



Handbook for Adults

Participating in the Pre-Session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child

Child Rights Connect

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About Child Rights Connect

Child Rights Connect is an international network of non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that advocates for children’s enjoyment of their rights and empowers children’s rights defenders, including children, NGOs, national human rights institutions (NHRIs) and Ombudspersons, to engage effectively with the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee).

Since our creation almost 40 years ago, we have assisted and supported children’s rights defenders from all countries of the world to use the Committee’s work to make change happen on the ground for children. Our longstanding experience and unique partnership with the Committee and its Secretariat, which is part of the United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), has made us their focal point for the participation of children’s rights defenders in the Committee’s work.

How to use this Handbook

This Handbook has been developed by Child Rights Connect to assist those invited to participate to the pre-session of the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

It contains practical information to be well prepared for the pre-session for each step of the process and how action can be taken.

This Handbook complements the information you can find on our mini site on the Committee’s reporting cycle at: <http://crcreporting.childrightsconnect.org/> and the practical information shared in our **Handbook for Children Participating in the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child**.

Tell us what you think about this Handbook

We would very much appreciate any comment you might have on this Handbook. We would particularly like to know how you have used it, what you found most helpful and what you feel is missing so that we can improve it for others.

Please send your comments to: crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org

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 **CONTACT US!**

If you have any question or need additional guidance to ensure child participation in the Committee’s reporting cycle, please contact us:

- via email at: crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org
- by phone: landline: +41 22 552 41 30
- via WhatsApp. Child Rights Connect mobile number is shared upon request.

Introduction - What is the Pre-Session of the Committee on the Rights of the Child?

The pre-session, or pre-sessional working group, is the week during which the Committee meets in private with selected children's rights defenders, including children, non-governmental organisations (NGOs), National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs), Ombudspersons, as well as UN agencies, **in person in Geneva, Switzerland or online**. During a pre-session week, several country pre-sessions are held one after another.

The country pre-sessions are scheduled when the Committee receives a new State report. The Committee meets 3 times a year for 4 weeks each time. The first three weeks are the session and the fourth one is the pre-session of the following session. The dates of the pre-session week are published on the [Committee's webpage](#). The exact date and time of a country pre-session are **CONFIDENTIAL** and are communicated to the selected participants only. The country pre-session takes place 6 months in advance to the related session.

A country pre-session is a 2.5-hour confidential meeting where all 18 Committee members¹ meet with selected children's rights defenders invited by the Committee and UN agencies representatives, like UNICEF.

It is an opportunity for children's rights defenders to confidentially share their information and concerns before the Committee's dialogue with the State – the session.



Before and after each country pre-session, Child Rights Connect organises **briefings and debriefings** for children's rights defenders **to provide any last-minute update to the participants, address any pending question, concern or issue and discuss advocacy strategies**.

Briefings are usually held 1 hour before the meeting and debriefings right after the country pre-session. We will confirm the times as soon as we get the final schedule of the Committee.

! Please keep this in mind when you organise your travel to Geneva.

¹ Unless the Committee decides to hold the pre-session week in double chambers, in which case only 9 Committee members will attend each country pre-session.

Respecting the Confidentiality of the Pre-Session

Why is it essential to preserve the confidentiality of the meetings with the Committee?

The principle of **confidentiality** constitutes one of the key components of the working methods of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as country pre-sessions are closed meetings, not open to the public.

Its objective is to ensure the meaningful and safe participation of national actors, including children, to its meetings by enhancing freedom of expression and protection from reprisals.

Confidentiality should be respected with regard to ALL MEETINGS organised with the Committee during the pre-session week: FOR YOUR SAFETY AND THE SAFETY OF OTHERS involved.

! Be aware that some children's rights defenders participating to the same country pre-session as you or to another meeting taking place before or after yours, **could be at risk if their presence was known to others**. They engage with the Committee on the Rights of the child because of the confidentiality of its meetings, please respect their needs.

! Children are more vulnerable and may not fully realise the risks and consequences of not following the principle of confidentiality for themselves and for others. It is essential that this is clearly explained to them in advance of a meeting with the Committee and reiterated just after the meeting.

