the National Action Plan on trafficking had no reference to the crimes under the Protocol, and that there was no national strategy to prevent the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The Committee requested information on trials and judgements pertaining to sex tourists. It asked for more details about the information gathering efforts and data on sex tourism.

The delegation explained that efforts had been taken towards preventing sex tourism. It confirmed that more efforts should be taken to strengthen cooperation with the tourism industry, non-governmental organizations and civil society organisations in order to prevent sex tourism. The Committee was concerned that the domestic legislation did not criminalize the production or dissemination of materials advertising the sale of children, child prostitution or child pornography. Among other concerns there were issues pertaining to the network of “pimp boys,” who courted girls with the intent to “groom” them into prostitution.

The Committee recommended that the Netherlands ratify the Convention on Cybercrime signed in 2001. It recommended that the Netherlands, *inter alia*, ensure specific shelter and care facilities for child victims of offences under the Protocol; improve the safety of the reception centres for unaccompanied foreign children; and enhance child rights knowledge and skills of professionals in shelters and care facilities.

The Committee asked the State party to include further information on the implementation of the OPSC in its 4th periodic report under the Convention, due on 6 March 2012.

Maldives

The delegation of Maldives was composed of 9 members representing different ministries. The head of the delegation, the Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Health and Family was very knowledgeable and could address the issues in a professional and constructive manner. Though Maldives was fortunate not to have issues on armed conflict, the situation was different for child prostitution and pornography. She noted that the culture of silence, denial and invisibility around these issues, and the absence of comprehensive data on the phenomenon had prevented them from becoming a social priority.

The Country Rapporteur congratulated the new government for embarking on “colossal” changes and taking this opportunity to engage with the State in putting children’s issues at the forefront. She noted that the present government did not take part in drafting the report, and that the report did not follow the reporting guidelines, and asked if any members of the delegation took part in the process. The delegation explained that there was active civil

society participation that followed the establishment of the new government. There were three NGOs consistently working with the State, none of who were specialized on child rights.

The Committee was concerned about the increasing rate of tourism and its potential links with child prostitution. It was also concerned that children as young as 10 years old, who had been victims of offences under the Protocol, might be criminalized according to Sharia law. The Committee recommended that provisions of the OP were widely disseminated among children, their families and communities.

The Committee noted also that child victims should be protected at all stages of the criminal justice process and encouraged the State to allow the views of child victims to be presented and considered in proceedings where their personal interests were affected. The Committee recommended the State party to establish a national database disaggregated, *inter alia*, by age, sex, minority group and origin, to ensure that children are protected throughout the criminal justice procedures.

The Committee asked the State party to include the information on the implementation of the OPSC in its combined 4th and 5th periodic report under the CRC due on 12 September 2011.

Examination of State party reports under the OPAC

Moldova

The Deputy Minister of Defence presented the report of Moldova for OPAC. The Committee was concerned that children aged 16 were required to register for conscription at local military authority which had given children a status of “recruit”. The Committee took a note with appreciation of the control of small arms and the requirement for obtaining permits. It asked Moldova to consider reducing the period between registration and mandatory enlistment into the armed forces by deferring the registration process for as long as possible until persons became eligible for enlistment at the age of 18.

The session was attended by national and international NGOs from Moldova. As far as the number of the drop-outs of Roma children and the level of enrolment in schools was concerned, some NGOs were in disagreement with the information provided by the delegation. The Committee recommended Moldova to ensure that all relevant professional groups, in particular military personnel, were trained on the provisions of the OPAC.

It asked the State party to include the information on the implementation of the OPAC in its 2nd periodic report under the CRC.

Tunisia

General Coordinator for Human Rights to the Committee on the Rights of the Child of Tunisia headed the delegation. He was accompanied by the representative of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Ministry of National Defence, and the Ministry on Family, Women, Children and Aged People. The head of the delegation explained that Tunisia’s first periodic report on OPAC was compiled with the help of the Ministry of Women, Family and Child Affairs, the Higher Committee of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms and the representatives of civil society. There was no NGO presence at the session. In response to the Committee's inquiry on the late submission of the report, the delegation explained that the delay was due to the decision to broaden the scope of consultations with stakeholders.

