



**Convention on the
Rights of the Child**

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COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

Thirty-seventh session

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES
UNDER ARTICLE 44 OF THE CONVENTION**

Concluding observations: Croatia

1. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Croatia (CRC/C/70/Add.23) at its 981st and 982nd meetings (see CRC/C/SR.981 and 982), held on 20 September 2004, and adopted at the 999th meeting (CRC/C/SR.999), held on 1 October 2004, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the State party's second periodic report, which followed the established guidelines, as well as the detailed written replies to its list of issues (CRC/C/Q/HRV/2), which gave a clearer understanding of the situation of children in the State party. It further welcomes the constructive and informative dialogue.

B. Follow-up measures undertaken and progress achieved by the State party

3. The Committee welcomes:

- (a) The adoption of the Act on the Ombudsperson for Children in 2003;
- (b) The amendments to the Family Act, the Criminal Code and the Criminal Procedure Act in 2003;
- (c) The adoption of the Asylum Law in 2003;
- (d) The withdrawal of its reservation on article 9, paragraph 1, of the Convention in 1998.

4. The Committee welcomes the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography in 2002.

5. The Committee also welcomes the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court in 2001.

6. The Committee further welcomes the State party's ratification of ILO Convention No. 182 concerning the Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in 2001 and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, supplementing the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in 2003.

C. Principal subject of concern and recommendations

1. General measures of implementation

Committee's previous recommendations

7. The Committee notes with satisfaction that various concerns and recommendations (CRC/C/15/Add.52 of 13 February 1996) made upon the consideration of the State's initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.19) have been addressed through legislative measures and policies. However, it regrets that some of its concerns and recommendations, regarding, inter alia, non-discrimination in the repossession of their property by returned refugees (para. 15), international cooperation to resolve the problem of property (para. 26) and training programmes to promote the process of national reconciliation and national dialogue (para. 24), which are all relevant to the implementation of children's rights, and the situation of children in institutions or in foster care (para. 25) have not been given sufficient follow-up. The Committee notes that those concerns and recommendations are reiterated in the present document.

8. The Committee urges the State party to continue to strengthen the efforts to address those recommendations contained in the concluding observations on the initial report that have not yet been implemented and to provide adequate follow-up to the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations.

Legislation and implementation

9. The Committee notes that new laws have been adopted by the State party to harmonize its domestic legislation with international human rights standards and, in particular, with the provisions and principles of the Convention since the review of the State party's initial report. However, the Committee remains concerned about the effective implementation of all legislation relevant to the Convention.

10. In light of its previous recommendations, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue to take all effective measures to bring domestic law and practice into line with the principles and provisions of the Convention;

(b) Ensure the effective implementation of all legislation relevant to the Convention and make it known to the population.

Coordination and national plans of action

11. The Committee welcomes the elaboration of the National Action Programme for Children in 1998 and the establishment of the Council for Children as the institution responsible for monitoring its implementation. Despite some improvements in the composition and functioning of the Council, the Committee is concerned about the reluctant or non-implementation of recommendations of the Council by the various ministries and the implementation of the National Action Programme for Children. It is also concerned about the insufficient coordination between the existing and newly created government bodies dealing with the welfare of children.

12. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to ensure the effective functioning of the Council for Children, including appropriate follow-up to its recommendations by State authorities and bodies, and implement the National Action Programme for Children. It also recommends that the State party enhance coordination between the different governmental bodies involved in the implementation of the Convention.

Independent monitoring

13. The Committee welcomes the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children in 2003 and the presence of the Ombudsperson at the dialogue, but the Committee is concerned at the need for ongoing and sufficient political, human and financial support for the functioning of this office.

14. In light of its General Comment No. 2 on national human rights institutions and the Paris Principles (General Assembly resolution 48/134, annex), the Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen its political, human and financial support for the Office of the Ombudsperson for Children in order to facilitate and promote its effective functioning, in particular at the local level outside the capital of the State party.

Allocation of resources

15. The Committee is concerned about the lack of disaggregated data with regard to resources allocated for children at the national and local levels.

16. The Committee recommends that the State party pay particular attention to the full implementation of article 4 of the Convention by:

(a) Prioritizing budgetary allocations to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, in particular those belonging to economically disadvantaged groups and minority ethnic groups, “to the maximum extent of ... available resources”; and

(b) Identifying the amount and proportion of the State and local governments budgets spent on children in the public, private and NGO sectors in order to evaluate the impact and effect of the expenditures and also, in view of the costs, the accessibility, quality and effectiveness of the services for children in the different sectors.

