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Committee on the Rights of the Child**Concluding observations on the fourth periodic report of Georgia*****I. Introduction**

1. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of Georgia (CRC/C/GEO/4) at its 2181st and 2182nd meetings (see CRC/C/SR. 2181 and 2182), held on 25 January 2017, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2193rd meeting, held on 3 February 2017.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the fourth periodic report of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues (CRC/C/GEO/Q/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 and 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 numerous areas, including the ratification of or accession to international instruments, in particular the ratification of the third Optional Protocol on the communications procedure in 2016. It also welcomes the adoption of numerous legislative Acts, as well as institutional and policy measures, including the revision of the social assistance system to make it more child-sensitive, as well as the adoption of the Juvenile Justice Code, both in June 2015, and the revision of the Civil Code in December 2015, abolishing exceptions to the minimal age of marriage, which is set at 18 years

III. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Convention

4. The Committee notes that Abkhazia, Georgia, and South Ossetia / Tskhinvali regions, Georgia, remain outside the effective control of the State party, which is a serious

* Adopted by the Committee at its 74th session (16 January – 3 February 2017).

obstacle to the implementation of the Convention in these regions. The Committee welcomes the efforts undertaken by the State party to support health and education services in these regions. However, the Committee is concerned about restrictions in the freedom of movement, which inter alia affect the access to healthcare services, the right to education in one's native language, the rights of internally displaced children and continued discrimination on ethnic basis in these regions.

IV. Main areas of concern and recommendations

5. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: corporal punishment and child abuse (paras. 21 - 22), sexual exploitation and abuse (paras. 23 - 24), family environment (paras. 26 - 27), children with disabilities (paras. 29 - 30), health and health services (paras. 31 - 32) and internally displaced children (paras. 38 - 39).

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

Legislation

6. **The Committee encourages the State party to continue its efforts in a view to adopting a law on the Rights of the child, to incorporate all provisions of the Convention and its Optional Protocols, and seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF to do so.**

Comprehensive policy and strategy

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

(a) **Carry out the necessary evaluation of progress achieved by the three implemented Child Action Plans to identify possible deficiencies, and develop indicators and measurable targets for the monitoring of the chapter on children in the National Action Plan for the Protection of Human Rights for 2016-17;**

(b) **Ensure sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the said Action Plan;**

(c) **Develop a distinct comprehensive action plan for the protection of the rights of the child, with prevention as its core component and in coordination and complementarity with policy measures addressed at minorities.**

Coordination

8. **The Committee notes the efforts made for the establishment of a Coordination Council for the implementation of the National Action Plan. It recommends that the State party allocate to a single body at a high interministerial level with a clear mandate and sufficient authority, the principal responsibility for the coordination and evaluation of implementation at cross-sectoral, national, regional and local levels of all aspects of the Convention, related strategies and child action plans. The State party should moreover ensure that the said coordinating body be provided with the necessary human, technical and financial resources for its effective operation.**

Allocation of resources

9. In the light of its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party set up a budgeting process that includes a child-rights perspective, that specifies clear allocations to children in the relevant sectors and agencies, and that includes specific indicators and a tracking system to monitor and evaluate the adequacy, efficacy and equitability of the distribution of resources allocated for implementation of the Convention, including by:

(a) Ensuring adequate budget allocation for the implementation of children's rights and for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, and guaranteeing that fluctuation or reduction in budget allocations for the delivery of services does not reduce the existing level of enjoyment of children's rights;

(b) Developing detailed budget lines and codes for all planned, enacted, revised and actual expenditures that directly affect children;

(c) Setting performance targets linking child-related programme goals to budget allocations and actual expenditures, to allow monitoring of the outcomes and of the impacts on all children;

(d) Strengthening audits to increase transparency and accountability with regard to public expenditure across all sectors, in order to mobilize the maximum available resources for the implementation of the rights of the child.