WHAT MUST REMAIN ABSOLUTELY CONFIDENTIAL

- ✓ The names of the **participants/organisations** attending a country pre-session or a children's meeting with the Committee must not be disclosed. Only selected children's rights defenders are invited to the pre-session and no observer is allowed in the room.
- ✓ The **content of the discussion** during a country pre-session or a children's meeting cannot be mentioned or shared. You can say what points you raised, but you **CANNOT** make any reference to what has been said by other people, including Committee members. NO participant to those meetings, including the Committee, NGOs, NHRIs, UN agencies, and children can mention **what is said and discussed** during the meeting. There are no public minutes or recordings of the meetings.
- ✓ The **date and time of a country pre-session or children's meeting** must NOT be disclosed or shared. While the dates of the week of the pre-session is public information that can be found on the OHCHR website, the exact dates of each country pre-session – which could indicate when children's rights defenders from which countries will be in Geneva – are strictly confidential.

What can children’s rights defenders decide to make public?

- You decide *if* and *when* you want to make your alternative report public. You can also decide if you want to provide the government concerned with a copy of your report. If children contributed to the alternative report, they should be consulted before the report is made public and, in any case, anonymised.
- You decide if you want your alternative report to be uploaded on the OHCHR website after the pre-session when you submit it to the Committee. If you decide to make it public later, or if you would like to make another version public, you can send this public version directly to the Committee’s Secretariat at ohchr@un.org right after the country pre-session specifying that it is for upload on the OHCHR website.

Confidentiality: DOs and DON'Ts

DOs	DON'Ts
Keep the information heard during a country pre-session or a children’s meeting confidential.	Do not publicise or share the names of other participants (individuals/organisations) of a country pre-session or a children’s meeting
Only share on internet/social media the topics and issues you raised during the country pre-session or the children’s meeting AFTER the pre-session week. Only make reference to your own report.	Do not publicise what has been said during the pre-session by other participants, including Committee members. NEVER share your topics/issues live as this would indicate the date of the country pre-session or children’s meeting.
Explain the principle of confidentiality to your colleagues and to the children you support and accompany. Make sure they understand what it means and the importance of respecting confidentiality for their safety and the safety of others.	Do not take pictures during the meeting. Do not take pictures of other participants outside of the meeting without asking for their prior authorisation. Do not take pictures of children participants without asking the children, getting their chaperones’ consent and informing them about how you will use the pictures and possible implications.
Write ‘Confidential’ on all the pages of your report submitted confidentially.	NEVER invite journalists to a country pre-session or a children’s meeting or to meet in the premises of such meetings before or after. NEVER disclose the dates of a specific country pre-session or children’s meetings outside your own organisation (and for internal purposes).

What to do if you fear reprisals for your engagement with the Committee?

Respecting the confidentiality of the pre-session is essential to protect you as well as other participants from reprisals, such as intimidation, harassment, discrimination.

! Never assume that if you do not fear reprisals, this is the case of all other participants to country pre-sessions.

As the political context of each country varies, it is very important **not to disclose the dates of other country pre-sessions or the name of participants from other countries you might have met while in Geneva, or with whom you were in contact during the preparation to the pre-session.**

If you feel concerned about possible forms of reprisals relating to your participation in a country pre-session, please inform Ms. Allegra Franchetti (afranchetti@un.org), the Secretary of the Committee and us (crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org) as soon as possible.

If you experience reprisals after your participation to a country pre-session, know that the Committee, along with all other UN treaty bodies, has developed a series of guidelines to “assist and protect individuals and groups alleging that they have been the object of intimidation or reprisals for seeking to cooperate or cooperating with them”.

In this context, the Committee has appointed a Committee member as its Rapporteur on the issue of reprisals. The Rapporteur is in charge of assessing your situation and decide how the Committee should react. You can check the OHCHR dedicated webpage: <https://www.ohchr.org/en/treaty-bodies/preventing-and-addressing-acts-intimidation-and-reprisal-cooperation-treaty-bodies>

You can find more information about the safety of Human Rights Defenders in Geneva, protection and reporting of reprisals on the NGO Welcome Desk [website](#).

! Please read the [Guide against Intimidations or Reprisals](#) (San José Guidelines) to have more details on the role of the UN Treaty Bodies in this subject.

Contact Details of the Committee’s Secretariat:

Committee on the Rights of the Child
Human Rights Treaties Division (HRTD)
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner
for Human Rights (OHCHR)

UNOG-OHCHR
CH-1211 Geneva 10 (Switzerland)

Tel.: +41 22 917 91 41

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Registering to the Pre-Session

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I. Modalities of participation

It is possible to participate in the pre-session, either:

- in person in Geneva, Switzerland where the 18 members of the Committee gather to hold their pre-session meeting;
- online, through the OHCHR teleconference system.

You will indicate your choice in the registration form.

II. Selection of Representatives of Organisations to the Pre-Session

Your organisation was invited by the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child to participate in a country pre-session of the Committee: if you want to participate, you need to select representatives.

