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Committee on the Rights of the Child**Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland*****I. Introduction**

1. The Committee considered the combined sixth and seventh reports of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland¹ at its 2716th and 2717th meetings,² held on 18 and 19 May 2023, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2728th meeting, held on 26 May 2023.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined sixth and seventh reports of the State party, under the simplified reporting procedure, which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the delegation of the State party.

3. Where not otherwise stated, the present recommendations are addressed to the Government of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, including the jurisdiction of England, and, where relevant mandates fall under their jurisdiction, to the governments of the devolved administrations in Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland and Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies.

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

4. The Committee welcomes the various measures to implement the Convention, including the prohibition of marriage under 18 years of age in England and Wales; the lowering of the voting age to 16 years in Wales; the prohibition of corporal punishment in Scotland and Jersey; the abolition of the defence of reasonable punishment in Wales; the passing of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill by the Scottish Parliament in 2021; the adoption of a Children and Young People's Strategy and the establishment of a Youth Assembly in Northern Ireland; the extension of the Convention and its first and second Optional Protocols to Guernsey and Alderney; and the establishment of a Children's Commissioner in Jersey. It also welcomes the ratification of the Council of Europe Conventions on protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse in 2018 and on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence in 2022.

* For adoption by the Committee at its ninety-third session (8–26 May 2023).

¹ CRC/C/GBR/6-7.

² See CRC/C/SR. 2716 and CRC/C/SR. 2717.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

5. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: non-discrimination (para. 20), abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse (para. 33), children deprived of a family environment (para. 38), mental health (para. 43), asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children (para. 50) and child justice (para. 54).

6. **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))

Reservations

7. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations³ and urges relevant Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies of the State party to consider withdrawing their reservations to articles 22, 32 and 37 (c) of the Convention.**

Legislation

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

(a) **Strengthen efforts to fully incorporate the Convention into national legislation in England, Wales, Northern Ireland, the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies, and conduct a comprehensive review of all legislation to align it with the Convention and address any inconsistencies;**

(b) **Expediently bring forward the amendments necessary to enact the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Incorporation) (Scotland) Bill in Scotland;**

(c) **Reconsider its decision to replace the Human Rights Act and ensure that any revision to the act protects all the rights of the child in the Convention, provides effective judicial remedies, ensures a child rights-based approach, and follows transparent and participatory processes, including by ensuring the meaningful participation of civil society and children and publishing the impact assessment of the Bill of Rights;**

(d) **Enact a bill of rights for Northern Ireland;**

(e) **Develop mandatory child-rights impact assessment procedures for legislation and policies relevant to children in England, Northern Ireland and Wales;**

(f) **Assess the impact of the State party's withdrawal from the European Union on the enjoyment of children's rights.**

³ CRC/C/15/Add.34, paras. 22, 37; CRC/C/15/Add.188, para. 7; CRC/C/GBR/CO/4, para. 9; CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 6.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

9. Noting with appreciation the adoption of action plans on children in the Overseas Territories, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop and adopt comprehensive policies and action plans on the implementation of the Convention, with the participation of children, in all jurisdictions of the State party, Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies that encompass all areas covered by the Convention and include specific time-bound and measurable goals;

(b) Ensure the effective implementation of policies and action plans on children, and ensure that they are supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources;

(c) Ensure that the action plans include a special focus on children in disadvantaged situations, including asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, children belonging to minority groups, children with disabilities, children in care, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, socioeconomically disadvantaged children and so-called “young carers” or children with caregiver responsibilities.

Coordination

10. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁴ the Committee recommends that the State party establish structures, such as a ministerial lead at the national level with corresponding structures in the devolved administrations and territories, responsible for ensuring the effective monitoring and coordination of all activities related to the implementation of the Convention across all sectors and at all levels.