The issues raised by the Committee included the lack of criminalization of recruitment of use of children in armed conflict; independent monitoring as well as lack of training and

dissemination of the OPAC. The Committee recommended that Tunisia revise its legislation and prohibit sale of arms to countries where children might be potentially recruited or used in hostilities; establish extraterritorial jurisdiction; criminalize the recruitment and involvement of children in hostilities.

The committee asked the State party to include the information on the implementation of the OPAC in its next periodic report under the CRC due on 12 September 2011

Maldives

Mr. Awich Pollar, Country Rapporteur on the OPAC, remarked that Maldives was a traditionally peaceful nation with little or no armed conflict but that relevant measures needed to be in place to ensure that children were protected even if there was no ongoing war in the country. As for NGO participation, the delegation explained that only a few NGOs worked with their ministry on a regular basis but that they had a good working relationship and sometimes took part in collective decisions. There were occasions when the State would secure funds and ask NGOs to implement programs, but NGOs were not always able to scrutinize the government and keep people accountable. The Co-Rapporteur for Maldives said that the Committee was excited about the recent changes in the Maldivian government and felt that the head of the delegation was “on the top of issues”. She recommended a more holistic, child rights-based approach throughout the implementation and monitoring of the Convention and the Protocol.

The Committee urged the State party to ratify other relevant international treaties, including the Hague Convention and the ILO Conventions, and establish a two-fold monitoring system within the government. Ms. Lee suggested the government to review the new Penal Code and ensure that all crimes prohibited by OPAC were explicitly included there. She said that civil society needed to be more empowered and aware of the Protocol. The Committee was concerned about the lack of sanctions and an explicit provision on criminalization of child recruitment in the Penal Code. It noted with regret that peace education was not included in the school curriculum and no measures existed to identify asylum-seeking and refugee children who might have been recruited or used in hostilities. It recommended Maldives to ensure that the Protocol was widely disseminated to the general public and State officials, and that the military received appropriate training on the provisions of the OP.

The Committee asked the State party to include the information on the implementation of the OPAC in its combined 4th and 5th periodic report under the CRC due on 12 September 2011.

Working Methods of the Committee

Of particular importance to the Committee was the approval of the GA of the Committee's request to convene in two parallel chambers to reduce the backlog of some 80 reports. The GA approved, as an exceptional and temporary measure, the Committee's decision to work in two parallel chambers during three regular sessions in 2010. It also requested the Committee to intensify its review of its working methods in order to timely consider the State parties' reports.

From 1 to 3 December 2008, the Inter-Committee Meeting (ICM) held its 8th meeting where Mr. Filali, Mr. Krappman and Ms. Lee represented the Committee. The meeting was dedicated to the issue of harmonisation of working methods and focused on revised treaty-specific guidelines; follow-up to concluding observations and the UPR of the HRC. The meeting concluded that the majority of treaty bodies had already adopted the harmonized guidelines on reporting for the common core document. It was agreed that remaining treaty

bodies, including the CRC, should seek to conclude the revision of treaty specific reporting guidelines by the end of 2009.

Other issues discussed during the ICM included establishing a working group or task force to identify best practices and possible areas of harmonisation with regards to follow-up to concluding observations, developing effective cooperation between treaty bodies and the HRC, given that frequent references to the recommendations of treaty bodies were made during and throughout the UPR process. With a view of mutually reinforcing human rights mechanisms, the Committee was encouraged to make references to pledges and recommendations of the countries reviewed by the UPR.

