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Committee on the Rights of the Child**Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iceland*****I. Introduction**

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Iceland¹ at its 2586th and 2587th meetings,² held on 4 and 5 May 2022, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2630th meeting, held on 3 June 2022.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues,³ 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 various legislative, institutional and policy measures taken by the State party to implement the Convention, including the decision of the Parliament in 2013 to incorporate the Convention and its Optional Protocols into domestic law, the withdrawal of its reservation to Article 37 of the Convention in 2015, the adoption of the Child-Friendly Iceland parliamentary resolution in 2021 and the amendment of the Children Act and the Child Protection Act in, respectively, 2021 and 2022. It notes with appreciation the ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in 2016, and accession to the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness in 2021.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

4. 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: independent monitoring (para. 12), violence against children (para. 25), children with disabilities (para. 30), mental health (para.

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninetieth session (3 May–3 June 2022).

¹ CRC/C/ISL/5-6.

² See CRC/C/SR.2586 and CRC/C/SR.2587.

³ CRC/C/ISL/RQ/5-6.

32), education, including vocational training and guidance (para. 38) and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children (para. 42).

5. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It urges the State party to ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children.

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

Legislation

6. The Committee recommends that the State party conduct a review of all its legislation to align it with the Convention, in line with the Strategy and Action Plan on Child-Friendly Iceland, and develop child-rights impact assessment procedures for national and subnational legislation and policies relevant to children.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

7. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Strategy and Action Plan on children's rights covering the period 2021-2024 and recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the implementation of the Strategy and the Action Plan through allocation of sufficient human, technical and financial resources in line with specific time-bound and measurable goals;

(b) Effectively monitor and evaluate progress in the implementation of children's rights according to the Strategy and Action Plan with the appropriate involvement of children and civil society.

Coordination

8. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to strengthen cooperation among relevant ministries, including through a memorandum of understanding and formal working groups on various matters concerning children and the establishment of a new Ministry of Education and Children. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the special steering committee on matters concerning children operates effectively to coordinate all activities related to the implementation of the Convention at the national and municipal levels and across sectors, and the implementation of the various action plans in the area of children's rights;

(b) Ensure that the steering committee is provided with the human, technical and financial resources necessary to support the effective implementation of the Convention across the State party, and that it includes the participation of children and civil society;

(c) Address disparities in access to child services between municipalities and ensure that children in all municipalities have access to high quality services for children.

Allocation of resources

9. With reference to its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party incorporate a child rights-based approach into the State budgeting process to:

(a) Elaborate and implement procedures for the allocation, use and monitoring of resources for children throughout the State party, and assess how investments in all sectors serve the best interests of the child;

(b) **Ensure transparent and participatory budgeting processes at State and municipal levels in which civil society, the public and children can participate effectively.**

Data collection

10. **The Committee notes with appreciation the establishment of a government steering committee on a children's welfare dashboard in 2020 and that a national dashboard on the well-being, health and rights of children will be established in 2022. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁴ the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that the dashboard collects both qualitative and quantitative indicators encompassing all areas of the Convention, and that the data are disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic origin, nationality and socioeconomic background;**

(b) **Strengthen the collection and analysis of data on discrimination against children, children with disabilities, mental health and violence against children, including domestic violence and sexual exploitation and abuse;**

(c) **Ensure the effective coordination and sharing of the data among relevant ministries and entities, including Statistics Iceland, the Ombudsman for Children, the Directorate of Health and relevant educational institutions, as well as among professional groups and civil society, and used for the evaluation of policies and projects on children's rights.**

Independent monitoring

11. **The Committee notes that children can file a complaint with the Parliamentary Ombudsman on decisions, procedures or conduct exercised by government officials and that they can receive relevant advice from the office of the Ombudsman for children, but is deeply concerned about the lack of a child-friendly complaints mechanism for children covering all areas of the Convention, including when they concern non-State actors.**

12. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations⁵ and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Establish an independent mechanism to receive, investigate and competently address complaints from children in a child-friendly manner, including against private persons, that is embedded or linked to the Ombudsman for children, and ensure that the Parliamentary Ombudsman uses child-friendly procedures;**

(b) **Ensure that all children are aware of their right to file a complaint under all existing mechanisms and the concrete possibility to do so;**

(c) **Expedite the establishment of an independent mechanism for monitoring and promoting human rights, including children's rights, and ensure that it is in full compliance with the Paris Principles.**

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

13. **Noting with appreciation the various programmes aimed at promoting awareness on children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Continue its awareness-raising regarding children's rights among the public, including by disseminating child-friendly pedagogical material in Icelandic, and promote the active involvement of children in public outreach activities;**

(b) **Ensure systematic training on children's rights, the Convention and its Optional Protocols for all professionals working for and with children.**

⁴ CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 21.

⁵ CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 17.

B. Definition of the child

14. While noting that very few exceptions for marriage under the age of 18 years have been granted since 2009, the Committee urges the State party to amend its Law in Respect of Marriage to remove all exceptions that allow marriage under the age of 18 years.

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

Non-discrimination

15. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on Equal Treatment irrespective of Race and Ethnic Origin in 2018 and the action plan on immigrant matters in 2016, but is concerned about the lack of information on the forms of discrimination against children in the State party. Taking note of target 10.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Eliminate disparities between municipalities regarding children's access to services, including by ensuring that the objectives of the Local Authorities Equalization Fund are aligned with the national policy and strategy on children's rights;

(b) Ensure that the legal framework on discrimination, including the Act on Equal Treatment, protects children from discrimination; that children know how to report cases of discrimination; and that cases of discrimination against children are investigated by a competent authority;

(c) Conduct a study on the extent and forms of discrimination against children, including discrimination based on residence and against migrant children, children belonging to minority groups, children of a parent with an irregular residence status, children living in poverty, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and children with disabilities.

Best interests of the child

16. The Committee notes with appreciation the integration of the principle of the best interests of the child in the Children Act and other laws, but is concerned about the insufficient application of the principle in administrative and judicial proceedings and insufficient knowledge among professionals working with children. With reference to 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:

(a) Ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is consistently applied in programmes and legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings, including in relation to parental custody and mediation, and decisions on asylum, international protection and residence permits;

(b) 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

17. The Committee welcomes the efforts to promote child participation in decision-making processes, including in the preparation of the State party's report and through the national assembly on child matters, municipal and special youth councils, the advisory group to the Ombudsman for Children and action plans on child participation, but is concerned that younger children are not always given the opportunity to have

their views heard in all matters concerning them. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁶ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend the Youth Act to ensure that all municipalities establish youth councils and to clarify their functions, responsibilities and mandates, in accordance with the Child-Friendly Iceland parliamentary resolution;

(b) Ensure that all children can express their opinion and be heard in all decisions affecting them, including in courts and civil proceedings and on decisions regarding custody, contact and asylum, and adopt relevant legislative amendments to ensure that their views are heard and taken into account in such decisions;

(c) Continue to strengthen measures to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children, including children in disadvantaged situations, within the family, the community, schools and the realm of policymaking at the municipal and national levels, such as by ensuring that the outcomes of youth councils are systematically fed into public decision-making;

(d) Ensure that all relevant professionals working with and for children, including teachers and youth care professionals, systematically receive appropriate training on the right of the child to be heard and have his or her opinion taken into account.

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

Birth registration and nationality

18. The Committee welcomes the amendments made to the Icelandic Nationality Act in 2018, but is concerned that children born in the State party to parents with an irregular residence status are registered as domiciled overseas, which negatively impacts their access to health and other services. It recommends that the State party ensure that children of parents with an irregular residence status have access to health and other services and receive protection against deportation under article 102 of the Foreigner Nationals Act, and strengthen legal pathways for such children to acquire a nationality.