Data collection

17. The Committee is concerned about the lack of disaggregated statistical data and other information on the situation of children, especially those belonging to different ethnic groups and the most vulnerable groups and in particular with respect to girl children, street children, disabled children, displaced, refugee and asylum-seeking children, children from minority groups and Roma children.

18. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures to ensure the availability of reliable data regarding persons under 18 years old, disaggregated by age, gender and ethnic origin, and to identify appropriate disaggregated indicators with a view to addressing all areas of the Convention and all groups of children in society, in order to evaluate progress achieved and the difficulties hampering the realization of children's rights.

Training and dissemination

19. The Committee welcomes the training activities undertaken by the State party since its initial report but remains concerned about the lack of detailed information on this issue, specifically on training activities and programmes to raise public awareness about the Convention undertaken by the State party since its initial report.

20. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to disseminate the principles and provisions of the Convention and to undertake systematic education and training for all professional groups working for and with children, and also strengthen its efforts to raise public awareness about the Convention, in particular among children themselves and among parents.

2. General principles

Non-discrimination

21. The Committee acknowledges the various efforts undertaken by the State party to follow up its previous recommendations but remains concerned at the de facto discrimination against ethnic and national minorities and Roma and foreign children, and at incidents of harassment and expressions of hatred, which have a negative effect on the development of children. The Committee joins the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in its concern as it relates to the lack of legal provisions prohibiting incitement to racial discrimination and violence, and about the adequacy of efforts to investigate and prosecute persons responsible for fomenting ethnic hatred (see CERD/C/60/CO/4, para. 12).

22. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party should take measures aimed at developing a culture of tolerance in the society at large through all possible channels, including the schools, the media and the law.

23. **In accordance with article 2 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party carefully and regularly evaluate existing disparities in the enjoyment by children of their rights and undertake on the basis of that evaluation the necessary steps to prevent and combat discriminatory disparities. It also recommends that the State party strengthen its administrative and judicial measures to prevent and eliminate de facto discrimination against children belonging to minorities, especially Roma and foreign children.**

24. **The Committee requests that specific information be included in the next periodic report on the measures and programmes relevant to the Convention on the Rights of the Child undertaken by the State party to follow up on the Declaration and Programme of Action adopted at the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance held in Durban, South Africa, in 2001, and taking account of General Comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education.**

The best interests of the child

25. The Committee values the fact that the State party holds the principle of the best interests of the child to be of vital importance in the development of legislation, programmes and policies concerning children and is aware of the progress made in this respect, but remains concerned that it is not fully applied and duly integrated in the implementation of the policies and programmes of the State party or in administrative and judicial decisions.

26. **The Committee recommends that the principle of “the best interests of the child” contained in article 3 be systematically implemented in judicial and administrative decisions as well as in programmes, projects and services with regard to children in various situations, in particular children belonging to vulnerable and minority groups.**

Right to life

27. The Committee notes with concern the relatively high number of deaths and injuries among children due to traffic and domestic accidents despite the various measures taken by the State party to address this problem.

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue and strengthen as much as possible its efforts to prevent traffic and domestic accidents, inter alia by systematic enforcement of existing regulations and by ongoing awareness-raising via educational campaigns.**

Respect for the views of the child

29. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party to promote respect for the views of the child. The Committee remains concerned that the general principle laid down in article 12 of the Convention is insufficiently respected in families, schools and other institutions and not fully applied and duly integrated in practice in judicial and administrative decisions and in the implementation of the laws, policies and programmes of the State party.

30. **The Committee recommends that further efforts be made to ensure the implementation of the principle of respect for the views of the child. In this connection,**

particular emphasis should be placed on the right of every child to participate in the family, at school, within other institutions and bodies and in society at large, with special attention to vulnerable and minority groups. This general principle should also be reflected in all laws, judicial and administrative decisions, policies and programmes relating to children. Awareness-raising among the public at large as well as education and training of professionals on the implementation of this principle should be reinforced and regular reviews should be undertaken on the extent to which children's views are taken into consideration and the impact of these measures on children themselves.