In order to make the best selection of your representatives, please keep the following points in mind:

Number of participants

Given the confidential and interactive nature of the meeting, the Committee usually invites only a small group of civil society representatives per country pre-session (about 12 participants).

Based on our experience, organisations that have submitted a comprehensive report on a broad number of issues should register 2 people. 1 person is sufficient to represent an organisation that has submitted a thematic report.

Selection criteria

The Committee requires participants to:

- ✓ Be **fluent** (understanding and speaking) in one of the United Nations official languages, namely English, French, Spanish, Russian, Chinese or Arabic;
- ✓ Have been **actively involved** in the preparation of the alternative report submitted by the organisation;
- ✓ Be ready to **actively participate** and answer the questions asked by the Committee (no observers are allowed);
- ✓ Have **extensive knowledge** of the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) and its Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (OPSC) and/or the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict (OPAC), if relevant, and how they are implemented in the country, especially with regard to the national legislation, government policies and programmes and the priority areas and major gaps;

- ✓ Be **willing to collaborate** with other representatives in the room (e.g. UNICEF, Ombudsman, etc.);
- ✓ **Commit to the confidentiality** principle.

! If you select several representatives for your organisation, they should have complementary expertise to cover a broader range of topics.

III. Registration of Organisations to the Pre-Session

Registration of representatives participating in the pre-session is done through our [online registration platform](#). This means that the contact details of all selected representatives for each organisation invited to a country pre-session need to be registered at once. Please send only one form per representative.

Organisations which do not register online by the set deadline will need to contact the Committee's Secretariat directly (ohchr-crc@un.org) to see if a late registration is possible.

! At this stage, we recommend that organisations who may attend depending on funding register anyway, even if funding has not yet been secured.

Designating a main representative and contact person:

Each organisation registering will be asked to provide the name of one main representative, who will also act as the contact person for Child Rights Connect and the Committee's Secretariat in the preparation of the country pre-session.

The main representative will be expected to:

- ✓ Disseminate any information shared by Child Rights Connect and/or the Committee's Secretariat with colleagues participating to the country pre-session and
- ✓ Participate to the preparatory call that Child Rights Connect organises for all main representatives of organisations participating country pre-sessions (see the timeline for the dates).

For coordination purposes, the contact details of this person will be shared with the other main representatives of the other organisations participating in the same country pre-session. If this is a problem, please contact us at crcreporting@childrightsconnect.org

IV. Accreditation to enter the UN buildings, for in person participation only

Once you have registered representative(s) of your organisation online, you must submit a request to get accredited to enter the UN building where the Committee will meet with you, only if you will participate in person.

! Failing to do so will prevent you from accessing the building and attending your country pre-session.

Accreditation to the UN is done in 2 steps:

1) Before the country pre-session:

- ✓ Participants must register through the unique OHCHR online platform for accreditation, Indico. The private link will be provided to the invited participants by email, together with the invitation to the pre-session sent by the Secretariat of the Committee. Kindly allow two working days for your request to be processed.

2) On the day of the country pre-session:

- ✓ Withdraw your badge at the Palais des Nations (street address: *Villa Les Feuillantines, Avenue de la Paix 13, 1211 Genève 10*. Ouvert du lundi au vendredi de 8h00 à 16h45).
- ✓ Go to the security gate of Palais Wilson (street address: 52 rue des Pâquis, 1201 Geneva, Switzerland) where the country pre-session will take place.
- ✓ Bring the confirmation of registration which includes the QR code and your passport or your ID card.

Preparing for the Pre-Session

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I. The structure of the country pre-session

A country pre-session is a confidential meeting between the Committee members and selected participants from civil society. It lasts between 1.5 and 3 hours and it is divided in **3 main parts**:


- 1) Round of questions by the Committee** - The Committee's country rapporteurs (2 members) or task force (3-4 members) ask a series of questions to the participants, which are not limited to the issues raised in their reports or oral statements.
- 2) Preparation and organisation of the answers** – Participants have 10-15 minutes in total to prepare their answers to the questions asked by Committee members. They can decide on the order they will use to answer the questions, who will answer which question and if there are questions they do not want to answer. It is strongly encouraged that all participants work together to divide up the answers amongst themselves.
- 3) Interactive dialogue with the Committee** – Once the preparation time is over, participants are given the floor to answer the Committee's questions. Committee members can intervene at any point with additional or follow-up questions.