Right to identity

19. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on Gender Autonomy in 2019 and recommends that the State party allocate sufficient resources for its implementation, particularly with regard to the provision of related services and support for children and their parents, and provide training on gender-neutral registration to professionals working with children.

20. Noting with concern that Article 4 of the Act on Artificial Fertilisation and Use of Human Gametes and Embryos for Stem-Cell Research allows for anonymity of donors, the Committee recommends that the State party guarantee the right of children conceived by medically assisted reproduction to information regarding their biological origins.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

21. Noting with concern that parents decide on a child's religious status at birth under the Act on Registered Religious Communities as amended in 2013, the Committee recommends that children's religious statuses remain undeclared until they are able to make the decision for themselves.

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

22. Noting with concern that persons under 18 years of age cannot legally register their associations, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that children

⁶ CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 29.

are supported and encouraged to form, legally register and participate in their own associations and initiatives.

Right to privacy and access to appropriate information

23. The Committee welcomes the various measures taken by the State party to promote children's digital literacy, protect children's rights to privacy and ensure their safety in the digital environment, including through the adoption of the data protection act in 2018. With reference to its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Further develop regulations and safeguarding policies to protect the rights and safety of children in the digital environment, including by instituting effective regulations of the internet service providers, and ensure that media and other relevant professionals are appropriately trained on such regulations and policies;

(b) Ensure that laws on access to information and the digital environment protect children from harmful content and materials and online risks, and provide for mechanisms to prosecute violations;

(c) Continue efforts to enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, teachers and families.

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

Violence against children, including neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse

24. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to combat violence against children, including the revision of the General Penal Code and Children Act, the abolishment of the requirement of double criminality for sexual offences against children, the adoption of the national action plans against, respectively, violence 2019-2022 and sexual and gender-based violence and harassment 2021-2025, and the ratification of the Lanzarote Convention and Istanbul Convention. However, the Committee is concerned about the following:

(a) The lack of reliable statistical information on violence against children, although research indicates a high prevalence of violence against children, including sexual exploitation and online violence;

(b) The lack of information on the investigation and prosecution of cases of sexual abuse and exploitation concerning children;

(c) Insufficient funding allocated for the implementation of the national action plan against violence;

(d) The particular vulnerability of children with disabilities, asylum-seeking and migrant children and children belonging to minority groups to violence;

(e) That many services, including *Barnahus*, have relatively long waiting lists, which delay access to adequate support.

25. With reference to its general comment No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and targets 5.2, 16.1 and 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the effective investigation of and intervention in all cases of violence against children, including neglect and sexual abuse, in and outside the home, and in the digital environment, and that perpetrators are brought to justice;

(b) Strengthen measures for ensuring that children who are victims or witnesses of violence, including children with disabilities and asylum-seeking children, have prompt access to child-friendly and multisectoral remedies and comprehensive support, including in a *Barnahus*, with the aim of preventing the secondary victimization of those children;

(c) Ensure that mechanisms for supporting child victims of violence, including the child protection services and regional child protection boards that will replace the child protection committees in 2023, are adequately resourced;

(d) Strengthen measures aimed at preventing violence against children, with an emphasis on children in particularly vulnerable situations including children with disabilities, children living in poverty, asylum-seeking children and children belonging to minority groups;

(e) Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children, in order to enhance awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation, including online safety, among both members of the public and professionals working with and for children and to identify and adequately respond to all cases of violence against children, including neglect and sexual abuse;

(f) Conduct a national survey on violence against children and ensure the collection of data on child sexual exploitation and abuse, including on cases that have been reported to the authorities, investigated and prosecuted and the sanctions that have been imposed on perpetrators, and draw conclusions in terms of policies and practices, in line with the rights of the child.