3. Civil rights and freedoms

Right to a name and nationality

31. The Committee welcomes the efforts made by the State party to reform its legislation in accordance with the provisions and principles of the Convention but it remains concerned about the different types of access to citizenship, which mainly affect children from minority groups, especially Roma children.

32. The Committee recommends that the State party undertake measures to ensure that all provisions of the Croatian Law on Citizenship are in conformity with article 7 of the Convention and that the law is implemented in a non-discriminatory manner.

Right to privacy

33. The Committee joins the State party in its concern about violations of the right to privacy of children by the media but is concerned at the lack of information on the implementation in practice of the rights of the child contained in articles 13-17 of the Convention, in particular in the family, social institutions, schools and places of detention.

34. The Committee recommends that the State party take the necessary measures to ensure that the media fully respect the right to privacy of children and that it provide concrete and detailed information (examples, good practices) in its next report on the implementation of articles 13-17 of the Convention in the family, social institutions, schools and places of detentions.

Access to information

35. While noting the State party's efforts to protect children from harmful information, the Committee remains concerned about pornographic and other harmful material in printed and electronic media that is easily available and accessible to children. It is also concerned at the lack of adequate measures to encourage the mass media to disseminate information that would promote a spirit of understanding of differences.

36. The Committee recommends that the State party pursue its efforts to protect children from information and material injurious to their well-being. It also urges the State party to disseminate information and material of social and cultural benefit to the child, in line and with the spirit of articles 17 and 29 of the Convention. To that end, the

State party should provide children with access to diversity of cultural, national and international sources, taking into particular account the linguistic and other needs of children who belong to a minority group.

Right not to be subjected to torture or other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment

37. The Committee is deeply concerned about cases of violence among children and young adults placed in homes for re-education and other institutions and about cases of violence and bullying among children and young adults in social care institutions.

38. **The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to prevent acts of violence in homes for re-education and social care institutions. In accordance with the recommendation of the Committee against Torture (CAT/C/CR/32/3, para. 9 (k)), the Committee urges the State party to increase the protection of children in social care institutions, inter alia by ensuring that violent acts are reported and investigated and providing adequate support and treatment, including psychological treatment to victims of such acts.**

4. Family environment and alternative care

Guidance and responsibilities for children

39. While taking note of the legislation adopted in the area of the family environment, the new Family Act and the Social Welfare Act, the Committee remains concerned that many children are left on their own without proper guidance from parents and other caregivers. The Committee also remains concerned that supervision and guidance for vulnerable families are not well structured and defined, making it difficult to monitor the situation.

40. **The Committee recommends that further efforts be made to ensure the effective implementation of the Family Act as regards guidance and responsibility for the child in light of article 27, paragraph 2. The Committee further recommends that the State party take all necessary steps and devote adequate resources to providing ongoing training of the staff of the social welfare centres and provide for effective administrative, legal and practical measures to ensure the quality and efficiency of all the activities of these institutions.**

Alternative care

41. The Committee expresses its concern that quite a number of children without parental care or who have lost contact with their families are in institutions or in foster care and about the low quality of care and treatment provided to these children. The Committee is also concerned about the apparent insufficient monitoring of placements.

42. **The Committee recommends that the State party give high priority to the assistance provided to families in order to prevent placement of children in alternative care. The Committee further recommends that the State party promote family-based assistance in foster care as a form of alternative care and ensure that institutionalization is used only as**

a measure of last resort, i.e. that it is professionally indicated and in the best interests of the child, and conduct periodic reviews of the placement of children in light of article 25. The Committee also recommends that the State party develop quality standards of foster care and significantly decrease the time spent in institutions for children deprived of parental care. It further recommends that adequate resources be allocated for the proper functioning and monitoring of the care institutions and foster care.

Recovery and maintenance

43. While welcoming amendments to the legislation on maintenance, the Committee is concerned that recovery of maintenance is not sufficiently ensured in practice and that the related administrative and court proceedings are often too lengthy.

44. **The Committee recommends that the State party take further measures to ensure that legislation on the payment of maintenance is fully implemented, consider alternative measures to court procedures in this regard and ensure more expeditious court proceedings and strict enforcement of court orders. The Committee also recommends that the State party reconsider establishing a fund to provide support to parents waiting for the decision regarding the maintenance of their child.**

Illicit transfer and non-return of children abroad

45. The Committee notes with satisfaction that the State party has ratified the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction of 1980 but remains concerned that problems persist in the implementation of this Convention.