Country Rapporteurs and Task Force

For each country pre-session, the Committee appoints either **2 country rapporteurs** or **1 task force made of 3-4 members**.

Appointments are made at the end of the previous session, about 3 months before the country pre-session. Both the country rapporteurs and the task force have the mandate to lead the dialogues with children's rights defenders during the country pre-session and the State reviewed during the country session.

When a task force leads a country pre-session, the Committee Chair may limit the number of questions raised by other members during the round of questions to children's rights defenders.

 Child Rights Connect will let you know who the country rapporteurs/task force members are as soon as we get the information.

II. How to effectively engage in the pre-session?

Given the format and length of the pre-session, it is essential for participants to each country pre-session to coordinate beforehand to ensure effective time management and avoid duplication of issues and answers.

Advantages of coordination:

- ✓ All participants know each other before the country pre-session;
- ✓ All oral statements are shared beforehand so that participants know what issues others plan to raise and the areas of expertise of each participant;
- ✓ Introductory oral statements of participants are not repetitive and are kept to their shortest, which allows more time for questions and answers with the Committee;
- ✓ Participants know which topics or themes they will cover and are able to prepare in advance;
- ✓ Participants manage to answer most, if not all, of the questions asked by the Committee despite the short time available for preparation during the meeting;
- ✓ This coordination for the country pre-session will serve further coordination at the time of the session and follow-up to the Committee's recommendations.

III. How to Prepare your Written Statement?

Country pre-sessions start with short introductory oral statements from NGOs, NHRIs, UNICEF and other non-governmental bodies. While there is no specific format for these introductory remarks, the following points provide some guidance on how to present information in an effective way.

Content of the statement

- ✓ The purpose of the statements is to highlight new developments and provide updates since the submission of your report.
- ✓ Focus on a limited number of key priorities (issues raised, updates and recommendations) to help the Committee understand better the main challenges in your country.
- ✓ If there are relevant general issues that affect the implementation of the Convention (CRC) and/or its Optional Protocols (OPs), please mention them briefly.
- ✓ You can give your opinion on the State party report.
- ✓ You can refer to the content of your report but there is no need to summarize your report and go into too much detail since the Committee will have already studied your report.

! Please note that the Committee members will have been provided with electronic and hard copies of your reports: you do not need to bring hard copies of your report.

- ✓ You can conclude your statement with a summary of key recommendations and issues that you want the Committee to raise with the State party during the country session.
- ✓ Your written statement should not provide information about the work of your organisation. If you nevertheless wish to share such information, you can distribute it in writing to the members of the Committee.
- ✓ NGOs/coalitions can either prepare a joint statement, or separate ones.

- ✓ Statements should be made in **English, French** or/and **Spanish, the working languages of the Committee.**



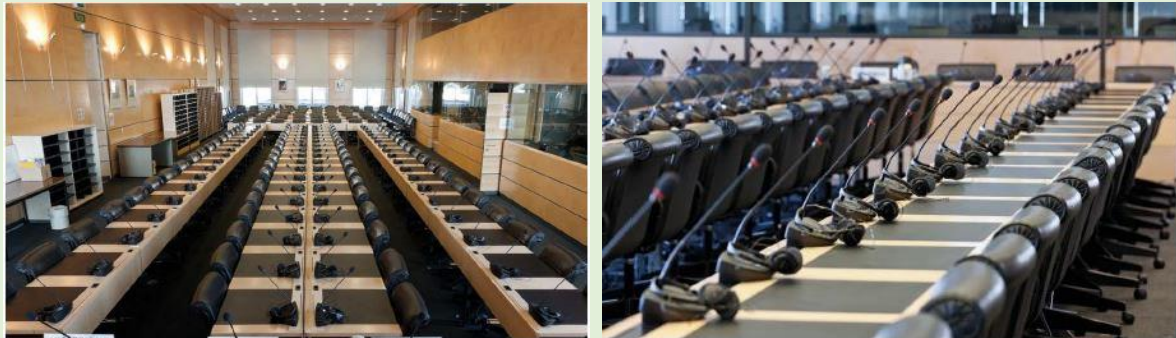
Child Rights Connect is happy to comment on your draft presentations.

! You can check the spoken languages of the members of the country Task Force, in order to decide which are the most relevant languages of your statement.

The pre-session room

The pre-session usually takes place in a meeting room of the OHCHR headquarters, in the historic Palais Wilson building (see picture below).

The Chair of the Committee leads the meeting from the podium and the CRC Secretary will sit next to him or her. The Committee members sit around the tables on the sides. The NGO representatives sit at the tables in the middle and the children staying for the pre-session meeting may occupy the same seats, or sit at the rows of tables at the back of the room.