Data collection

10. While welcoming the collection of data on several areas of the Convention, including through the national census in 2015, the Committee, in the light of its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation, recalls its recommendation (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 16) and recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue and strengthen its efforts to develop a comprehensive data collection system on the implementation of the Convention, especially at municipal level, which reaches all regions of the country. The data should be disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographic location, ethnic origin and socioeconomic background, in order to facilitate analysis on the situation of all children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability and especially in the area of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, sexual exploitation and children in street situations;

(b) Ensure that the data-collection system covers the collection of disaggregated data for all areas of the Convention, including child abuse, neglect, exploitation and sexual exploitation of children and children in street situations;

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

Independent monitoring

11. While welcoming the activities of the Child's Rights Centre, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 13) and, in line with its general comment No.2 (2002) on the role of independent human rights institutions in the protection and promotion of the rights of the child, recommends that the State party:

- (a) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources to enable this Centre to adequately execute its mandate throughout the country;
- (b) Provide the Centre with unhampered access to all institutions caring for children, including institutions led by religious groups;
- (c) Strengthen the capacities of the Centre to effectively receive, examine and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

12. The Committee recommends that the State party expand existing systematic introductions and continued in-service professional training and / or awareness raising programmes on children's rights for judicial actors by the High School of Justice to all professional groups working with and for children.

Cooperation with civil society

13. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observation (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 29), encouraging the State party to collaborate more actively with civil society, including non-governmental and children's organizations in the planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, plans and programmes related to the Convention and in the promotion of children's rights.

Children's rights and the business sector

14. In the light of its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights and the concerns raised by the Special Rapporteur on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography (A/HRC/34/55/Add.1, paras. 30 and 76), the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Examine and adapt its legislative framework (civil, criminal and administrative) to ensure the legal accountability of business enterprises and their subsidiaries operating in or managed from the State party's territory, especially in the tourism industry;
- (b) Establish monitoring mechanisms for the investigation and redress of children's rights violations, with a view to improving accountability and transparency;
- (c) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns for the tourism industry and the public at large on the prevention of child sex tourism and widely disseminate the charter of honour for tourism and the World Tourism Organization global code of ethics for tourism among travel agents and in the tourism industry;
- (d) Strengthen its international cooperation against child sex tourism through multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements for its prevention and elimination.

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

Non-discrimination

15. While welcoming the adoption of the law on Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination in May 2014, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 22) and urges the State party to:

(a) Allocate the necessary human, technical and financial resources to institutions in charge of monitoring the implementation of the law on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, and especially to the Public Defender's Office, and collect disaggregated data on cases of discrimination against children, including children with disabilities, children in street situations, children in the juvenile justice system, children belonging to minorities, children of disadvantaged families, children living in rural or remote areas and, children who are refugees or internally displaced, with a view to developing comprehensive strategies aimed at ending all forms of discrimination;

(b) Ensure that the law is appropriately integrated and consistently interpreted and applied, that perpetrators are adequately sanctioned and child victims of discrimination are provided with effective and appropriate remedies;

(c) Combat the practice of sex-selective abortion, including by addressing its root causes and long-term implications for the society, expanding family planning services and carrying out awareness-raising activities on the detrimental impact of sex selection and on the equal value of girls and boys, in line with previous recommendations of the Human Rights Committee (CCPR/C/GEO/CO/4, para. 26 (f)).

Best interests of the child

16. The Committee welcomes the inclusion of the definition of the best interests of the child in the Juvenile Justice Code and in the revised Civil Code. However, 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, consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children, including procedures concerning child asylum-seekers and unaccompanied children. In this regard, the State party is encouraged 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 it due weight as a primary consideration.

Respect for the views of the child

17. While noting the establishment of child friendly court rooms, the Committee, in line with its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard, encourages the State party to strengthen methods to ensure that children's views are given due consideration in the family, at schools, at the community level, in institutions, as well as in administrative procedures concerning them, through, *inter alia*, the:

- (a) Refinement of appropriate legislation;
- (b) Continuous training of professionals;
- (c) Support of various forms of children's meaningful participation;
- (d) Collaboration with civil society organizations, to increase opportunities for children's participation, including in the media.

