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**Committee on the Rights of the Child****Concluding observations on the combined third and fourth periodic report of Suriname\***

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

**I. Introduction**

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

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

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

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

**III. Main areas of concern and recommendations**

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

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

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

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

### **Legislation**

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

### **Comprehensive policy and strategy**

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

### **Coordination**

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

### **Allocation of resources**

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

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

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

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

(d) Take measures to combat all forms of corruption that negatively impact the economic development of the State party, including the adoption of the Draft Anti-Corruption Law.

### **Data collection**

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

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

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

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

(d) Take into account the conceptual and methodological framework set out in the 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 information*; and

(e) Strengthen its technical cooperation with, among others, UNICEF.

### **Independent monitoring**

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

(a) Take measures to expeditiously establish an independent mechanism for monitoring human rights in full compliance with the Paris Principles, including the Child Ombuds Bureau for monitoring children's rights that is able to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-sensitive manner; and

(b) Seek technical assistance from, among others, OHCHR, UNICEF and UNDP.

### **Dissemination, awareness-raising and training**

12. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to strengthen efforts to ensure systematic, mandatory and ongoing training on children's rights, including as part of the school curricula, as well as awareness-raising programmes, including campaigns, among children, families and the general public. It further recommends that training is provided to professionals working with and/or for children, particularly teachers, early childhood workers, social workers, health service personnel, the legal profession, and law enforcement officials, in particular in the interior areas of the State party. It also recommends that the Youth Parliament be

provided with the necessary mandate and that the Child Rights Bureau be provided with the necessary support and resources to step up efforts in this regard.

**B. Definition of the child (art. 1)**

13. While noting that the age of marriage is 15 for girls and 17 for boys, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendations (CRC/C/SUR/CO/2) and urges the State party to adopt the draft amendment to the Marriage Act setting a minimum age of 18 for both girls and boys in the State party.

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

**Non-discrimination**

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

**Best interests of the child**

15. In the light of its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to ensure that this right is appropriately integrated and consistently applied in all legislation, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, for example placement of children in alternative care and adoption, as well as in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to and have an impact on children, including children with disabilities. 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**

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

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

(b) Conduct research to identify issues that are most important to children, to hear their views on those issues, to find out how well their voices are heard in family decisions affecting their lives and the channels through which they currently and potentially have the most influence on national and local decision-making;

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

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

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

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

### **Birth Registration and Nationality**

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

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

### **Corporal punishment**

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

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

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

### **Abuse and neglect**

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

(a) Further strengthen awareness-raising and education programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children in order to formulate a

comprehensive strategy for preventing and combatting child abuse in all settings, in particular among Amerindian and Maroon communities;

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

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

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

(e) Implement the recommendations contained in the Report of the independent expert for the United Nations Study on violence against children (A/61/299), taking into consideration the recommendations of the Regional Consultations for the Caribbean, as previously recommended (CRC/C/SUR/CO/2);

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

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

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

#### **Sexual exploitation and abuse**

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

21. The Committee urges that the State party to:

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

(b) Conduct awareness-raising and education programmes including among children to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, including incest, and ensure

accessible, confidential, child-friendly and effective reporting channels for such violations;

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

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

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

#### Harmful practices

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

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

#### Family environment

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

#### Children deprived of a family environment

24. While welcoming the approval of the Bill on Care Institutions in 2014, and the establishment of the Children in Need of Special Protection Monitoring System, the Committee draws the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children (see General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex), and emphasizes that financial and material poverty should never be the sole justification for removing a child from parental care, for receiving a child into alternative care or for preventing a child's social reintegration. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party:

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Adoption**

25. The Committee recommends that, within the ongoing revision of its Civil Code, the State party ensure that the provisions on adoption are in line with the Convention. It further recommends that the State party consider ratifying the 1993 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Intercountry Adoption as previously recommended (CRC/C/SUR/CO/2).

### **E. Disability, basic health and welfare (arts. 6, 18 (3), 23, 24, 26, 27 (1–3) and 33)**

#### **Children with disabilities**

26. The Committee is seriously concerned that:

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

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

(c) Inadequate care in residential care institutions, and abuse and violence by service providers and by family members, including sexual abuse.

(d) Training for teachers who work with children with disabilities is insufficient; and

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

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

(a) Ratify the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and strengthen efforts to implement the requisite legislative framework and policies for

the effective protection of the rights of children with disabilities, including adoption of the draft Bill on Special Education and the draft Bill on Primary Education, as well as the current draft policy for persons with disabilities.

