



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Suriname*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined third and fourth periodic reports of Suriname (CRC/C/SUR/3-4) at its 2146th and 2147th meetings (see CRC/C/SR.2146 and 2147), held on 21 and 22 September 2016, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2160th meeting, held on 30 September 2016.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined third and fourth periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/SUR/Q/3-4/Add.1), which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the high-level, multisectoral delegation of the State party.

II. Follow-up measures taken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State party in various areas, including the ratification of or accession to international instruments, in particular the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, in 2012.

4. The Committee also welcomes the adoption of legislative measures to strengthen the protection of the human rights of children, in particular regarding nationality, care institutions, sexual abuse and exploitation, domestic violence, and judicial and administrative procedures.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

5. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights under the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the

* Adopted by the Committee at its seventy-third session (13-30 September 2016).



recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. However, the Committee draws the State party's attention to the following recommendations, in particular, that require the adoption of urgent measures: sexual exploitation and abuse (para. 21); children with disabilities (para. 27); adolescent health (para. 31); education (para. 35); economic exploitation (para. 38); and sale, trafficking and abduction (para. 40).

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

6. Considering the slow rate of adoption and implementation of various child-related legislative reforms and measures necessary to fully harmonize domestic legislation with the provisions of the Convention, the Committee encourages the State party to expeditiously take steps to develop a comprehensive legislative framework that is fully compatible with the principles and provisions of the Convention to ensure the effective implementation of child-related laws at the national, provincial and municipal levels.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

7. The Committee requests the State party to provide in its next periodic report information on the results of the third National Action Plan for Children, including information on specific time-bound and measurable goals and targets to effectively monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of children's rights throughout the State party, as well as information relating to human, technical and financial resources.

Coordination

8. Noting that the Child Rights Bureau and the Presidential Committee for Child and Youth Policy both play a role in the monitoring and coordination among ministries of the implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party establish one coordinating body with a clear mandate and sufficient authority to coordinate all the activities relating to the implementation of the Convention at cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels. The State party should ensure that the coordinating body is provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for its effective operation.

Allocation of resources

9. While noting the increase in social protection benefits and enhanced cooperation with international development partners for financing programmes, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, recommends that the State party:

(a) Establish a budgeting process, which includes a child-rights perspective and specifies clear allocations for children in the relevant sectors and agencies, including specific indicators and a tracking system;

(b) Define strategic budgetary lines for all children, including those who may require affirmative social measures, and take measures to ensure that those budgetary lines are protected in the current economic downturn, as well as in situations of natural disasters and emergencies, especially with respect to health and education;

(c) Establish mechanisms to monitor and evaluate the efficacy, adequacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated to the implementation of the Convention;

(d) Take measures to combat all forms of corruption that negatively impact the economic development of the State party, including the adoption of the draft law on anti-corruption.

Data collection

10. While noting the increased computerization of databases and the establishment of reporting systems, including the information database, SurInfo, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, recommends that the State party:

(a) Expeditiously improve its data collection system to ensure that the data cover all areas of the Convention and are disaggregated, including by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin, migration status and socioeconomic background;

(b) Strengthen reporting compliance by all relevant institutions and ensure that the Child Indicators Monitoring System and Children in Need of Special Protection system are fully implemented;

(c) Ensure that the data and indicators are shared among the ministries concerned and used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and programmes;

(d) Take into account the conceptual and methodological framework set out in the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) publication, *Human rights indicators: a guide to measurement and implementation*, when defining, collecting and disseminating information;

(e) Strengthen its technical cooperation with, among others, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF).

Independent monitoring

11. Noting that the State party is planning to establish a national human rights institution, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 2 (2002) on the role of independent national human rights institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, recommends that the State party:

(a) Take measures to expeditiously establish an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights in full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles), including the Child Ombuds Bureau to monitor children's rights and to receive, investigate and address complaints by children, in a child-sensitive manner;

(b) Seek technical assistance from, among others, OHCHR, UNICEF and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP).

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

12. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen efforts to ensure systematic, mandatory and ongoing training on children's rights, including as part of school curricula, as well as awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, among children, families and the general public. It also recommends that training be provided to professionals working with and/or for children, in particular

teachers, early childhood workers, social workers, health service personnel, the legal profession and law enforcement officials, in particular in the interior areas of the State party. It also recommends that the Youth Parliament be provided with the mandate necessary to carry out its activities and that the Child Rights Bureau be provided with the support and resources necessary to step up efforts in this regard.