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

Birth registration

18. Taking into account the adoption of Decree No 18 of the Minister of Justice of Georgia on the Approval of the Rule on the Registration of Civil Acts in January 2012, as well as of door-to-door establishment of identification documents, the Committee, taking note of target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration, recommends that the State party:

(a) Set a realistic timeline for effective birth registration throughout the country, address administrative obstacles, with special attention to minority groups, refugees, stateless persons and families living in high mountain areas;

(b) Continue and strengthen ongoing efforts to establish institutional structures, such as mobile registration centres, in line with previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 28), in order to attain equal rates of birth registration for minority groups;

(c) Seek technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) among others, for the implementation of these recommendations.

Name and nationality

19. Noting the regulation of birth registration of children born in Georgia via surrogacy under article 19 of Decree No. 18 of the Minister of Justice on the Approval of the Rule on the Registration of Civil Acts, the Committee recommends that the State party :

a) Address possible obstacles to the implementation of this decree, especially with regard to international surrogacy arrangements;

b) Ensure that a child born via surrogacy motherhood will be able to get access to the information about his or her origin;

c) Amend the Law on Legal Status of Aliens and Stateless Persons to fully comply with the provisions of the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons;

d) Establish an effective and efficient identification and referral mechanism of undocumented and at risk of statelessness children;

e) Accede to the 1997 European Convention on Nationality and the 2006 Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession.

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

Torture and other cruel or degrading treatment or punishment

20. The Committee is concerned at reports of arbitrary detention of children, as well as of torture and ill treatment of children in police stations, including children diverted from the criminal system, and, in rare cases, juvenile detention centres. The Committee recalls its previous concluding observation (CRC/C/GEO/CO3, para. 30) and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Investigate thoroughly all allegations of torture and ill-treatment by public officials, especially the police, and ensure that perpetrators are rapidly tried and brought to justice;
- (b) Provide adequate reparations, rehabilitation and recovery programs for child victims of such abuses;
- (c) Strengthen independent monitoring by and coordination amongst civil society, the Public Defender and the Human Rights Monitoring Unit and reinforce their action in detention centres for juveniles;
- (d) Ensure the accessibility of the existing mechanisms to receive complaints from, or on behalf of, children, of ill-treatment or abuse.

Corporal punishment and child abuse

21. While welcoming efforts made by the State party to combat domestic violence, including amendments to the Law on Combating Domestic Violence and the new Child Protection Referral Mechanism, adopted in 2016, the program “Identification and prevention of violent and behavioural disorder”, piloted from 2016 on, and the standing program “Violence against children, redirection procedures in case of the need for child protection”, implemented since 2015, the Committee is strongly concerned by the:

- (a) Prevalence of corporal punishment in the home as well as schools and institutions;
- (b) Lack of legislation criminalizing corporal punishment and of awareness raising activities to combat this practice;
- (c) Limited implementation of the Child Protection Referral Mechanism with regards to kindergarten and professionals working with families and children, as well as in school environment;
- (d) Predominant role of the Police in the implementation of the Child Referral Mechanism;
- (e) Limited coverage of counselling services for children and parents in schools for the prevention of violence;
- (f) Existence of Psychological Service Centers in seven cities only, and limited coverage of *Mandaturi* in schools;
- (g) Low awareness on Child Protection Referral Procedures in the general population and in professionals of the child protection system, absence of guidelines for the implementation of these procedures for all health and education professionals of the child protection system, as well as for involved law enforcement agents, and reluctance in the implementation of these procedures by law enforcement officers.