Harmful practices

26. Noting with concern that the Act on Sterilization Procedures of 2018 allows for the sterilization of children if continued fertility is considered to have negative effects on their lives and health, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Prohibit the sterilization of children, particularly girls with disabilities, without their informed consent;

(b) Ensure that the performance of unnecessary medical or surgical treatment on intersex children are safely deferred until children are able to provide their informed consent, in line with the prohibition of such procedures under the Act on Gender Autonomy, and provide reparations for children who received unnecessary treatment;

(c) Provide adequate social, medical and psychological services, counselling and support to intersex children and their families.

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

Family environment

27. The Committee welcomes the extension of parental leave to 12 months and the flexibility in which such leave can be applied between parents but notes with concern the 6-month gap between the end of parental leave and the start of pre-school in some municipalities. The Committee is also concerned about the long waiting times for divorce and custody proceedings. It recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that proceedings on custody and other family matters are promptly resolved, including by increasing the number of professionally trained staff, and ensure that both parents and children receive adequate counselling and other support services;

(b) Ensure that working parents have sufficient childcare options after the end of parental leave and before the start of pre-school, and consider undertaking a study, in collaboration with municipalities, to assess the impact of the 6-month gap between the end of parental leave and the start of pre-school, with a view to proposing improvements at the national level.

Children deprived of a family environment

28. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken to promote foster care, but is concerned about the heavy workloads of child protection committees and reports of the publication of personal information of children in the child protection system. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Prioritize a reform of the child protection system, with a view to developing quality standards and clear guidelines for child protection services and regional child protection boards, reducing processing times of cases, ensuring psychosocial support for children, expanding coverage to all geographical areas and allocating sufficient financial, technical and human resources;

(b) Ensure that all child protection authorities receive training on children's rights, including their right to privacy, and on relevant legislation;

(c) Further strengthen its system of foster care, including through regular review of placements and continuous training, support and counselling for foster adoptive parents;

(d) Strengthen measures aimed at providing education, skills and opportunities for independent living for children leaving alternative care, including through increased funding and on the basis of the assessments conducted under the action plan for child protection.

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

29. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on Services for Persons with Disabilities in 2018, which provides for specific protection and support for children with disabilities, but is concerned about long waiting times for children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities to receive diagnoses and adequate support.

30. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen support provided to children with disabilities, in particular migrant children with disabilities, for their social integration and individual development, including by ensuring that they have prompt access to early detection and early intervention programmes, and by allocating sufficient resources for the implementation of the Act on Services for Persons with Disabilities;

(b) Decrease the waiting time for diagnoses by increasing the number of professionals and by ensuring the availability of quality services for children with disabilities;

(c) Ensure that families of migrant children know how to seek necessary support, and address the overrepresentation of migrant children who are referred to services for intellectual and psychosocial disabilities;

(d) Ensure that, in cases where custody is shared, parents of children with disabilities who are separated or divorced can both benefit from relevant support under the national health insurance scheme;

(e) Ensure the accessibility of public and private buildings for children with disabilities, including all diverse groups of children with different needs.

H. Basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 24, 26, 27 (1)–(3) and 33)**Mental health**

31. The Committee welcomes the adoption of a policy and action plan on mental health in 2016, but is concerned about:

(a) Rising rates of depression, anxiety, self-harm and sleep deprivation, and the large number of children on prescription medication for these and other issues as well as for attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder;

(b) Long waiting lists for children seeking mental health services, partly due to a shortage in specialized staff;

(c) Reports of children with mental health issues being placed in detention due to a lack of space at the psychiatric ward for children and adolescents at the national hospital;

(d) The fact that comparable comprehensive mental health promotion, screening for mental health issues and early intervention services are not being offered in all upper secondary schools.