Allocation of resources

11. The Committee recommends that the State party incorporate a child rights-based approach into the State budgeting process in all jurisdictions of the State party, the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies, and:

(a) Implement a tracking system for the allocation, use and monitoring of resources for children, with a view to eliminating disparities and ensuring equitability, and assess how investments in all sectors serve the best interests of children;

(b) Introduce budgetary allocations for children in disadvantaged situations and ensure that children are not affected by austerity measures;

(c) Ensure that, in situations of economic crisis, regressive measures are not taken without the requirements stated in paragraph 31 of general comment No. 19 on public budgeting for the realization of children’s rights, including that children participate in the decision-making process related to such measures;

(d) Withdraw the 2023/24 budget for Northern Ireland and fully consider the equality and human rights implications of a new budget, taking all possible steps to mitigate any adverse impact on children’s rights before issuing a revised budget;

(e) Ensure transparent and participatory budgeting in which civil society, the public and children can participate effectively.

Data collection

12. Recognizing the large body of data available on children’s rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen its data-collection system with regard to both qualitative and quantitative indicators that encompasses all areas of the Convention, and ensure that

⁴ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 11.

the data are disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic origin, nationality and socioeconomic background;

(b) Improve the collection and analysis of data, including in the Overseas Territories, on violence against children, mental health, food insecurity, malnutrition, education and the situation of children in disadvantaged situations, including children in alternative care, children with disabilities, asylum-seeking and migrant children, and children of incarcerated parents;

(c) Regularly collect, analyse and publish disaggregated data on the use of stop-and-search checks, harmful devices, seclusion, restraint, solitary confinement and isolation on children;

(d) Allocate sufficient resources for the piloting of an administrative data-based system on children in the Overseas Territories;

(e) Ensure that the data are shared among devolved administrations and Overseas Territories as well as among relevant ministries, professional groups and civil society and used for the evaluation of policies and projects on children's rights.

Independent monitoring

13. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the national human rights institutions and/or Children's Commissioners, as relevant, have the mandate and sufficient human, financial and technical resources to monitor children's rights and to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-friendly manner;

(b) Continue to ensure the full compliance of all such institutions with the Paris Principles, including regarding their funding and selection and appointment processes.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

14. Noting with concern the relatively low level of knowledge of the Convention among children and adults, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt a national strategy for awareness-raising of children's rights among the public, and promote the active involvement of children in public outreach activities;

(b) Ensure systematic training on children's rights, the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto for all professionals working for and with children, in particular those working in education, social work, law enforcement, immigration and justice.

International cooperation

15. The Committee commends the State party for its commitment to meet the internationally agreed target of allocating 0.7 per cent of gross national income to official development assistance. Recalling target 17.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee encourages the State party to regain the target as soon as possible and adopt a children's rights-based approach in respect of its trade agreements and development aid policy and programmes.

Children's rights and the business sector

16. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the legal accountability of business enterprises and their subsidiaries operating in or managed from the State party's territory in relation to international and national human rights, labour, environmental and other standards;

(b) **Require companies to undertake assessments of, consultations on and full public disclosure of the environmental, health-related and children's rights impacts of their business activities and their plans to address such impacts.**

Access to justice and remedies

17. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children have access to:**

(a) **Confidential, child-friendly and independent complaints mechanisms in schools, alternative care settings, foster care systems, mental health settings and detention for reporting all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and other violations of their rights, and raise awareness among children of their right to file a complaint under existing mechanisms;**

(b) **Legal support and representations and remedies, including by removing barriers faced by children in disadvantaged situations and expanding the types of support provided under the legal aid budget;**

(c) **Officials working with children in the justice system who have been adequately trained on children's rights and child-friendly proceedings.**

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

18. **The Committee is concerned that children who are 16 and 17 years of age do not always receive protection as children, and that marriage under 18 years of age remains permissible in Scotland, Northern Ireland, the Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey and the Isle of Man. In particular, the Committee is concerned about the information provided during the dialogue that Saint Helena does not plan to raise the minimum age of marriage to 18 years without exception. The Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Ensure that all children, including those who are 16 and 17 years of age, are defined as children in law and receive protection as children in practice, including by undertaking a review of age-based legislation throughout all jurisdictions of the State party;**