- (b) Strengthen support to caregivers of children with disabilities, including by increasing social benefits and other services;
- (c) Ensure that schools provide inclusive education, that both schools and care facilities are accessible, and adequately staffed and funded, as well as ensure that training is provided for professionals working with children with disabilities, such as teachers, social workers and health, medical, therapeutic and care personnel;
- (d) Ensure periodic review of the placement of children with disabilities in alternative care settings, and monitor the quality of care therein, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children;
- (e) Take all the necessary measures to ensure that children with disabilities are fully integrated into all areas of social life, including schools, sports and leisure activities, and facilities and other public areas are accessible for children with disabilities;
- (f) Undertake awareness-raising campaigns aimed at government officials, the public and families to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities.

#### Health and health services

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

- (a) Continue to strengthen efforts to ensure adequate provision of prenatal and post natal care, as well as address the high rates of mortality of infants and children aged 5 years and younger, and the still high maternal mortality rates;
- (b) Introduce targeted interventions to prevent the undernourishment of children, continue to implement the Infant and Young Child Feeding Plus Communication Strategy and take other measures to improve the practice of exclusive breastfeeding for the first six months, including through legislation by expanding maternity leave for both the public and private sector, awareness-raising measures, including campaigns, providing information and training to relevant officials, particularly staff working in maternity units, and parents with a particular focus on minority communities, as well as work with UNICEF to establish baby friendly hospitals;
- (c) Strengthen implementation of the National Strategic Plan on HIV/AIDS, the Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission programme, and the Ministry of Health special prevention programmes for children and youth (ages 10 to 19), including availability of rapid testing in the interior areas of the State party and ensure access to antiretroviral treatment;
- (d) Develop policies and programmes to strengthen capacity of families and the community to provide care and support for children infected or affected by HIV/AIDS, as well as continue activities aimed at reducing stigma and discrimination related to HIV/AIDS providing awareness-raising on human rights within the context of HIV;

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

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

#### **Mental health**

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

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

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

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

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

#### **Adolescent health**

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

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

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

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

(d) **High rate of alcohol, drug and tobacco use.**

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

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

(b) **Ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and targeted at adolescent girls and boys, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexual transmitted infections, including**

HIV/AIDS, and expand the Basic Life Skills programme to all schools, in particular those in the interior areas, and integrate it into the curriculum at both the primary and secondary levels;

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

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

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

#### **Impact of climate change on the rights of the child**

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

#### **Standard of living**

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

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

(b) Implement the Conditional Cash Transfer (CCT) system and strengthen all social protection programmes to continue to improve outcomes for children as well as poverty reduction strategies to address the multidimensional nature of the issue with a view towards establishing a coherent framework identifying priority action against the exclusion of children, in particular those from single-headed households, Amerindian and Maroon communities, with specific and measurable objectives, clear indicators, deadlines and sufficient economic and financial support; and

(c) To partner with UNICEF and other development partners to promote a comprehensive and coherent strategy to guarantee children a minimum level of access to basic services and financial security, especially in the interior areas, and create a

**nationally defined social protection floor, as part of the Social Protection Floor initiative of the United Nations.**

## **F. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28, 29, 30 and 31)**

### **Education, including vocational training and guidance**

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

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

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

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

(d) The high number of students who drop out of school, in particular girls in the interior areas and boys nationally, and the high number of repeat-students;

(e) Lack of a formal government policy on pregnant girls in schools, insufficient support for the reintegration of school-aged mothers into the education system, and persistent stigmatization of pregnant teens and teen mothers within schools; and

(f) Quality of care and issues related to safety and hygienic requirements, educational backgrounds of staff and background checks for staff working in registered day care facilities, including public kindergartens, semi-public kindergartens, nurseries and preschool centers.

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

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

(b) **Increase the number of qualified teachers, and step-up quality training for teachers, including kindergarten and primary school teachers, by expanding the capacity of the Centre for Continuing Education in Suriname, in line with the child friendly schools initiative and the UNADF Action Plan (2012-2016) in cooperation with UNICEF;**

(c) **Adopt and implement legislation and policy on early childhood education, allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of**

early childhood education, in particular in interior areas, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care, as well as approve the Early Childhood Development Standards;

(d) Adopt and implement the Basic Education Act which would extend compulsory education from ages 4 through 16, and strengthen child-friendly approaches to education, including the “I Believe In You” approach and “PROGRESS” program and implement recommendations in the report of the Preparing Education Innovation Task Force for strengthening the education system;

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

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

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

**Children belonging to minority and indigenous groups**

36. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to improve access to health, education and other services in the interior areas of the State party for Amerindian and Maroon children, including by approving the draft Law on Language Education and the Language Council, ensuring access to free primary education, building more public school facilities, expanding preschool education, improving training for teachers and administrators, and expanding the Child-Friendly School project. The Committee also recommends that the State party ensure access by these communities to quality health care and to clean water and sanitation by expanding the Water and Sanitation Facilities Project, as well as ensure that Amerindian and Maroon communities are protected from illegal and uncontrolled logging and mining which has a negative environmental impact on these communities by adopting and enforcing legislation on sustainable land management in consultation with local communities, as well as corporate social responsibility.