32. Taking note of target 3.4 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Strengthen mental health services and programmes for children, including by: (i) improving coordination between municipalities and relevant ministries, including the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour and the Ministry of Education and Children, to provide therapeutic mental health services in schools at all levels and within communities; (ii) ensuring that the number of qualified medical professionals, including child psychologists and psychiatrists, is sufficient to meet children's mental health needs in a timely manner; (iii) providing mental health services that are tailored to address the specific needs of migrant children, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and children with disabilities; and (iv) having a better overview of the waiting list to improve the efficiency of interventions;**

(b) **Invest in preventive measures, address the underlying causes of suicide and poor mental health among children and ensure that children's perspectives are included in the development of response services available for them;**

(c) **Ensure that the prescription of drugs for children, including for anxiety, depression, sleep disorders and attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder is used only as a measure of last resort and after an individualized assessment of the best interests of the child, and that medical practitioners, children and their parents are properly informed about non-medical alternatives and possible side effects of such medical treatment;**

(d) **Provide community-based education, training and support to parents of children with mental health issues, in line with the policy and action plan on mental health;**

(e) **Prohibit the practice of the placement of children with mental health issues in detention;**

(f) **Provide comprehensive mental health promotion, screening for mental health issues and early intervention services in all upper secondary schools.**

Adolescent health

33. Recalling its general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence and its previous recommendations, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) **Integrate age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education into mandatory school curricula at all levels of education and in teacher training, and ensure that it includes a well-coordinated age-appropriate education on gender equality, sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights, responsible parenthood and sexual behaviour and violence prevention;**

(b) **Ensure that relevant professionals receive appropriate training on adolescents' right to sexual and reproductive health-care services;**

(c) **Strengthen measures to prevent and address the incidence of drug, alcohol and tobacco use by adolescents, including by: (i) providing adolescents with accurate**

and objective information on the harmful effects of alcohol, drug and substance abuse, as well as life-skills education on preventing substance abuse, including tobacco and alcohol dependence; (ii) ensuring the early identification and adequate referral of adolescents requiring treatment, and that such treatment is accessible and child-friendly; and (iii) enforcing legislation regarding the marketing of tobacco, including e-cigarettes, to children and regularly evaluating the effectiveness of various interventions aimed at reducing the incidence of drug, alcohol, and tobacco use by adolescents.

Breastfeeding

34. The Committee is concerned about the reported decrease in exclusive breastfeeding after the first month of birth, and recommends that the State party strengthen efforts, including through the newly agreed agreement with midwives for home visits, to facilitate exclusive breastfeeding during the first six months of the life of a child.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

35. The Committee takes note of the various measures taken, including to tackle carbon emissions, to address climate change related challenges. Taking note of targets 13.2 and 13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that national policies and programmes on climate change and adaptation are implemented in accordance with the principles of the Convention and taking into account children's needs and views;

(b) Promote, with the active participation of schools, children's awareness of and preparedness for climate change, including by incorporating the subject into school curricula and teacher training programmes.

Standard of living

36. Noting with appreciation the measures taken to address child poverty, the Committee takes note of target 1.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party:

(a) Further strengthen its policies to ensure that all children have an adequate standard of living, including by increasing social benefits for single-parent households, providing support for childcare prior to the start of pre-school and providing adequate and long-term social housing for families in need;

(b) Ensure that measures include a particular focus on children from disadvantaged families, especially children of single parents, children of parents with disabilities and migrant children;

(c) Assess the impact of measures to combat poverty, including any negative effects on the enjoyment of other rights, with a view to ensuring that such measures are comprehensive and comply with a child rights-based approach.

I. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)

Education, including vocational training and guidance

37. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to improve the quality of education and address bullying, including through the adoption of the education policy 2021-2030, the establishment of the new Ministry of Education and Children and initiatives such as the Reykjavik City Child-Friendly Education Policy. However, it is concerned about the following:

- (a) The prevalence of dropouts and absenteeism from schools, particularly at the secondary level and among migrant children and children with mental health problems or learning difficulties;
- (b) Insufficient resources and teacher training for inclusive education;
- (c) Inadequate educational outcomes in literary, mathematical and scientific understanding;
- (d) Reports of bullying of children, particularly children with disabilities, in schools.