Elections

The terms of nine members of the Committee expired in February 2009. On December 2008, the States parties elected nine members of the Committee. With only three members of the Committee running and re-elected, it was the biggest turnover since the membership was increased from 10 to 18 in 2003. The three re-elected members of the Committee are Yanghee Lee (chairperson) (Republic of Korea), Awich Pollar (Uganda), and Jean Zermatten (Switzerland). Meanwhile, Al-Thani (Qatar), Aluoch (Kenya), Parfitt (Canada), Siddiqui (Bangladesh), Smith (Norway) and Vuckovic-Sahovic (Serbia and Montenegro) did not run for re-election. The current membership and background information of all members is available at: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/elections12th.htm>.

The new regional breakdown of the 18 members, based on the UN regional groups, includes six members from Africa, three from the Western European and others group, three from Asia, three from Latin America and Caribbean States and three from Eastern Europe. A further breakdown of the regions shows that of the six Africans, three are from North Africa, two are from English speaking East and West Africa and one is from Mauritius. The WEOG members include two members from Northern Europe, one member from Southern Europe. The Asian members include one from the Middle East, one from South Asia and one from East Asia. Meanwhile, the members from GRULAC are all from South America. This further breakdown shows that although all regions are represented, there is overrepresentation of Africa.³ The new gender balance of the Committee will remain unchanged with 9 women and 9 men out of 18 members.

The professional expertise of the six new members is varied: Marta Mauras Perez (Chile) is the Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) and she has worked with Unicef in various regions. Sanphasit Koompraphant (Thailand) is the Director of the Center for the Prevention of Children's Rights Foundation and the President of the International Society for the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect. Peter Guran (Slovakia) is the Head of International Relations and Children Rights Department of the Slovak National Center for Human Rights. Hadeel Al-Asmar (Syria) is the Unesco Coordinator for developing the Childhood Sector in Syria. Kamla Devi Varmah (Mauritius) is the Chairperson of the National Children's Council in Mauritius. Susana Villaran de la Puente (Peru) was the Commissioner of the Inter-American Commission for HR, the Rapporteur for Children's Rights of the IACHR and the Ombudsperson for the Police in Peru. The NGO Group has prepared a fact sheet on how NGOs can take part in the election process.

³ For the results of the 2008 CRC Elections please check our section on Election at: <http://childrightsnet.org/>.

General Comments

During its 50th session, the Committee adopted the General Comment (GC) on indigenous children and their rights under the Convention. The GC noted that indigenous children continue to face discrimination against the right to health care and education. The Committee noted that many States parties gave insufficient attention to the rights of indigenous children and to promotion of their development. It considered that special measures should be undertaken in consultation with these communities. The Committee also discussed the latest draft of the GC on the right of the child to be heard, which it will adopt during its next 51st session.

Day of General Discussion

As 2009 will mark the 20th anniversary of the Convention, the Committee decided that it would hold a commemorative event rather than a usual day of general discussion. The commemorating event of the 20th anniversary of the Convention entitled as “Dignity, Development and Dialogue” will take place the first week of October instead of the usual day of General Discussion. More information on this will be available on our website.

Closing Remarks of the 50th Session

On January 30 2008, the Committee concluded its 50th session by adopting concluding observations for Malawi, Chad, the Netherlands, the Republic of Moldova, the Democratic Republic of the Congo and the DPRK on the CRC; concluding observations for Moldova, Maldives and Tunisia on the OPSC; and that of Moldova, Maldives and Tunisia.

Mr. Krappmann, serving as a Rapporteur, briefed the Committee about informal meetings held between the Committee and the Committee on CEDAW organised by UNICEF. The Committee had informal meetings with the States parties to discuss issues such as the reporting backlog of the Committee, the two-chamber working method of the Committee, the upcoming commemoration of the 20th anniversary of the Convention and the draft UN Guidelines on Alternative Parental Care. On 23 January the Committee had a separate meeting with the NGO Group to discuss the participation of children in the reporting process as well as the events of the 20th anniversary of the CRC.

From 25 May to 12 June 2009, the Committee will resume its 51st session with a new membership. It will examine the reports of France, Sweden, Mauritania, Bangladesh, Niger, Romania, Romania for the CRC. Slovenia and Oman are scheduled to be examined for the OPSC & OPAC.