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

13. While noting that the age of marriage is 15 years for girls and 17 years for boys, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (see CRC/C/SUR/CO/2, para. 25) and urges the State party to adopt the draft amendment to the Marriage Act, which sets the minimum age for marriage at 18 years for both girls and boys.

C. General principles (arts. 2, 3, 6 and 12)

Non-discrimination

14. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children in the State party enjoy equal rights under the Convention, both in law and in practice, without discrimination, and intensify efforts to ensure the effective elimination of any form of discrimination against children from Amerindian and Maroon communities, children of Haitian migrants, children living with HIV/AIDS, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and other groups of children in marginalized situations through, among other things, awareness-raising campaigns and education, especially at the community level and in schools.

Best interests of the child

15. In the light of its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that this right is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislation, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions — for example, the placement of children in alternative care and adoption —, and in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children, including children with disabilities. In this regard, the Committee encourages the State party to develop procedures and criteria to provide guidance to all relevant persons in authority for determining the best interests of the child in every area and for giving those interests due weight as a primary consideration.

Respect for the views of the child

16. While noting the adoption of the bill on Hearing Children in Judicial Proceedings, in 2008, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, recommends that the State party:

(a) Take measures to ensure the effective implementation of legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal and administrative proceedings, including by establishing systems and/or procedures for social workers and courts to comply with the principle;

(b) Conduct research to identify issues that are most important to children, including by consulting children to hear their views on those issues and to find out how well their voices are heard in family decisions affecting their lives and the

channels through which they currently and potentially have the most influence on national and local decision-making;

(c) Develop toolkits for public consultation on national policy development so as to standardize such consultation at a high level of inclusiveness and participation, including consulting with children on issues that affect them;

(d) Conduct programmes and awareness-raising activities to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children in the family, community and schools, including in student council bodies, with particular attention to girls and children in vulnerable situations;

(e) Promote inclusive participation in the Youth Parliament by ensuring that eligible children from Amerindian and Maroon communities, children in situations of poverty, children with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children are able to fully participate, as well as provide the Youth Parliament with adequate resources.

D. Civil rights and freedoms (arts. 7, 8, and 13-17)

Birth registration and nationality

17. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen efforts to ensure that all children born in its territory are registered and provided with official birth certificates, including by streamlining birth registration in the interior areas of the State party through, among others, local registry offices, mobile units and outreach programmes. The Committee also recommends that the State party carry out awareness-raising programmes and campaigns on the importance of registering the birth of all children, including children born to migrant workers in both regular and irregular situations. The Committee further recommends that the State party consider acceding to the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

E. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 37 (a) and 39)

Corporal punishment

18. While noting the progress in prohibiting corporal punishment in schools through a ministerial decree, the Committee, in line with its general comments No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment and No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence, reiterates its previous recommendations (see CRC/C/SUR/CO/2, para. 37) that the State party:

(a) Amend its legislation to explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including in the family, day care and afterschool care facilities, schools, alternative care settings, residential care and penal institutions;

(b) Strengthen and expand its efforts, through awareness-raising programmes and campaigns, to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline as an alternative to corporal punishment; as well as expand parenting education programmes, in particular, in the interior areas of the State party, and training for principals, teachers and other professionals working with and for children.

Abuse and neglect

19. Noting the increased number of children subject to abuse and neglect, the Committee recommends, in the light of its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and taking note of target 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children, that the State party:

(a) Further strengthen education and awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children in order to formulate a comprehensive strategy for preventing and combating child abuse in all settings, in particular among Amerindian and Maroon communities;

(b) Establish a national database on all cases of domestic violence against children and carry out a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of such violence;

(c) Further strengthen interministerial cooperation, including the Steering Committee on Domestic Violence, to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children, and ensure the allocation of adequate human, technical and financial resources to enable it to implement long-term programmes for addressing the root causes of violence and abuse;

(d) Take all appropriate measures to ensure that reporting child abuse and neglect is mandatory for all persons working with and for children, as previously recommended (see CRC/C/SUR/CO/2, para. 47), and expand the pilot project with UNICEF to provide an accessible mechanism for children and others to report cases of abuse and neglect in all areas of the State party to ensure the necessary protection for victims and to monitor, prevent and take action on behalf of children at risk;