(b) **Prohibit all marriages under 18 years of age, without exception, in Scotland, Northern Ireland and all Overseas Territories and the Crown Dependencies of Guernsey and the Isle of Man.**

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

Non-discrimination

19. **The Committee remains deeply concerned about persistent discrimination, such as through expressions of racism and bullying, against children in disadvantaged situations, including children belonging to minority groups and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender children; insufficient progress in ensuring protection of all children under 18 years of age against discrimination on the grounds of their age; and the overrepresentation of children of Asian and African descent, Muslim, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children in the criminal justice system and the large proportion of these groups of children who are living in poverty.**

20. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations⁵ and urges the State party to:**

(a) **Implement targeted policies and programmes to combat racist and xenophobic activities and to eliminate discrimination against children in disadvantaged situations, including children belonging to ethnic minority groups, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children, children with**

⁵ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 11.

disabilities, children in alternative care, children of incarcerated parents, children of unmarried parents, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, socioeconomically disadvantaged children, and children in the justice system;

(b) Establish clear avenues for children to seek justice in cases of discrimination, and, where appropriate, ensure the access of children in disadvantaged situations to health services, education and a decent standard of living;

(c) Conduct media campaigns to change social norms and behaviours that contribute to discrimination, raise public awareness of the prohibition of discrimination, and promote tolerance and respect for diversity;

(d) Encourage the reporting of hate crimes against children; investigate and prosecute cases of racially, ethnically and religiously motivated crime; punish perpetrators with commensurate sanctions; and provide adequate compensation to the victims, as appropriate;

(e) Ensure that children who experience discrimination, bullying or harassment in relation to their sexual orientation or gender identity receive protection and support, including through targeted anti-bullying measures;

(f) Take legislative and other measures to ensure the protection of all children below 18 years of age from discrimination on the grounds of their age, particularly in England and Northern Ireland; address discriminatory stereotypes against children; and promote a positive image of children as rights-holders;

(g) Implement the “Inclusive Britain” recommendations that would help to address discrimination against children;

(h) Evaluate, with the participation of children and civil society, existing measures aimed at combating discrimination against children in disadvantaged situations, to assess their impact and revise the measures accordingly.

Best interests of the child

21. Noting with concern that the principle of the best interests of the child is not systematically applied in all matters affecting children, the Committee recalls its previous recommendations⁶ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the principle of the best interests of the child is consistently applied in all policies, programmes and legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings affecting children, including in relation to placement in alternative care, domestic violence, custody, trafficking, child justice, migration and asylum procedures;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of all relevant professionals for assessing and determining the best interests of the child and for giving it due weight as a primary consideration;

(c) Take measures to develop and implement a tool for the purpose of Child Rights Impact Assessments throughout the State party.

Right to life, survival and development

22. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Urgently reduce infant and child mortality rates, including the reportedly high rates among boys in the Overseas Territories, and address the underlying determinants especially poverty, discrimination and disability;

(b) Conduct an independent inquiry into the unexpected deaths of children in alternative care, custody, mental health care and the military, and ensure the regular collection and publication of disaggregated data on child deaths in all institutional settings;

⁶ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, paras. 22, 23.

(c) Address the high rate of avoidable child deaths and strengthen efforts to prevent suicide and self-harming behaviours among children, including children in care, custody, health settings and immigration detention;

(d) Undertake effective and urgent measures to repatriate children who are nationals of the State party from camps in the Syrian Arab Republic.