**Economic exploitation, including child labour**

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

38. The Committee urges that the State party:

(a) Adopt and implement the draft National Action Plan on Combatting Child Labour and provide the necessary resources for its implementation;

(b) Harmonize the minimum age of 14 for work with the proposed age of 16 for compulsory education;

(c) Take measures to prevent children from being economically exploited by ensuring that the relevant provisions of the Labour Code, Penal Code and other relevant legislation related to child labour are enforced, including with respect to the minimum age for hazardous work, which is set at 18 years of age, and adopt policies

to address child labour in both the formal and informal sectors, ensuring compliance with article 32 of the Convention and relevant ILO standards;

(d) Strengthen labour inspectorates and monitoring mechanisms, in the formal and informal sectors, and make data on the number of inspections and violations publically available;

(e) Continue to raise awareness on the negative consequences of child labour through public educational programmes, including campaigns organized in cooperation with opinion leaders, families and the media;

(f) Consider ratifying the ILO Convention No. 138 on Minimum Age and seek technical assistance from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the ILO; and

(g) Continue cooperation with the ILO with a view towards establishing programs to move children out of the worst forms of child labor and strengthen vocational programs for drop-outs and older children to serve as alternatives to underage labour.

#### **Sale, trafficking and abduction**

39. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Strategy to Combat Human Trafficking (2014-2018) and regional initiatives to address commercial sexual exploitation of children in tourism, and the Human Trafficking Awareness Programs and the Anti-Trafficking Hotline. The Committee is however seriously concerned that:

(a) The State party is a source, transit and destination country for children subjected to sex trafficking, in particular girls from Amerindian and Maroon communities in regions where mining and forestry operations are taking place;

(b) Reports of children being coerced to engage in commercial sex, including sex tourism, and forced prostitution in the State party, as well as forced labour; and

(c) Insufficient capacity for enforcement of laws and policies as well as the lack of shelters and services for victims.

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

(a) **Adopt and implement the necessary legislative and policy measures to effectively combat child trafficking for purposes of sexual exploitation, including through the development of a comprehensive anti-trafficking strategy and plan of action;**

(b) **Increase staff and resources of the Trafficking in Persons Unit of the Police as well as training to step-up enforcement, and ensure that all law enforcement officers receive adequate training in human trafficking and have the resources to carry out investigations, particularly in the interior areas of the State party;**

(c) **Establish a monitoring mechanism for the investigation and redress of such abuses, with a view to improving accountability, transparency and the prevention of violations to the Convention, as well as ensure the effective prosecution and punishment of those who exploit children for purposes of prostitution, forced labour or pornography;**

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

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

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

(g) Expand public education campaigns on identifying possible victims, children at risk and perpetrators, preventative measures and avenues for assistance and redress, including the World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) global code of ethics for tourism within the tourism industry, and raise awareness of the Anti-Trafficking Hotline.

#### Administration of juvenile justice

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

(g) Ensure sufficient resources, both financial and personnel in social welfare and justice sectors; and

(h) Make use of the technical assistance tools developed by the Interagency Panel on Juvenile Justice and its members, including the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), UNICEF, OHCHR and NGOs.

#### Child victims and witnesses of crimes

42. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure, through adequate legal provisions and regulations that all children who are victims and/or witnesses of

crimes, e.g., children victims of abuse, domestic violence, sexual and economic exploitation, abduction, and trafficking and witnesses of such crimes, are provided with the protection required by the Convention and that the State party take fully into account the United Nations Guidelines on Justice in matters Involving Child Victims and Witnesses of Crime (annexed to Economic and Social Council resolution 2005/20).

#### **I. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communication procedure**

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

#### **J. Ratification of international human rights instruments**

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

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

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

#### **J. Cooperation with regional and international bodies**

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

### **IV. Implementation and reporting**

#### **A. Follow-up and dissemination**

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

## B. Next report

49. The Committee invites the State party to submit its combined fifth and sixth periodic reports by 30 March 2021 and to include therein information on the follow-up to the present concluding observations. The Committee draws attention to its harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines adopted on 1 October 2010 (CRC/C/58/Rev.2 and Corr.1) and reminds the State party that future reports should be in compliance with the guidelines. In addition, in its resolution 68/268, adopted on 9 April 2014, the General Assembly decided in paragraph 16 to establish a word limit of 21,200 words for periodic reports submitted by States parties. In the event a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purpose of its consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

50. The Committee also invites the State party to submit an updated core document in accordance with the requirements of the common core document in the harmonized guidelines on reporting, approved at the fifth Inter-Committee Meeting of the human rights treaty bodies in June 2006 (HRI/MC/2006/3). The word limit is 42,400 words as established by the General Assembly in its resolution 68/268 (para. 16).

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