(e) Implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Independent Expert for the United Nations Study on violence against children (A/61/299), taking into consideration the recommendations of the Regional Consultations for the Caribbean, as previously recommended (see CRC/C/SUR/CO/2, para. 48 (a));

(f) Take measures to ensure that the child telephone hotline is available 24/7 and that it is adequately staffed and resourced, increase the number of shelters for child victims of abuse and neglect, and facilitate the physical and psychological rehabilitation of the child victims;

(g) Ensure that all professionals and staff working with and for children are provided with the necessary training and are subject to background checks, and provide systematic training for judges, prosecutors, police and other law enforcement officials on how to prevent and monitor domestic violence and receive and investigate complaints about such violence in a child- and gender-sensitive manner and prosecute perpetrators;

(h) Encourage community-based programmes aimed at preventing and addressing domestic violence, child abuse and neglect, including by involving former victims, volunteers and community members, and providing training support to them.

Sexual exploitation and abuse

20. The Committee is seriously concerned about the high rate of child sexual abuse and exploitation in the State party, including incest, especially against girls. It is also concerned about the lack of shelters for child victims and information on investigations of cases of

sexual abuse, including the outcomes of such trials and redress and compensation offered to victims.

21. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Establish mechanisms, procedures and guidelines to ensure mandatory reporting of child sexual abuse and exploitation, ensure that acts of sexual abuse and exploitation are effectively investigated and that perpetrators are brought to justice, with focus on the interior areas of the State party;**

(b) **Conduct awareness-raising and education programmes, including among children, to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, including incest, and ensure accessible, confidential, child-friendly and effective reporting channels for such violations;**

(c) **Ensure that all professionals and staff working with and for children are provided with the necessary training and supervision and are subject to background checks; continue to provide systematic training for social workers, judges and other law enforcement officials on how to receive, monitor and investigate complaints in a child- and gender-sensitive manner that respects the privacy of the victim and prosecute perpetrators; and ensure that child protection agencies are adequately staffed and funded;**

(d) **Upgrade the existing shelter and open additional shelters for child victims of sexual abuse and ensure that they are adequately staffed with appropriately trained personnel and resourced to effectively provide comprehensive services, including strengthening the human and financial resources of the Child Foundation;**

(e) **Ensure the development of programmes and policies for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims.**

Harmful practices

22. **The Committee recommends that the State party provide comprehensive awareness-raising programmes on the negative consequences of child marriage on children, in particular girls, targeting in particular parents, teachers and community leaders.**

F. Family environment and alternative care (arts. 5, 9-11, 18 (1) and (2), 20, 21, 25 and 27 (4))

Family environment

23. **The Committee recommends that the State party further strengthen its efforts to render appropriate assistance to parents and legal guardians in the performance of their child-rearing responsibilities, in particular those in situations of poverty and especially female-headed households and families caring for children suffering from HIV/AIDS, including by strengthening the system of family benefits and child allowances, and other services, including affordable day care. The Committee also recommends that the State party expand family counselling, parenting education programmes and other programmes, including the Family Coaching Project.**

Children deprived of a family environment

24. **While welcoming the approval of the bill on Care Institutions, in 2014, and the establishment of the monitoring system for Children in Need of Special Protection, the Committee draws the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative**

Care of Children (see General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex) and emphasizes that financial and material poverty should never be the sole justification for removing a child from parental care, placing a child into alternative care or preventing a child's social reintegration. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Support and facilitate family-based care for children, including children in single-parent families, wherever possible, and strengthen the foster care system for children who cannot stay with their families, including by adopting and implementing the Foster Child bill, with a view to reducing the institutionalization of children;

(b) Ensure adequate safeguards and clear criteria, based on the needs and best interests of the child, for determining whether a child should be placed in alternative care;

(c) Further strengthen the Bureau for Care Institutions established under the Ministry of Social Affairs to ensure adequate government oversight, including the periodic review of the placement of children in foster care and institutions, monitor the quality of care therein, in particular by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children, and fully implement the Framework Act for alternative care settings;

(d) Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to alternative care centres and relevant child protection services, as well as adopt and implement the bill on Protection of Children in Residential and Day Care Institutions and the bill on Care Institutions to ensure that proper certification requirements and standards of care are respected by all such care facilities;

(e) Ensure that staff dealing with children in alternative care are provided with ongoing training, including by the development and dissemination of relevant tools relating to child abuse prevention in residential care facilities.