Source: UNOG

IV. How to Prepare for the Interactive Dialogue with the Committee?

After the round of questions by the Committee, you will be given a **10 to 15-minute break** to decide how to answer the questions.

In order to make the most efficient use of this time, we recommend you to:

- ✓ Note down all the questions on a paper or laptop;
- ✓ Coordinate in advance with your colleagues and/or other participants of the pre-session (*i.e.* other NGOs, UNICEF, NHRIs) to avoid overlaps and repetitions;
- ✓ Consider asking one person to be in charge of time management, especially if you are a large group;
- ✓ Group the questions into subjects and prioritise the subjects by their importance.
- ✓ Prioritise the questions you want to give an answer to. Given the time available, it may not be possible to give an answer to all questions posed by the Committee: it is up to you to decide which questions you think need to be answered during the meeting and which could be answered in writing afterwards.

Be concise and focused when you answer keeping in mind that the longer you spend on answering one question, the less questions you can answer, but also that it may be better to answer some key questions comprehensively than all questions superficially.

! It is important that you **keep to the essentials, be as brief and organised as possible.**

- ✓ **Please note** that questions about the CRC will be asked first, followed by those on OPAC and/or OPSC, when relevant.

If you have statistics, reports or information, which do not come from UN reports (*i.e.* UNICEF, ILO and WHO statistics), that support the issues that you will emphasise during the meeting, please share them with the Committee Secretariat and ask that they are distributed to the Committee members at the beginning of the meeting. Any information about publications or campaigns prepared by NGOs, children and NHRIs to disseminate the CRC would also be useful as the Committee often encourages States parties to support such civil society campaigns.

Annex – Background Information on Committee Members

To better prepare for the pre-session, here is a general overview of who the Committee members are and what their background is. This will help you have an idea of the main areas of expertise of Committee members and therefore what to expect from them in terms of questions.

The Committee is made of 18 independent experts on child rights from 18 different countries. It is important to keep in mind that **Committee members are elected in their personal capacity** for a four-year term and can be re-elected.²

The current composition of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, as well as information on the members' background, can be found here:

<http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRC/Pages/Membership.aspx>

! All Committee's sessions with States are public and webcasted. If you want to get a sense of the questions asked by the Committee, check the [UN Web TV archives](#).

All Committee members are experts in different subjects related to the rights of children, who tend to ask questions in line with their expertise and interests.



Child Rights Connect mapped **the questions that Committee members most frequently ask States and the thematic areas they usually cover** during country sessions.

We hope that this information can help you to:

- Better understand the Committee's perspective and areas of interest;
- Better prepare for the country pre-session;
- Provide the Committee with more relevant and targeted inputs (recommendations, suggested questions for the State).

! **Please note** that the information included in this section is not meant to be comprehensive and has been drafted solely by Child Rights Connect for informative purposes.

² For more information on Committee members' nomination and election, check our fact sheet at : http://www.childrightsconnect.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/09/Fact-sheet-CRC-Elections_ChildRightsConnect_-English.pdf

Thematic issues frequently raised by Committee members

Committee Members	Issues
<i>Suzanne AHO ASSOUMA</i>	Birth registration, child trafficking, adoption, health, sexual education, early pregnancy, social welfare, child marriage
<i>Hynd AYOUBI IDRISSE</i>	Budget, laws and policies, data collection, cooperation with civil society, best interest of the child, corporal punishment, juvenile justice, domestic violence
<i>Rinchen CHOPHEL</i>	Violence against children, child marriage, corporal punishment, child labour, child sexual abuse, exploitation and trafficking, law enforcement procedures, public health
<i>Bragi GUDBRANDSSON</i>	Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse, children with disabilities, child participation, alternative care
<i>Philip JAFFE</i>	Respect for the views of the child, child parliament, access to information, corporal punishment, mental health
<i>Sopio KILADZE</i>	Legal frameworks for the advancements of children's rights, social rights of the child
<i>Gehad MADI</i>	Juvenile justice, children involved in armed conflict, discrimination, OPSC and OPAC
<i>Faith MARSHALL-HARRIS</i>	Laws and policies, family law, nationality, birth registration, child labour, juvenile justice
<i>Benyam Dawit MEZMUR</i>	Child victims of abuse, quality of education, definition of the child, general principles, civil rights and freedoms, budget
<i>Clarence NELSON</i>	Juvenile justice, helplines, vulnerable groups of children, child labour, children in street situations, environmental health
<i>Mikiko OTANI</i>	Civil rights and freedom, birth registration, right to privacy, access to information, freedom of religion, child participation, environmental health, child human rights defenders
<i>Luis Ernesto PEDERNERA REYNA</i>	Laws and legislations, freedom of association, ratification, independent monitoring complaint, right to privacy, cruel and inhuman treatment, sexual exploitation, cooperation with civil society
<i>Zara RATOU</i>	Social affairs, child protection
<i>José Ángel RODRÍGUEZ REYES</i>	Discrimination, right to express their views, alternative care, adoption, health, intersex children
<i>Aissatou ALASSANE SIDIKOU</i>	Traditional practices, education, social welfare and child protection
<i>Ann Marie SKELTON</i>	Childcare and protection act, laws and policies, budget, OPIC, access to justice, juvenile justice, education, alternative care
<i>Velina TODOROVA</i>	Violence against children, cruel inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, laws and policies, family law
<i>Benoît VAN KEIRSBILCK</i>	Migrant and refugee children, access to justice, juvenile justice, child protection, socio-legal defence of children, children deprived of liberty