22. **In the light of its general comments No. 8 (2006) on corporal punishment and 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, the Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Adopt legislation explicitly prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings, including educational institutions, alternative care institutions and the home;**
- (b) **Further strengthen programmes and policies combatting violence against children — including community-based programmes and campaigns aimed at**

preventing and tackling domestic violence, child abuse and neglect — and involve children, former child victims, volunteers and community members in their implementation to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline;

(c) **Improve the implementation of the Child Referral Protection Mechanism by increasing the number of professionals working with families and children, in particular law enforcement personnel, social workers, and service providers;**

(d) **Support social workers to ensure the best interests of the child in the Child Referral Mechanism and adopt rehabilitation and reintegration of child victims as the ultimate goal of services;**

(e) **Extend the coverage of counselling services for children and parents for the prevention of violence, as well as Psychological Service Centers for children;**

(f) **Ensure the activity of *Mandaturis* in all schools, extend their mandate to kindergartens and child care facilities, and reinforce their capacities for the identification, reporting and management of cases of violence and abuse in schools, using a multidisciplinary and multisectoral approach;**

(g) **Develop appropriate guidelines for the implementation of Child Referral Protection Procedures for all professionals involved in the child protection system (including teachers, social workers, kindergarten personnel, medical professionals, members of the police and the judiciary) and ensure that they receive training on these procedures and corresponding guidelines, as well as on their obligation to report and take appropriate action in suspected cases of domestic violence affecting children;**

(h) **Cooperate with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on violence against children and other relevant United Nations bodies.**

Sexual exploitation and abuse

23. The Committee is deeply concerned by:

(a) The lack of comprehensive legislation to criminalize and prevent sexual exploitation of children, as well as a corresponding strategy and a coordination body in charge of its implementation;

(b) Insufficient data on the scope and different forms of sexual abuse, exploitation and abuse in the family, as well as of studies on the root causes of these phenomena and on the impact of information and communications technologies on child sexual abuse and exploitation;

(c) Challenges in investigation of child sexual abuse cases and identification of victims, such as the inexistence of the planned Digital Evidence Research Unit, limited activity of the Cybercrime Unit, the insufficient geographic coverage of the toll-free helpline and the length of the number of this helpline;

(d) Insufficient awareness in general population, and specifically amongst children, parents and professionals, on referral and reporting mechanisms of cases of sexual exploitation, on the dangers of online conduct of children and of the existence of a toll-free child helpline;

(e) The absence of protocols to regulate and reinforce cooperation between the public and the private sector, as well as international cooperation to combat online child abuse and exploitation;

(f) Outsourcing of rehabilitation services for children victims of neglect, abuse and exploitation, including sexual exploitation, and lack of financial resources for such services.

24. The Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 67) and urges the State party to:

(a) Establish a national database on all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse of children, including cases of online abuse and exploitation and of cases happening within the family, and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of this phenomena, with a particular focus on the impact of information and communications technologies on child sexual abuse and exploitation;

(b) Reinforce the victim identification process for cases of sexual abuse and exploitation of children, including by adopting proactive investigation and prosecution strategies, allocate the necessary human, technical and financial resources to the Specialized Cybercrime Unit and establish the planned Digital Evidence Research Unit;

(d) Train actors possibly involved in the detection of children suspected of having been subjected to sexual exploitation or abuse, on applicable international child right norms and standards, on protection, reporting and referral procedures and a child-friendly and gender-sensitive approach to them;

(e) Change the toll-free helpline into a three-digit-number in order to facilitate its use by children and guarantee access to the toll-free helpline in all regions of the country;

(f) Raise awareness of parents, children, teachers, health officials and others working with and for children, and especially among children who are particularly vulnerable to sexual exploitation, on reporting and referral procedures, as well as on the means to minimize the risks of children's online conduct;

(g) Develop public-private sector protocols and strengthen international cooperation between law enforcement bodies to combat child sexual exploitation online;

(h) Strengthen financial resources allocated to and support for assistance to child victims of abuse and neglect, in order to ensure their access to services for recovery, counselling and other forms of rehabilitation and meet the Child Care Standards defined in August 2012;

(i) Continue collaboration with relevant NGOs and seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF.

Harmful practices

25. The Committee welcomes the abolishment of legal provisions allowing marriage of children before the age of 18 by 1 January 2017, and recommends that the State party develop awareness-raising campaigns and programmes to reinforce the implementation of the law.