46. **The Committee recommends that the State party apply the Hague Convention to all children abducted to Croatia and encourage other States that are not yet a party to the Hague Convention to ratify or accede to this treaty and, if necessary, conclude bilateral agreements to deal adequately with international child abduction. It further recommends that professionals dealing with this kind of case receive adequate and ongoing training and that maximum assistance be provided through diplomatic and consular channels, in order to solve cases of illicit transfer.**

Adoption

47. The Committee notes that the State party has not ratified the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993 and that there is little information about the rules and procedures on intercountry adoption and on how article 21 and other related provisions of the Convention are implemented in this respect.

48. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption and ensure that domestic adoption is carried out in full compliance with the best interests of the child and the appropriate legal guarantees and procedures spelled out in the Convention.**

Abuse, neglect, maltreatment

49. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Law on the Protection against Domestic Violence (2003), which prohibits corporal punishment within the family, and of various other legal instruments to prevent and combat domestic violence (e.g. Criminal Code, Family Act) but remains concerned about incidents of domestic violence.

50. **In light of article 19 of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Undertake a comprehensive study on violence, more particularly, on sexual abuse and violence at home and in school, in order to assess the extent, causes, scope and nature of these violations;**

(b) **Strengthen awareness-raising and education campaigns with the involvement of children in order to prevent and combat child abuse and promote positive, non-violent forms of discipline and respect for children's rights, while raising awareness about the negative consequences of corporal punishment;**

(c) **Evaluate the work of existing structures and provide training to the professionals involved in these types of case;**

(d) **Strengthen measures to encourage reporting of instances of child abuse and prosecute the authors of these acts;**

(e) **Provide care, full physical and psychological rehabilitation and reintegration for child victims of violence.**

5. Basic health and welfare**Health, health-care services**

51. The Committee notes the efforts made by the State party to improve its health-care system, e.g. the new Health Insurance Law (2002), but remains concerned about the lack of data about children's health status, in particular children of ethnic and minority groups, and that medical coverage is not ensured for every child. It is also concerned about the effective implementation of breastfeeding programmes and that the "happy baby package" contains material that is not consistent with the International Code of Marketing of Breastmilk Substitutes. The Committee is also concerned about the information that mothers are not allowed to stay with their hospitalized children free of charge unless the child is less than 6 months of age.

52. **The Committee recommends that the State party undertake all necessary measures to ensure that all children enjoy equal access to and quality of health services, with special attention to children from ethnic and minority groups, especially Roma children. The Committee also recommends that the State party enhance its efforts to promote proper breastfeeding practices, including by complying with the International Code of Marketing,**

and ensure the effective implementation of breastfeeding programmes in accordance with international standards. It also recommends that children not be separated from their parents when they are hospitalized.

Adolescent health

53. The Committee notes the efforts undertaken by the State party with regard to drug abuse by adolescents but remains concerned at the increasing number of cases, the increase in sharing syringes among drug users, the lack of an integrated strategy against drug abuse and the apparent inadequacy of treatment facilities to deal with drug additions. The Committee is also concerned at the increasing alcohol and tobacco consumption by adolescents and the lack of programmes for the prevention of suicide among adolescents. The Committee is also concerned that adolescents have a low perception of the risks of contracting HIV and other STDs.

54. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) Enhance its efforts to address adolescent health issues and ensure that the programmes for adolescent health are effectively implemented, including through the provision of adequate resources;**
- (b) Take into account General Comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development;**
- (c) Develop programmes to prevent and combat HIV/AIDS, taking into account the Committee's General Comment No. 3 on HIV/AIDS and the rights of children (2003);**
- (d) Develop mental health programmes and services for, inter alia, the prevention of drugs and alcohol abuse, and tobacco use, and programmes for the prevention of suicide and to enhance the quality of the treatment facilities;**
- (e) Ensure that adolescents have access to child-sensitive and confidential counselling services;**
- (f) Seek technical cooperation and advice from UNICEF and WHO.**

Right to an adequate standard of living

55. The Committee notes the measures undertaken by the State party to increase economic growth, but remains concerned at the widespread prevalence of poverty in Croatian society, which affect in particular families with more than one child, families headed by women and minority families, including Roma families and families of foreign origin, and in areas that were affected by armed conflict.