Examples of questions asked by Committee members under each cluster

A. General Measures of Implementation

Independent monitoring

Gehad Madi

With regard to independent monitoring of children's rights violations, could you please inform the Committee about the number of complaints that have been filed?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What has been planned to make sure that children have confidential access to the monitoring mechanisms?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How many complaints does the national human rights institution has received in terms of violations of the rights of the child? And how have you process these complaints, in particular, since the creation through the special unit dedicated to the rights of women, children and people with disabilities?

Allocation of resources

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

We acknowledge there have been financial challenges. What is the budget cut for education?

Ann Marie Skelton

Was this new Childcare and Protection Act costed before it was brought into operation? Is there a specific budget to run this new law?

Ratification of the Optional Protocols

Velina Todorova

What are the discrepancies between the law and the provisions of the Optional Protocol on a Communications Procedure (OPIC) that would pose a problem and prevent you from ratifying this protocol?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Do you have a timeframe for the updating of the Human Rights Treaties whose ratification that is still pending?

Implementation of the CRC in national legislation

José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

Do you have any national or local body in charge of coordinating children's rights related public policies? How frequently do these bodies meet?

Comprehensive policy and strategy

Sophie Kiladze

Child rights impact assessment procedures: what is the status of the elaboration process?

Ombudsperson

Clarence Nelson

Does the Ombudsperson have an investigation team that deal with complaints? Does it have a legal department dealing with other issues?

Data collection

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

Data collection is an area that needs to be strengthened, especially in relation to indigenous population, orphans, etc. What measures are being taken by the State?

José Angel Rodriguez Reyes

Do you have a mechanism for disaggregating data by age/gender/type of disability/geographical location and economic status?

Cooperation with Civil Society

Suzanne Aho Assouma

How does the State work with NGOs? Is there any subvention for NGOs that endeavours to work for child protection?

B. Definition of the child

Definition of the child

Gehad Madi

The age of majority is 18, but those children who get married before reaching the age of 18 are already legally adults. How is that possible?

Luis Pedernera

Marriage under 18 is not totally prohibited, there are some exceptions possible: does the State plan to introduce a ban on marriage under 18?

C. General Principles

Non-discrimination

Zara Ratou

According to the information gathered, there is discrimination against certain groups of children. Can this be explained? What common approaches are being taken to end such discrimination?

Aïssatou Alassane Sidikou

According to a study, 43% of children have experienced discriminatory treatment. The government maintains that the law provides sufficient protection against discrimination. What measures are being taken to publicize this law? What strategy or mechanism does the government intend to put in place to combat discrimination?

Best interest of the child

Gehad Madi

The Committee congratulates your country for the implementation of the principle of the Best interest of the child in the Children Act. Yet, the principle does not have legal status as it is absent from the education act and decision-making in immigration policies. Are you planning to change this?

Ann Marie Skelton

Do judges and magistrates consider the best interest of the child? If so, how?

Respect for the views of the child

Faith Marshall-Harris

How are children from vulnerable groups included and their views represented?

Mikiko Otani

Despite the recognition of the right of the child to be heard, it is rarely in practice. What is the current practice? Are there any guidelines developed? What are the views of the government to the need of special measures to ensure inclusive participation?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What steps are being taken to ensure child participation? What is being done to address cultural resistance?

D. Civil Rights and Freedoms

Nationality

Suzanne Aho Assouma

Registration of travellers and Roma children: are there facilities to declare the birth of those children?