Adoption

25. The Committee recommends that, as part of the ongoing revision of the Civil Code, the State party ensure that the provisions on adoption are in line with the Convention. It also recommends that the State party consider ratifying the Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, as previously recommended (see CRC/C/SUR/CO/2, para. 45).

G. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1-3) and 33)

Children with disabilities

26. The Committee is seriously concerned that:

(a) Insufficient support is given to caregivers of children with disabilities;

(b) Children with disabilities continue to face discrimination and are not effectively integrated into all areas of social life, including the education system, in particular in the interior areas of the State party;

(c) Inadequate care is provided in residential care institutions, and abuse and violence, including sexual abuse, by service providers and family members persist;

(d) Insufficient training is provided to teachers who work with children with disabilities;

(e) Facilities for children with disabilities, including schools, sports and leisure facilities and residential facilities, are insufficient and inadequate.

27. In the light of its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and to devise a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities. It specifically recommends that the State party:

(a) Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and strengthen efforts to implement the requisite legislative framework and policies for the effective protection of the rights of children with disabilities, including adoption of the draft law on special education and the draft law on primary education, as well as the draft policy on persons with disabilities.

(b) Strengthen support to caregivers of children with disabilities, including by increasing social benefits and other services;

(c) Ensure that schools provide inclusive education and that both schools and care facilities are accessible and adequately staffed and funded, as well as ensure that training is provided for professionals working with children with disabilities, such as teachers, social workers, and health, medical, therapeutic and care personnel;

(d) Periodically review the placement of children with disabilities in alternative care settings and monitor the quality of care therein, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children;

(e) Take all the measures necessary to ensure that children with disabilities are fully integrated into all areas of social life, including schools, and sports and leisure activities, and that facilities and other public areas are accessible for children with disabilities;

(f) Conduct awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities.

Health and health services

28. In the light of its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and taking note of targets 3.1, 3.2 and 3.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue to strengthen efforts to ensure adequate provision of prenatal and postnatal care and address the high rates of mortality of infants and children aged 5 years and younger, and the still high maternal mortality rates;

(b) Introduce targeted interventions to prevent the undernourishment of children, continue to implement the Infant and Young Child Feeding Plus communication strategy and take other measures to improve the practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months after birth, including through legislation, by extending maternity leave for both public and private sectors, awareness-raising measures, including campaigns, providing information and training to relevant officials, in particular staff working in maternity units, and parents, with particular focus on minority communities, and work with UNICEF to establish baby-friendly hospitals;

(c) Strengthen the implementation of the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, the Prevention of Mother-to-Child Transmission programme and the

Ministry of Health special prevention programmes for children and youth (aged 10 to 19 years), including the availability of rapid testing in the interior areas of the State party, and ensure access to antiretroviral treatment;

(d) **Develop policies and programmes to strengthen the capacity of families and the community to provide care and support for children living with HIV/AIDS, and continue activities aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination relating to HIV/AIDS, including awareness-raising on human rights within the context of HIV/AIDS;**

(e) **Combat obesity among children and intensify measures to raise awareness about healthy nutrition among parents, children and the public, in general, and promote healthy eating habits, particularly among young children and adolescents;**

(f) **Ensure access to improved water sources and sanitation facilities, especially for people living in the interior areas, including by expanding the Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) programme throughout the interior areas to Amerindian and Maroon communities, in cooperation with UNICEF.**

Mental health

29. **The Committee, with reference to its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention, recommends that the State party strengthen both the quality and availability of mental health services and programmes for children and, in particular:**

(a) **Take measures to increase the number of specialists on children's mental health and ensure adequate psychosocial care and rehabilitation facilities and outpatient services specifically for children;**

(b) **Take urgent action to strengthen efforts to prevent suicide among children and adolescents, including by increasing available psychological counselling services and social workers in schools and communities;**

(c) **Ensure that all professionals working with children are trained to identify and address early suicidal tendencies and mental health problems;**

(d) **Undertake a study and develop a national strategy to address the issue of suicide, including helplines, in cooperation with civil society and taking into account the views of children.**

Adolescent health

30. **The Committee welcomes the various initiatives to promote adolescent health and life skills, including the Basic Life Skills programme, and measures to reduce HIV prevalence. The Committee is, however, seriously concerned about:**