56. **The Committee, in line with its previous recommendations (para. 31) recommends that the State party:**

- (a) Take all necessary measures to the "maximum extent of ... available resources" to accelerate the elimination of child poverty, notably to eliminate the disparities between the different regions of the country;**

(b) Continue to provide material assistance and support to economically disadvantaged families, notably Roma families and families of foreign origin, in order to guarantee the right of children to an adequate standard of living;

(c) To include in the poverty reduction strategy specific programmes addressing the particular difficulties faced by poor children.

6. Education, leisure and cultural activities

57. While noting the efforts made by the State party with regard to education, e.g. the 2001 Law on the Changes and Amendments of the Primary Education Law, it remains concerned about the different access to education of children belonging to minority and the most vulnerable groups, including Roma children, children living in poverty, children with disabilities and foreign children, which hampers their full enjoyment of a system of education adequate to their values and identity. The Committee is also concerned that the education system and its organization remain very centralized and that human rights education is not included in the curricula. Finally, the Committee is concerned about the shift system of instruction and the poor equipment and school facilities in many parts of the country.

58. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Take all necessary measures to ensure that articles 28 and 29 of the Convention are fully implemented, in particular with regard to children belonging to the most vulnerable groups (i.e. minority groups, children living in poverty, etc.);

(b) Ensure the implementation of the National Programme for Roma, providing it with adequate human and financial resources and with periodic evaluation of its progress;

(c) Allocate more funds to reduce the number of shifts in schools and to improve the quality of education in the whole country in order to achieve the goals set out in article 29, paragraph 1, of the Convention and in the Committee's General Comment No. 1 (2003) on the aims of education;

(d) Ensure that human rights education, including children's rights, is included in the school curricula and that materials are available in the different languages used in schools, and that teachers have the necessary training;

(e) Take measures to move towards decentralization;

(f) Adopt teaching methods that encourage child-centred learning and more active participation by children;

(g) Take the necessary measures to integrate children with disabilities in the mainstream education system, including vocational education, and in society;

(h) In the light of article 29 on the aims of education, establish adequate programmes and activities with a view to creating an environment of tolerance, peace and understanding of cultural diversity in order to prevent intolerance, bullying and discrimination in schools and in society at large.

7. Special protection measures

Refugee and displaced children

59. The Committee notes the adoption of a new Asylum Law (2003) and the progress achieved in the area of asylum, but remains concerned about the delay in its effective implementation.

60. In line with the recommendation of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD/C/60/CO/4, para. 13), and while noting the challenges confronted by the State party in meeting the needs of a large number of refugees, returnees and displaced persons, most of whom are children, the Committee remains concerned that return is still hindered by administrative impediments and hostile attitudes on the part of some national and local officials. The Committee expresses its concern about the difficult access to education and health care for refugee and internally displaced children.

61. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the effective implementation of the new Asylum Law and that refugee and asylum-seeking children have access to basic services such as education and health, and that there is no discrimination in benefit entitlements for asylum-seeking families that could negatively affect children.

62. The Committee also recommends that the State party take effective measures to resolve the problem of property owners, most of whom are Serbs, returning to their homes before their occupiers (refugees and displaced persons) have been able to find alternative shelter, and that further efforts be undertaken to facilitate the return of refugees and displaced persons. It also recommends that effective measures be undertaken to ensure that displaced children have equal access to education and health care.

63. The Committee further recommends that the State party introduce specific laws or administrative regulations or directives that provide special procedures and address special needs of unaccompanied asylum-seeking and refugee children, and in particular ensure that these children have proper accommodation.

Children in armed conflicts

64. The Committee welcomes the State party's ratification of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict in 2002 and notes the efforts undertaken by the State party to provide psychological and social assistance for children who have been affected by armed conflict. However, it remains concerned about the lack of systematic research on the situation of children affected by armed conflict, including follow-up monitoring measures. The Committee is also concerned about the lack of compensation provisions for those children.