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

Family environment

26. The Committee notes the reform of the Child Care System and the deinstitutionalization process of children, but remains seriously concerned by:

- (a) Insufficient human, technical and financial resources allocated to the social protection system, especially when supporting and / or replacing family environment;
- (b) Limited geographical coverage of the social protection system;
- (c) Inadequate initiatives for the early identification and management of children's needs;
- (d) Insufficient measures for the reconciliation of work and family life to support working parents to provide quality care to their children;
- (e) Limited access of the Childs Rights Center to Childcare institutions run by religious organizations and private individuals.

27. **The Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 35) and urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Reinforce and allocate the necessary human, technical and financial resources to the social protection system, as well as to education and family policies and programmes, especially by significantly increasing the number, training and remuneration of social workers;**
- (b) **Guarantee access of all children and their families to social services, especially in rural areas;**
- (c) **Establish mechanisms and procedures for the early identification of children and families in need of the services of the social protection system;**
- (d) **Further strengthen assistance and support services to parents and legal guardians in their child-rearing responsibilities and promote measures to support working parents, including considering collaboration with the business sector.**
- (e) **Introduce and enforce a mandatory registration requirement for childcare institutions, criminalize running an institution without a license and enforce standards for childcare in all institutions.**

Adoption

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party expedite the adoption of the draft Law on Adoption and Foster Care, which shall prohibit, inter alia, direct adoption and introduce capacity building of adoptive parents and foster carers, as well as comply with all safeguards in relation to adoption under the Convention.**

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

Children with disabilities

29. While welcoming efforts for integration of children with disabilities in social, recreational and cultural activities, the Committee is seriously concerned by the:

(a) Absence of early identification and intervention programmes, the exclusively health-needs-based system determining disability status, which ignores some developmental disabilities of infants and young children, as well as the absence of an effective referral system, based on cooperation between medical personnel, social workers and service providers;

(b) Slow progress in the deinstitutionalization of children with disabilities in rural areas;

(c) Incomplete data on children with disabilities;

(d) Low awareness in concerned families of available services for children with disabilities, as well as limited access to health, education and care services by children with disabilities, especially with autism, Down syndrome and severe disabilities, as well as for children in rural areas.

30. 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 to, set up a comprehensive strategy for the inclusion of children with disabilities, and:

(a) Introduce individual functional assessments of disability status, based on the International Classification of Functioning, Disability and Health, as well as a bio-psycho-social approach for their support, train service providers on these mechanisms, guarantee effective cooperation between services, timely medical interventions and referral to adequate health and educational services and establish early identification and referral mechanisms for vulnerable children;

(b) Accelerate the deinstitutionalization process in rural areas, ensure sufficient alternative family - and community - based care options for children deprived of family environment, in particular for children with disabilities and reinforce reintegration services;

(c) Organize disaggregated data collection on children with disabilities;

(d) Develop a monitoring system for children with disabilities and their participation in health and education systems;

(e) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities, promote a positive image of such children and strengthen knowledge of specific services available.

Health and health services

31. Whilst noting the launch of the Universal Healthcare Programme in 2013, the creation of a programme and a coordination council of mothers and children's health within the Ministry of Labour, Health and Social Affairs in the same year, as well as the adoption of a policy for regionalization of maternal and newborn care and the implementation of a corresponding pilot programme in 2015, the Committee remains concerned at:

(a) High rates of infant mortality and stillbirth and low technological capacity of prenatal and post-natal health care;

(b) Reports of continued prevalence of malnutrition, anaemia, other micronutrient deficiencies, as well as obesity in children and limited coverage of educational health visits by Primary Health Care professionals, leading to inappropriate child care practices.