Bragi Gudbrandsson

Do you envisage amending certain provisions so that the child does not find himself in a situation of statelessness?

Birth registration

Suzanne Aho Assouma

What is the deadline to obtain a birth certificate? What is the rate of non-declaration? And what is the rate of children with anonymous parents?

The registration system seems to be too centralized; how do people from rural areas register? Is the registration free? If not, is there any scope to remove the fee?

Is there any programme to raise awareness on the importance of birth registration?

Mikiko Otani

Is the requirement of the forensic medical examination still a challenge to the children born in the home and in the settings other than hospitals? Have you taken awareness raising measures and a training for hospital staff, administrators and other health professionals through the country on this new procedure? Do you have a data collection system to identify the number of non-registration of births and monitor if this new procedure has positive impacts of reducing non-registration?

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Would the State Party remove the fees for birth registration?

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How are children involved in these human rights associations in schools? How are they created? Do they become members through elections? What powers do they have? What activities do they carry out? What resources do they receive? Do children know about these human rights associations?

José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes

Can children participate in public life? Can young people associate freely? Do you have any Child parliament for instance?

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

What is the possibility for children to be involved in structures of a political nature?

Freedom of religion

Mikiko Otani

Can you confirm if the decision of students being allowed to not attend religion class, as part of the curriculum, if a written request is made by their parents, is actually issued? Can you inform the Committee if any legislative measures to amend a national education law which was found unconstitutional or any other measures in response to this constitutional core decision has been made or planned? If this provision is still effective, how the right with a child to opt out attending religious class is actually implemented? How are the students and their parents informed of the option not to attend religion class? How many students are choosing not to attend? How are those students who don't attend religion class treated in the school?

Child parliament

Philip Jaffé

How does the government ensure that all children are represented in the child parliament?

Aissatou Alassane Sidikou

How is the government guaranteeing a democratic process to ensure that children from all backgrounds can be part of youth parliaments?

Protection of privacy and access to appropriate information

Mikiko Otani

How do you ensure that the children are effectively protected from broadcasting their images or statement which should not be? Are there any safeguard mechanisms to prevent such broadcastings? Are there any monitoring body for the internet services?

Velina Todorova

Media initiatives to discuss personal stories of victims of sexual abuses: are there similar intentions as far as corporal punishment is concerned, somehow to be covered by this good media practice?

Philip Jaffé

Is the transmission of information culturally available to children?

E. Violence against children

Corporal punishment

Clarence Nelson

Is corporal punishment still legal as response to certain religious offenses?

Philip Jaffé

What kinds of specific strategies do you have to combat the use of corporal punishment?

Faith Marshall-Harris

Is corporal punishment banned in schools or in all settings? If not, when do you plan to do so?

Velina Todorova

Are there plans of the governments to address corporal punishment in the family? Any plans to hold some awareness campaigns or some training for parents?

Abuse and neglect

Rinchen Chopel

The law allows for the use of “proportionate educational measures”. When the measure is disproportionate, it can be dealt with in the criminal justice system. What is the difference for you between a proportionate and disproportionate measure?

Harmful practices

José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes

Intersex children: what measures are taken to avoid non-urgent or unnecessary genital operations?

Sexual exploitation and sexual abuse

Gehad Madi

Sometimes sexual exploitation cases end up in suicide. How many of those cases are taken to courts?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

How many boys and girls are affected by sexual exploitation and what concrete measures have been taken to care for the children who have been sexual exploited and abused?

Suzanne Aho Assouma

What programmes are available for children victim of sexual violence and abuse in order for them to recover both physically and psychologically?

Bragi Gudbrandsson

How are sexual abuse cases managed? Is there mandatory reporting?
Are there any help lines dedicated to children?

Violence against children

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Could you please clarify if your State allows that someone who has violated a child's human right is not necessarily punished if violence was performed in good faith?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Are prison guards trained? Are children informed of the fact that torture is a crime under law? Do protection measures make it possible for people to report cases of torture, cruel and degrading treatments?

Helpline

Clarence Nelson

Do you have helplines available to children 24/7 and nationwide? Are they supported by the State or privately funded?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

How do you guarantee that children have access to the toll-free number for complaints?

Mikiko Otani

Is there child-friendly information on the complaint system created and disseminated? Would you provide us with the information on the number of the complains in relation to the children?

Velina Todorova

How is the safety of child that makes use of helplines and independents complaint mechanisms ensured? What are the consequences for the child, for example is there any follow-up of the complaints or not?