65. **The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Undertake a comprehensive study on children affected by armed conflict in order to assess the extent and scope and the population affected by the problem and identify the consequences and the recovery and remedial measures needed;**

(b) **Strengthen awareness-raising campaigns with the involvement of children;**

(c) **Evaluate the work of existing structures and provide training to the professionals involved in the programmes;**

(d) **Extend psychological and social assistance for the children who have been affected by armed conflict;**

(e) **Take effective measures to ensure that the affected children receive adequate compensation.**

Trafficking and sexual exploitation

66. While welcoming the measures taken by the State party to prevent and raise awareness of the problem of trafficking in persons, including the establishment of the National Committee for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons responsible for formulating and implementing the National Plan for the Prevention of Trafficking in Persons, it remains concerned about the effective implementation of the Plan and at the lack of statistical data and specific information on measures undertaken to combat trafficking.

67. **In light of article 34 and other related articles of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party further strengthen its efforts to identify, prevent and combat trafficking in children for sexual and other exploitative purposes, including by undertaking studies to assess the nature and magnitude of the problem and allocating sufficient resources to this field, in accordance with the Declaration and Agenda for Action and the Global Commitment adopted at the 1996 and 2001 World Congresses against Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children.**

Administration of juvenile justice

68. The Committee welcomes the amendments to the Family Act (2003), the Criminal Code (1999) and the Act on Juvenile Courts (2002) aimed at harmonizing the administration of juvenile justice with relevant international human rights standards, but remains concerned about the quality of the relevant institutions and the reports of incidents of violence in detention centres, and that persons below 18 in detention or custody are kept with adults up to the age of 27.

69. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the full implementation of juvenile justice standards, in particular articles 37, 39 and 40 of the Convention, and other United Nations standards in this field such as the United Nations Standard Minimum Rules for the Administration of Juvenile Justice (the Beijing Rules), the United Nations Guidelines for the Prevention of Juvenile Delinquency (the Riyadh Guidelines), the United Nations Rules for the Protection of Juveniles Deprived of their Liberty and the**

Vienna Guidelines for Action on Children in the Criminal Justice System, and in light of the Committee's day of general discussion on the administration of juvenile justice held in 1995. In particular, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that deprivation of liberty is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible time, that guarantees of due process are fully respected and that persons under 18 are not detained with adults;

(b) Protect the rights of children deprived of their liberty and improve their conditions of detention and imprisonment, notably by establishing special detention centres for persons below 18 with conditions suitable to their age and needs and by ensuring the existence of social services in all the juvenile detention centres in the country;

(c) Undertake training programmes on relevant international standards for all professionals involved in the system of juvenile justice;

(d) Request technical assistance in the area of juvenile justice and police training from, among others, OHCHR and UNICEF.

Minorities

70. The Committee notes the measures undertaken by the State party to improve domestic legislation with regard to minority rights, e.g. the Constitutional Law on the Rights of National Minorities, but remains concerned that these legal instruments are not effectively implemented. It is also concerned about continuing problems of ethnic discrimination and intolerance, particularly concerning the Roma and other minority groups, e.g. Serbs and Bosniaks.

71. The Committee reiterates its recommendation that the State party should take effective measures to encourage the protection of the rights of children belonging to minority groups and eliminate the impunity enjoyed by those who harass these groups. It also recommends that the State party undertake special measures to stimulate a process of reconciliation and confidence-building, including wide-ranging educational and awareness-raising campaigns.

8. Follow-up and dissemination

Follow-up

72. The Committee recommends that the State party take all appropriate measures to ensure full implementation of the present recommendations, inter alia by transmitting them to the members of the Council of Ministers, the Cabinet or a similar body, the Parliament, and provincial or local governments and parliaments, when applicable, for appropriate consideration and further action.

Dissemination

73. The Committee further recommends that the second periodic report, the written replies submitted by the State party and the related recommendations (concluding these observations) adopted by the Committee be made widely available, including (but not exclusively) through the

Internet, to the public at large, civil society organizations, youth groups, professional groups and children in order to generate debate and awareness of the Convention, its implementation and monitoring.

9. Periodicity of submission of reports

74. **Finally, in light of the recommendation on reporting periodicity adopted by the Committee and described in its session reports (see CRC/C/114 and CRC/C/124), the Committee underlines the importance of a reporting practice that is in full compliance with the provisions of article 44 of the Convention. An important aspect of States parties' responsibilities to children under the Convention is ensuring that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has regular opportunities to examine the progress made in the Convention's implementation. The Committee recommends that the State party submit its next periodic report on 7 October 2008. This report will combine the third and fourth periodic reports. The report should not exceed 120 pages (see CRC/C/118). The Committee expects the State party to report every five years thereafter, as foreseen by the Convention.**