32. 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 target 3.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ending preventable deaths of new-borns and children under 5 years of age, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para 45) and urges the State party to:

(c) Strengthen efforts to decrease rates of infant mortality and stillbirth, by, inter alia, improving ante- and post-natal care, enhancing the capacity of health care providers all over the country and implement and apply the OHCHR Technical guidance on the application of a human rights-based approach to the implementation of policies and programmes to eliminate preventable mortality and morbidity of children under 5 years of age (A/HRC/27/31);

(d) Allocate adequate human, technical and financial resources to ensure full coverage of educational visits by Primary Health Care professionals, define periodicity of visits, expand this programme to pregnant women and introduce information on levels of delivery care and the corresponding perinatal institutions;

(e) Address issues of malnutrition, anaemia, other micronutrient deficiencies, as well as obesity through, inter alia, education and promotion of healthy feeding practices;

(f) Seek financial and technical assistance from UNICEF and the World Health Organization (WHO), among others, in this regard.

Adolescent health

33. Taking note of the high rates of early pregnancies and absence of sexual and reproductive health education in school curricula and in the light of its general comment No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the strategy of reproductive health includes a specific focus on adolescent health and expedite its adoption;

(b) Develop and implement a policy to protect the rights of pregnant teenagers, adolescent mothers and their children and combat discrimination against them;

(c) Introduce sexual and reproductive health education into the mandatory school curriculum for adolescent girls and boys, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;

(d) Reinforce measures to raise awareness of and foster responsible parenthood and sexual behaviour, with particular attention to boys and men.

HIV/AIDS

34. In the light of its general comment No. 3 (2003) on HIV/AIDS and the rights of the child, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 52) and recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop and implement national guidelines on HIV disclosure counselling for children;

(b) Improve follow-up treatment for HIV/AIDS-infected mothers and their infants to ensure early diagnosis and early initiation of treatment;

(c) Improve access to quality, age-appropriate HIV/AIDS, sexual and reproductive health services;

(d) Seek technical assistance from, inter alia, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and UNICEF.

Standard of living

35. While noting monetary and social support provided for families living in poverty, the Committee draws attention to target 1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals on implementing nationally appropriate social protection systems and measures for all and reiterates its previous concluding recommendations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 54) that the State party:

(a) Take steps to improve the standard of living of children as a matter of priority, giving particular attention to housing, water and sanitation;

(b) Allocate sufficient funds in order to counteract the persistent inequality, effectively reduce the disparities and improve the extremely low standard of living of, inter alia, families with several children, refugee and internally displaced families, and families living in rural and remote areas;

(c) Target as priority increased access to basic services, including clean running water and sewerage disposal;

(d) Seek technical cooperation from, inter alia UNICEF, for the regular monitoring of the poverty situation of children and to take urgent measures to address all negative indicators.

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

36. In the light of its general comment No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education and taking note of target 4.1 of the Sustainable Development Goals on ensuring that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take the necessary measures to improve accessibility of education, and focus on creating the conditions to increase access of children of vulnerable groups, such as children in situations of poverty, those from ethnic minorities and with disabilities, as well as young mothers after childbirth;

(b) Take the necessary measures to improve the quality of education, and strengthen quality training for teachers, with particular emphasis on rural areas, in line with previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 57 (b));

(c) Further develop and promote quality vocational education to enhance the skills of children, as an alternative for those who leave school early;

(d) Expedite the adoption of the draft Law on Early Learning and Preschool Education and allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and development;

(e) Adopt and implement the National Standards and Technical Regulations on WASH and Nutrition for pre-school institutions and establish monitoring mechanisms and tools for their enforcement, in order to eliminate existing regional disparities in the quality of water and sanitation facilities in preschools and schools, which continues to have a negative impact on the health of children in rural areas.

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

Asylum-seeking and refugee children

37. Taking into account the ongoing reform of the State party's national refugee legislation and in line with general comment No. 6 (2005) on treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Expedite the adoption of the draft Law on International Protection to facilitate access of asylum-seeking children to the asylum system, including for children in need of international protection, bringing the national legislation in line with the 1951 Convention relating to the Statute of Refugees;

(b) Allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of the Migration Strategy and Action Plan for 2016 – 2020, to facilitate local integration of refugee and asylum-seeking children, as well as their access to naturalization;

(c) Collaborate with relevant NGOs and seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNHCR.