(a) **The high teenage pregnancy rate, the widespread prevalence of sexually transmitted infections among adolescents and the high rate of HIV infections, especially among adolescent girls;**

(b) **Poor access to sexual and reproductive health care information and services;**

(c) **The fact that no comprehensive study to assess the nature and scope of adolescent health problems has been undertaken by the State party, including with respect to HIV/AIDS;**

(d) **The high rates of alcohol, drug and tobacco use.**

31. In the light of its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention and taking note of targets 3.5 and 3.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Undertake a comprehensive study to assess the nature and extent of adolescent health problems, with the full participation of adolescents, as a basis for future health policies and programmes, including a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents;

(b) Ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted towards adolescent girls and boys, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections, including HIV, and expand the Basic Life Skills programme to all schools, in particular those in the interior areas, and integrate it into the school curricula at both the primary and secondary levels;

(c) Undertake legal and policy reform to increase the availability of sexual and reproductive health information and services, including confidential and youth-friendly health services throughout the country, and ensure the availability of contraceptive services to adolescents, without the need for parental consent, and free health care for pregnant adolescents up to the age of 18 years, through the national health insurance system;

(d) Undertake awareness-raising and education programmes and campaigns on sexual and reproductive health issues for all segments of society, in particular, poor households in the interior areas, in particular Amerindian and Maroon communities;

(e) Continue to take measures to address alcohol, drug and tobacco use among adolescents, including through awareness-raising programmes and campaigns, strengthen the regulation of alcohol and tobacco sales and the enforcement of such laws among vendors who sell such products to children, and expand programmes on alcohol and drug prevention, intervention and rehabilitation for adolescents.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

32. The Committee recommends that the State party develop strategies, including awareness-raising, to reduce the vulnerabilities and risks for children owing to climate change, in particular children in situations of poverty, including Amerindian and Maroon communities. The Committee also recommends that the State party mainstream child-specific and child-sensitive risk and vulnerability reduction strategies into its national plan on climate change and disaster preparedness and emergency management and strengthen its social safety nets and social protection framework so as to more effectively mitigate the multiple social, economic and environmental impacts of climate change.

Standard of living

33. The Committee draws the State party's attention to target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals on implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all, and recommends that the State party:

(a) Intensify its efforts to address, both in the short term and in a sustained manner, the high level of child poverty, including by designing public policies and a national plan to combat child poverty;

(b) Implement the Conditional Cash Transfer system and strengthen all social protection programmes to continue to improve outcomes for children, as well as poverty reduction strategies to address the multidimensional nature of poverty, with a

view to establishing a coherent framework to identify priority action against the exclusion of children, in particular those from single-headed households, and Amerindian and Maroon communities, with specific and measurable objectives, clear indicators, deadlines and sufficient economic and financial support;

(c) Partner with UNICEF and other development partners to promote a comprehensive and coherent strategy to guarantee children a minimum level of access to basic services and financial security, especially in the interior areas, and create a nationally defined social protection floor as part of the Social Protection Floor Initiative of the United Nations.

H. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29, 30 and 31)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

34. The Committee commends the State party for the high net enrolment rate for primary education and welcomes the numerous initiatives to improve education quality and programmes, including the launch of the Programme for More Effective Schools in Suriname (PROGRESS). The Committee, however, is seriously concerned about:

(a) The relatively low educational achievements of children in the State party, in particular children from economically disadvantaged communities, the low primary school completion rates and the low retention rates at the secondary level, in particular in the interior areas of the State party;

(b) The lack of schools in some of the remote districts and the insufficient number of professionally trained teaching staff at all levels, inadequate teacher training and materials and poor infrastructure;

(c) The insufficient access to education by children from low-income families, especially in the interior areas, the low compulsory school age, barriers to accessing education, including fees for school materials, and gaps with respect to early childhood education;

(d) The large number of students who drop out of school, in particular girls in the interior areas and boys nationally, and the large number of students repeating grades;

(e) The lack of a formal government policy on pregnant girls in schools, insufficient support for the reintegration of school-aged mothers into the education system and persistent stigmatization of pregnant teenagers and teenage mothers in schools;

(f) The quality of care and issues relating to safety and hygienic requirements, the educational backgrounds of staff and the carrying out of background checks on staff working in registered day-care facilities, including public kindergartens, semi-public kindergartens, nurseries and preschool centres.

