

CRC-CONSIDERATION OF NORWAY'S THIRD PERIODIC REPORT.

Introductory statement. Mr. Petter F. Wille

My delegation is pleased to meet with the Committee for a dialogue on our implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, as well as the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography. The drafting of the reports has involved several ministries and other state authorities, as well as non governmental organisations. This reporting is a cumbersome, but useful exercise. The examination of the reports is not only a cornerstone in international monitoring of states' human rights obligations, but it also serves as part of a dialogue to assist us in improving our implementation. The concluding observations from the Committee will be given wide distribution, not only to the relevant authorities, but also to civil society.

Subsequent to the submission of our reports, we have had the opportunity to inform the Committee about new developments in some areas, through our response to the list of issues raised by the Committee. In addition, I would like to inform the Committee about the following new developments:

- As referred to in chapter one of the third periodic report, the Norwegian Parliament decided in 2003 to incorporate the Convention on the Rights of the Child with its Optional Protocols into Norwegian legislation. It was also decided that the Convention will have precedence if any conflict should arise between the Convention and other Norwegian legislation. In addition to the incorporation of the Convention, the Government also undertook a review of legislation that concerns the rights of children. The intention was partly to eliminate any discrepancies in relation to the Convention and partly to better define the requirements of the Convention in our legislation. As a result of this review, several amendments have been made to different acts within areas such as civil procedure, adoption and child welfare.

-The proposed bill prohibiting ethnic and religious discrimination, referred to in para 103 in our third periodic report, has recently been adopted by Parliament. The act prohibits discrimination based on ethnicity, national origin, descent, colour, language and religious belief in all parts of society and includes both direct and indirect discrimination. The act incorporates the ICERD into Norwegian legislation. Furthermore, it complies with the requirements of the EU Council Directive 2000/43/EC by implementing the principle of equal treatment between persons, irrespective of racial or ethnic origin. The discrimination act will enter into force 1 January 2006.

- In March this year, the Government submitted a development strategy for Children and Young People in the South. The UN Millenium Development Goals, almost all of which focus on the situation of children and young people, provide the basis for the strategy and for Norway's future development efforts in this area. The Government will

i.a. give special priority to strengthening the rights-based approach and the participation of children and young people. Health and education are priority areas. We will, i.a. give priority to child health and nutrition. One of the main tasks will be supporting the development of health care systems at country level, and the fight against HIV/AIDS. We will continue our efforts to increase assistance for education to 15% of the development assistance budget. Special priority will be given to primary education for girls and young women. UNICEF and the World Bank are important channels in this context.

-Para 10 of the report submitted under article 12 of the Optional Protocol, contains information about the definitions of child pornography and the penalties set in the Penal Code for involvement in child pornography. As explained in the report, the Parliament has asked the Government to consider separating child pornography from the general provision on pornography. In December 2004 the Government presented a proposition to Parliament relating to amendments to the Penal Code, where it proposed a special penal provision for sexual depictions of children. The proposal was to make it a punishable act with penalty of fine or imprisonment up to three years to produce, acquire, introduce, possess, transfer to others for payment or systematically familiarise oneself with such sexual depictions of children. The proposal was adopted by Parliament 11 May this year.

These are some of the relevant latest developments. My delegation is looking forward to the dialogue with the Committee and we will do our best to answer your questions and to provide any additional information the Committee may request.