Internally displaced children

38. The Committee notes the revision of the Law on Internally Displaced Persons in February 2014, the adoption of the Strategy for Internally Displaced Persons and the accompanying IDP Action Plan. The Committee is however concerned by:

a) Non-consideration of specific needs of internally displaced children in the definition of assistance modalities and inheritance of the IDP status;

b) Reports of internally displaced children in the State party facing inadequate living conditions, limited educational services and opportunities for integration for internally displaced families.

39. The Committee recalls its previous recommendation (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 61) to give the highest priority to the protection of the rights of internally displaced children and recommends that the State party:

c) Mainstream needs-based assistance to internally displaced children into national social protection systems, and development plans, and guarantee their inclusion in professional programmes ;

d) Ensure that appropriate alternative accommodation is made available to all residents upon the closure of collective centres, especially families with children, while seeking long-term solutions, and strengthen support to community-based initiatives to generate livelihoods and employment for internally displaced persons;

e) Continue to follow up the recommendations of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Internally Displaced Persons.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

40. The Committee recommends that the State party take all necessary measures to combat all forms of child labour, including in the informal sector, and urges the State party to restore the Labour inspectorate, thus strengthening the monitoring of child labour prohibitions.

Children in street situations

41. Taking into account the adoption on 22 June 2016 of the legislative reform package affecting children in street situations and the development of a full-fledged system for the reintegration of children in street situations into society, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Strengthen the implementation of action plans for the protection of the rights of the child, by incorporating a separate goal on preventing and combating the sale and exploitation of children and on addressing the situation of children in street situations throughout the country,

(b) Include effective identification and referral mechanisms to comprehensive and long-term care, recovery and reintegration programmes, follow-up and measures in support of families and communities;

(c) Carry out a comprehensive study to assess the scope, nature and root causes of the presence of children in street situations in the country in order to develop a national prevention policy;

(d) Consider putting in place a mechanism to collaborate with neighbouring countries to ensure the protection of children in street situations;

(e) Conduct public awareness campaigns to address the stigma attached to children in street situations.

Sale, trafficking and abduction

42. The Committee recommends, in line with previous concluding observations (CRC/C/GEO/CO/3, para. 69), that the State party:

(a) Integrate a comprehensive child rights perspective in the next action plan on combating trafficking in persons to develop further prevention, protection and prosecution measures to combat sexual and labour exploitation, sale, abduction and trafficking of children;

(b) Specifically target children in vulnerable and marginalized situations, including children from ethnic minorities, children placed in institutions, children living in street situations, children with disabilities, children affected by migration, asylum seeking and refugee children, children of foreign nationality and girls who are victims of domestic violence;

(c) Ensure that all cases of sexual and labour exploitation, sale, abduction and trafficking are investigated and that perpetrators are charged and punished;

(d) Ensure that child victims of sexual exploitation, sale, abduction and trafficking are protected and that they are provided with adequate recovery and social reintegration services and programmes.

Administration of juvenile justice

43. The Committee, in line with its general comment No. 10 (2007) on children's rights in juvenile justice, recommends that the State party:

(a) Guarantee adequate human, technical and financial resources for specialized juvenile court facilities and ensure that specialized professionals receive continuous education and training;

(b) Further promote alternative measures to detention and ensure availability of sufficient possibilities for community work and mediation;

- (c) Seek technical assistance from, inter alia, UNICEF.

Child victims and witnesses of crimes

44. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that in practice, enough specialized personnel, including child psychologists and psychiatrists, are available for support of child victims and witnesses of crime.

J. Ratification of international human rights instruments

45. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the following core human rights instruments to which it is not yet a party:

- (a) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families of 2003;
- (b) International Convention for the Protection of all Persons from Enforced Disappearance of 2010;
- (c) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities of 2008.

Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

46. 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 fourth periodic report, 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

47. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports by 1 July 2022 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 purposes of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

48. The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document, not exceeding 42,400 words, 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) and paragraph 16 of General Assembly resolution 68/268.