Child trafficking

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

International adoption: what follow-up is given to the recommendations? What about enforced disappearances? What is being done to prevent international adoptions from covering up child trafficking?

F. Family environment and alternative care

Assistance to families

José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes

Family support programmes and services are very important to reduce poverty. But what is the scope of such programmes? How many families do these programmes involve?

Alternative care

Ann Marie Skelton

What is your vision for the care of children in a proper foster care system? Why do you have children so young in institutions?

Philip Jaffé

What is the estimated number of children separated from their parents?

Children of incarcerated parents

Faith Marshall-Harris

What about visitation rights for children with incarcerated parents?

Early childhood development

Suzanne Aho Assouma

In your report, you talk about maintenance payments and the fact that if the father cannot pay, the mother has to provide financial support to the child. What happens if none of the parents can afford?

José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

What policies are being applied to improve child nutrition? And to cut problems of stunting growth of children?

G. Basic Health and Welfare

Health and health services

José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

Do you envisage in these investments the installation of clinics in rural areas and the improvement of access to medicines?

Faith Marshall-Harris

Why do children accumulate huge debts for health care?

Adolescent health

Clarence Nelson

Regarding substance abuse, do you have any treatment shelters for drug users? Are there in all areas?

José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

I have the impression that it is stigmatizing to talk about mental health. What measures are you taking to combat the stigmatization of adolescents with mental disorders?

Reproductive health

Suzanne Aho Assouma

Criminalisation of abortion unless it is a rape: don't you think this will encourage clandestine abortions? Should you not decriminalise abortions?

Children with disabilities

Suzanne Aho Assouma

What is the percentage of children with disabilities and what is the budget for these children? Are there any programs for early detection of disability?

José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes

Are there measures taken to prevent discriminations against disabled children?

Environmental health

Velina Todorova

How the current climate mitigation policy, including in relation to domestic heating and transportation sector, is compatible with your obligation to protect the rights of children, in particular, the rights to health, food, and an adequate standard of living?

Sophie Kiladze

Climate change: how issues such as ocean acidification and the impact on the marine ecosystem are addressed? How are children involved in such plans?

H. Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities

Inclusive education

Velina Todorova

Are you planning to implement policies to ensure quality inclusive education for children with disabilities?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

What measures are envisaged to upgrade schools for inclusive education?

Access to education

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

Can children in an irregular situation in the country have access to education? What has been done for children and their access to education during the Covid-19 pandemic?

Benyam Dawit Mezmur

Are there disparities in access to education between rural areas and cities? What are the measures and what are the positive impacts in this regard?

Ann Marie Skelton

Do you have a monitoring group on home schooling?

Bullying

José Ángel Rodríguez Reyes

What measures are you taking to avoid bullying in schools? Do you undertake periodic inspections / monitoring?

Ann Marie Skelton

Could the delegation address allegations of bullying, and cyber-bullying in schools?

Human and children's rights education

Clarence Nelson

Is the Convention part of the school curricula?

School drop-out

Benoît Van Keirsbilck

What are the figures for school drop-out?

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

With regard to socially and economically disadvantaged classes, can you tell us the percentage of economically disadvantaged children who are in a normal curriculum?

Leisure

Ann Marie Skelton

To what extent was child participation ensured in urban planning processes, and making sure children had a place to play?

I. Special Protection Measures

Vulnerable groups of children

Ann Marie Skelton

What efforts are being made to ensure the protection of children in refugee camps? What was the Government's approach to the return of those children?

Child labor

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Child labor is a serious problem in the State party. Where are you in the fight against child labor? Where are you in the revision of the labor code?

Children in conflict with the law: age of criminal responsibility

Hynd Ayoubi Idrissi

Are you willing to reduce the age of criminal responsibility?

Gehad Madi

The Committee is concerned that in your legislation the minimum age of criminal responsibility is 8, which is way too low. Are you planning to modify it to comply with the standards of the Convention?

Juvenile justice

Clarence Nelson

Are accused children allowed to legal representation? What if they cannot afford it?
Does the new juvenile justice legislation abolish corporal punishment or lifelong imprisonment?

Luis Ernesto Pedernera Reyna

Is the national human rights institution allowed to visit places of detention? Why do they need to ask permissions and cannot make unannounced visits?

Children in street situations

José Angel Rodríguez Reyes

Do you have any policies to prevent children in street situations to be exploited?

Refugee children

Zara Ratou

What measures are taken to ensure the well-being and development of refugee children?

Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

Philip Jaffé

Are you considering combating child prostitution?

Are there any specialised units in the police to address cases of sexual violence against children?