35. **In the light of its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education and taking note of targets 4.1, 4.2, 4.5 and 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee urges the State party to:**

(a) **Continue efforts aimed at improving access to education, regardless of the ability to pay fees for school materials, at both the primary and secondary levels, and improve the quality of education by ensuring adequate and timely funding, adequate facilities, learning materials and education tools that take into consideration the national and local context, with particular emphasis on the interior areas, and by increasing safe transportation and the use of information and communication technologies;**

(b) Increase the number of qualified teachers and step-up quality training for teachers, including kindergarten and primary school teachers, by expanding the capacity of the Centre for Continuing Education, in line with the child-friendly schools initiative and United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) 2012-2016, in cooperation with UNICEF;

(c) Adopt and implement legislation and policy on early childhood education, allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education, in particular in the interior areas, based on a comprehensive and holistic early childhood care policy, and approve the Early Childhood Development Standards;

(d) Adopt and implement the bill on Basic Education, which would extend compulsory education from ages 4 to 16 and strengthen child-friendly approaches to education, including the “I Believe in You” and PROGRESS programmes, and implement the recommendations contained in the report of the Preparation Education Innovation Task Force for strengthening the education system;

(e) Strengthen efforts to reduce the premature dropout rate, including addressing the reasons for the non-completion of schooling, and develop and promote quality vocational training to enhance the skills of children, especially those who drop out of school, in particular boys and girls who became pregnant while in school;

(f) Implement the framework bill to ensure the registration of day care centres and ensure that such centres meet health, safety and educational requirements.

I. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32, 33, 35, 36, 37 (b)-(d), 38, 39 and 40 of the Convention)

Children belonging to minority and indigenous groups

36. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to improve access to health, education and other services in the interior areas of the State party for Amerindian and Maroon children, including by approving the draft law on language education and the language council, ensuring access to free primary education, building more public school facilities, expanding preschool education, improving training for teachers and administrators and expanding the child-friendly school project. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure access by the Amerindian and Maroon communities to quality health care and to clean water and sanitation, by expanding the WASH project. It should also ensure that Amerindian and Maroon communities are protected from illegal and uncontrolled logging and mining, which has a negative environmental impact on these communities, by adopting and enforcing legislation on sustainable land management in consultation with local communities, and promote corporate social responsibility.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

37. The Committee is seriously concerned about the persistence of child labour in the State party, in the agricultural, fishing, timber and mining sectors and domestic work, and in particular about boys from the Maroon communities in the interior areas who are disproportionately represented in the worst forms of child labour.

38. The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Adopt and implement the draft national action plan on combating child labour and provide the resources necessary for its implementation;

- (b) **Harmonize the minimum age of 14 years for work with the proposed age of 16 years for compulsory education;**
- (c) **Take measures to prevent children from being economically exploited by ensuring that the relevant provisions of the Labour Code, the Penal Code and other legislation relating to child labour are enforced, including with respect to the minimum age for hazardous work, which is set at 18 years of age, and adopt policies to address child labour in both the formal and informal sectors, ensuring compliance with article 32 of the Convention and relevant International Labour Organization (ILO) standards;**
- (d) **Strengthen labour inspectorates and monitoring mechanisms in the formal and informal sectors, and make data on the number of inspections and violations publicly available;**
- (e) **Continue to raise awareness on the negative consequences of child labour through public education programmes and campaigns organized in cooperation with opinion leaders, families and the media;**
- (f) **Consider ratifying ILO Minimum Age Convention, 1973 (No. 138) and seek technical assistance under the ILO International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour;**
- (g) **Continue cooperation with ILO with a view to establishing programmes to move children out of the worst forms of child labor and strengthen vocational education programmes for drop outs and older children as alternatives to underage labour.**

Sale, trafficking and abduction

39. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2014-2018), the regional initiatives to address commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourism, the human trafficking awareness programmes and the anti-trafficking hotline. The Committee is, however, seriously concerned:

- (a) That the State party is a source, transit and destination country for children subjected to sex trafficking, in particular girls from Amerindian and Maroon communities in regions where mining and forestry operations are taking place;
- (b) At reports of children being coerced to engage in commercial sex, including sex tourism, and forced prostitution and forced labour in the State party;
- (c) At the insufficient capacity for the enforcement of laws and policies against human trafficking, as well as the lack of shelters and services for victims.