38. **Taking note of targets 4.1, 4.5 and 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Continue its efforts to reduce and prevent school dropouts and absenteeism, based on an analysis of the root causes, including by: (i) providing financial support for socioeconomically disadvantaged children to complete upper secondary school; (ii) establishing the proposed database for registration of compulsory school students; and (iii) developing guidelines for identifying, registering and responding to cases of school absenteeism;**

(b) **Strengthen measures for ensuring inclusive education for all children with disabilities, including children with intellectual or psychosocial disabilities, such as by: (i) increasing the resources allocated for the implementation of the policy on inclusive education; (ii) adapting curricula and training and assigning specialized teachers and professionals in integrated classes so that children with learning difficulties receive individual support and due attention; (iii) providing assistive technologies and devices; and (iv) ensuring reasonable accommodation in school infrastructure and transportation;**

(c) **Strengthen its efforts to improve the quality of education and to ensure an adequate number of qualified teachers, including by providing incentives to attract teachers;**

(d) **Ensure appropriate budget allocations for the implementation of quality multilingual intercultural education for migrant children, including through appropriate materials, bilingual teachers and educative tools;**

(e) **Combat violence in schools, including bullying, cyberbullying and online violence, and ensure that such measures encompass prevention, early detection mechanisms, awareness-raising on its harmful effects, the empowerment of children, the training of teachers and intervention protocols;**

(f) **Promote high-quality vocational training to enhance the skills of children, especially those who drop out of school, and adopt a re-entry policy to encourage those who wish to return to school;**

(g) **Ensure the active participation of children and young people in the formulation of educational policies.**

Human rights education

39. **Noting with appreciation the incorporation of human rights into the national curriculum, the Committee takes note of target 4.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Strengthen the teaching of children's rights and the principles of the Convention within the mandatory school curricula in all educational settings and in the training of teachers and education professionals, taking into account the framework of the World Programme for Human Rights Education;**

(b) **Develop human rights education materials that foster respect for and appreciation of racial, gender and other diversities, and ensure that teachers receive the necessary support to teach children's rights in schools.**

Rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities

40. The Committee welcomes the 2018 guidelines for the quality of work in after-school activity centres for children between 6 and 9 years of age, and the action plans on, respectively, sports and leisure and social activities for children and young people. With reference to its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop guidelines for ensuring the quality of leisure and after-school activities for children over 9 years of age;

(b) Strengthen support for initiatives aimed at promoting children's right to leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, including youth centres, sports clubs, youth associations and the Children's Cultural Fund, and ensure that they meet quality standards, including with regard to accessibility and staffing;

(c) Ensure that sporting, recreational, leisure, cultural and artistic activities are available and accessible for children with disabilities, asylum-seeking and migrant children, socioeconomically disadvantaged children and children living in rural areas;

(d) Fully involve children in planning, designing and monitoring the implementation of policies and programmes relevant to leisure, play, recreation, cultural life and the arts.

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

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

41. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of the Act on Foreigners in 2016, the measures taken to ensure that all asylum-seeking children are interviewed in a child-friendly manner, and the State party's plans to implement all recommendations of the report of the Ministry of Justice on children seeking international protection. Nonetheless, the Committee is concerned about the following:

(a) That unaccompanied children, while waiting for placement in foster care, remain at such centres sometimes for months and without appropriate care from a child protection official;

(b) The use of dental procedures to assess the age of asylum-seeking children, and the lack of a procedure for them to challenge the outcome of any age assessments.