40. **The Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Adopt and implement the necessary legislative and policy measures to effectively combat child trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, including through the development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy and plan of action;**
- (b) **Increase staff and resources of the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the police as well as provide training to step-up enforcement, and ensure that all law enforcement officials receive adequate training in relation to human trafficking and have the resources to carry out investigations, particularly in the interior areas of the State party;**
- (c) **Establish a monitoring mechanism for the investigation and redress of such abuses, with a view to improving accountability, transparency and the**

prevention of violations to the Convention, as well as ensure the effective prosecution and punishment of those who exploit children for purposes of prostitution, forced labour or pornography;

(d) Continue to implement appropriate policies and programmes for the prevention, recovery and social reintegration of child victims, ensuring that education and training, as well as counselling, health care and other social services, are provided to them;

(e) Ensure that child trafficking victims receive appropriate social services and shelter and are not placed in juvenile detention facilities;

(f) Strengthen regulation and engagement with the private sector, particularly the tourism industry, on the prevention, monitoring and reporting to relevant authorities of cases of child trafficking and commercial sexual exploitation of children;

(g) Expand public education campaigns on identifying possible victims, children at risk and perpetrators, preventative measures and avenues for assistance and redress, including the World Tourism Organization global code of ethics for tourism within the tourism industry, and raise awareness about the anti-trafficking hotline among the public, in particular children.

Administration of juvenile justice

41. While welcoming the various initiatives to assist children in conflict with the law and the establishment of the Opa Doeli pre-sentence detention facility, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, urges the State party to bring its juvenile justice system into line with the Convention, and, in particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that all children under 18 years of age are protected by the juvenile justice system;

(b) Adopt a holistic and preventative approach to addressing the problem of children in conflict with the law and the underlying social factors, with a view to supporting children at risk at an early stage, including by expanding intervention programmes, vocational training and other outreach activities;

(c) Promote restorative justice and alternative measures to detention, taking into consideration gender differentiated programmes for boys and girls in conflict with the law, such as diversion, probation, mediation, counselling or community service;

(d) Ensure that detention is used as a last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to withdrawing it;

(e) In cases where detention is unavoidable, take measures to provide adequate facilities for children in conflict with the law, and ensure that children are not detained together with adults, that boys and girls are held separately, that children are never held in solitary confinement, and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services, with particular focus on the Santa Boma prison;

(f) Provide effective rehabilitation services, including access to mental health counselling;

(g) Ensure sufficient financial and human resources in the social welfare and justice sectors;

(h) Seek technical assistance in this area from the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNICEF, OHCHR and non-government organizations and make use of the tools developed by the Interagency Panel.

Child victims and witnesses of crimes

42. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure, through adequate legal provisions and regulations that all children who are victims and/or witnesses of crimes, for example, children victims and/or witnesses of abuse, domestic violence, sexual and economic exploitation, abduction and trafficking, are provided with the protection required by the Convention and that the State party take fully into account the Guidelines on Justice in matters involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20, annex).

J. Ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communication procedure

43. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure.

K. Ratification of international human rights instruments

44. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, ratify the core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party, namely, the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

45. The Committee urges the State party to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. The report on the implementation of the Optional Protocol has been overdue as of 18 May 2014.

46. The Committee also urges the State party to submit the mandatory declaration under article 3 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the involvement of children in armed conflict to the Treaty Section of the Office of Legal Affairs at United Nations Headquarters to effect the deposit of the instrument of ratification of the Optional Protocol with the Secretary-General, pursuant to article 9.

L. Cooperation with regional and international bodies

47. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to cooperate with the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and the Organization of American States (OAS) for the implementation of the Convention and the promotion of children's rights in the State party and in other member States of CARICOM and OAS.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

48. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure that the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations are fully implemented. The Committee also recommends that the combined third and fourth periodic reports, the written replies to the list of issues and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

B. Next report

49. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports by 30 March 2021 and to include therein information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 31 January 2014 (CRC/C/58/Rev.3) and should not exceed 21,200 words (see General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16). In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purpose of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

50. The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document in accordance with the requirements for the common core document contained in the harmonized guidelines on reporting under the international human rights treaties, including guidelines on a common core document and treaty-specific documents (see HRI/GEN/2/Rev.6, chap. I). The core document should not exceed 42,400 words (see General Assembly 68/268, para. 16).