42. With reference to joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families /No. 22 and No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) on the human rights of children in the context of international migration, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Allocate sufficient resources for the effective implementation of the Act on Foreigners and for all reforms proposed in the report of the Ministry of Justice on children seeking international protection;

(b) Prioritize the immediate placement of unaccompanied children in foster care and invest the resources necessary to ensure that all reception facilities are child-friendly, with a view to ensuring that they conform to minimum standards for reception conditions, psychosocial and integration support, health, welfare and education for children;

(c) Provide asylum-seeking children with age-appropriate information about their rights, available services and, as relevant, application procedures for family reunification;

(d) Ensure that all relevant stakeholders working with children receive training, and copies of the relevant procedures, for ensuring that the best interests of

asylum-seeking children are given primary consideration in all asylum processes and that their views are heard, taken into account and given due weight;

(e) Conduct age-assessment procedures through multidisciplinary methods, including a comprehensive assessment of the psychological development of the child, in cases of serious doubt only and respecting the legal principle of the benefit of the doubt; and ensure that the outcome of such assessments can be challenged separately by the affected party.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

43. The Committee remains concerned about the large number of children who may start participating in light work as early as 13 years of age. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁷ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the involvement of children in all contexts is in full compliance with international child labour standards with respect to age, working hours, working conditions, education and health;

(b) Raise awareness in schools and among parents and employers on the regulations regarding the participation of children in paid work.

Trafficking

44. Noting with appreciation the establishment of the National Referral Mechanism for Human Trafficking in 2020, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Establish a procedure for the identification of children who are victims of trafficking and ensure that relevant professionals working with and for children receive appropriate training;

(b) Effectively investigate and prosecute cases of trafficking of children and ensure appropriate convictions for perpetrators.

Administration of child justice

45. Noting with appreciation that no child has received or served a sentence for prison since the State party's withdrawal of its reservation to Article 37 in 2015, the Committee takes notes of its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system and recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt the bill aimed at protecting the rights of children in the justice system, including by legally prohibiting the publication of the names of children recognized as having infringed criminal law;

(b) Strengthen measures to ensure that children with sexually inappropriate behaviour, including children who may have committed sexual offences, receive appropriate therapeutic attention and benefit from child protection measures.

K. Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention

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

46. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the Act on the Protection of Sexual Privacy in 2021. With reference to its 2019 guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the sale of

⁷ CRC/C/ISL/CO/3-4, para. 51.

children, child prostitution and child pornography,⁸ the Committee recalls its previous recommendations⁹ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that all forms of the sale of children are criminalized, in line with articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol, including with regard to acts of producing and disseminating material advertising the offences described in the Protocol, and producing, distributing, disseminating, selling or possessing child sexual abuse material;

(b) Take measures specifically aimed at preventing and addressing the online sale of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation and abuse, including through training of relevant professionals.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

47. While welcoming the incorporation of the Optional Protocol into domestic law in 2013 and the legal prohibition of the recruitment of children into the armed forces in 2018, the Committee recalls its previous recommendations¹⁰ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Establish in law extraterritorial jurisdiction for crimes under the Optional Protocol when they are committed by or against a person who is a citizen of or has links with the State party;

(b) Establish a mechanism for the early identification of children who may have been involved in armed conflicts abroad, and ensure that they receive support for their physical and psychological recovery and their reintegration into society.

L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

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

M. Ratification of international human rights instruments

49. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearances and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

N. Cooperation with regional bodies

50. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to cooperate with the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other Council of Europe member States.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

51. 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 and that a child-friendly version is disseminated to, and made

⁸ CRC/C/156.

⁹ CRC/C/OPSC/ISL/CO/1.

¹⁰ CRC/C/OPAC/ISL/CO/1.

widely accessible for, children, including those in the most disadvantaged situations. The Committee also recommends that the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports and the present concluding observations be made widely available in the languages of the country.

B. National mechanism for reporting and follow-up

52. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the Steering Committee on Human Rights and ensure that it has a mandate to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms, and to coordinate and track national follow-up to, and implementation of, treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms. The Committee emphasizes that the Steering Committee should be adequately and continuously supported by dedicated staff and should have the capacity to consult systematically with the national human rights institution, when established, and civil society.

C. Next report

53. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined seventh and eighth periodic report by 26 November 2027 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 guidelines¹¹ and should not exceed 21,200 words.¹² In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report. 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.

¹¹ CRC/C/58/Rev.3.

¹² General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.