Respect for the views of the child

23. Noting with concern that children's views are not systematically taken into account in decisions affecting them and in national and local decision-making, and underscoring the importance of the availability of age-appropriate information to facilitate child participation, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the right of all children, including younger children, children with disabilities and children in care, to express their views and to have them taken into account in all decisions affecting them, including in courts and relevant judicial proceedings and regarding domestic violence, custody, placement in alternative care, health, including mental health treatment, education, justice, migration and asylum;

(b) Strengthen measures to promote the meaningful participation of children in family, community and school settings, and in policymaking at local and national levels, including on so-called "reserved matters", and develop mechanisms to ensure that the outcomes of children's and youth parliaments are systematically fed into public decision-making;

(c) Ensure that all relevant professionals working with and for children systematically receive appropriate training on the right of the child to be heard and to have his or her opinions taken into account;

(d) Consider holding consultations with children and civil society in England and Northern Ireland on lowering the voting age to 16 years.

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

Nationality

24. The Committee is deeply concerned that children and their families can be deprived of their nationality without notice under the Nationality and Borders Act of 2022, which also retroactively validated deprivation decisions already made but found unlawful by courts. The Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Remove legal and administrative barriers and strengthen legal pathways for all children, including children without a regular residence status, children born in the Overseas Territories and children in care, to acquire residence status and nationality, including by simplifying procedures and waiving high fees for all children in need;

(b) Amend the Nationality and Borders Act of 2022 to ensure that the best interests of the child are taken as a primary consideration in all proceedings related to deprivation of nationality, that the act is not applied to any children who would be put at risk of statelessness or would otherwise be stateless, and that citizens are not deprived of their citizenship as a result of actions they allegedly committed as children.

Right to identity

25. Noting the decision taken by the State party to prevent the implementation of the Gender Recognition Reform (Scotland) Bill, the Committee recommends that the State party recognize the right to identity of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, and put in place measures to ensure that all adolescents enjoy their freedom of expression and respect for their physical and psychological integrity, gender identity and emerging autonomy. In this context, the State party should ensure that any decisions regarding systems of gender recognition for children are taken in close

consultation with transgender children and in line with children's rights, including the right to be heard and the right to identity, in accordance with their evolving capacities, to free and informed consent and with appropriate safeguards.

Freedom of expression and religion

26. The Committee is deeply concerned about the chilling effect of counter-terrorism measures on the right of children to freedom of expression, and that nearly half of referrals under the Prevent Strategy are Muslim children and children of Asian descent. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁷ the Committee urges the State party to guarantee the right of all children to freedom of expression and to practise freely their religion or belief, including by:

(a) Immediately halting the targeting of certain groups of children in counter-terrorism measures, including through mandatory training of teachers, police and other relevant professional groups on the prohibition of discrimination and the right of children to freedom of expression and religion;

(b) Continuing to assess the impact of the Prevent Strategy on children's rights, and regularly collect and publish data, disaggregated by age, ethnicity and religious affiliation, on children referred to the authorities under the Prevent Strategy, with a view to ending the discriminatory, racial and stigmatizing impact of such measures on children belonging to minority groups;

(c) Ensuring that counter-terrorism measures do not undermine children's rights to freedom of expression, opinion and religion, and that children can exercise these rights without threats or intimidation;

(d) Repealing legal provisions for compulsory attendance in collective worship and establishing statutory guidance to ensure the right of all children, including children under 16 years of age, to withdraw from religious classes without parental consent;

(e) Preventing the use of religion as a selection criterion for school admissions in England and revising the religious education syllabus in Northern Ireland to include education on and respect for a diversity of religions.

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

27. Noting with concern that the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and the Public Order Bill may restrict a child's right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen children's right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, including by repealing measures in the Police Crime Sentencing and Courts Act 2022 and removing provisions in the Public Order Bill which limit children's rights to participate in protests;

(b) Strengthen measures to prevent the use of acoustic devices to disperse public gatherings of children (so-called "mosquito devices"), in line with the Committee's previous recommendations;⁸

(c) Ensure that children are not threatened for exercising their right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, including for their involvement in climate activism.

Right to privacy

28. The Committee remains concerned about the continued use of unnecessary stop-and-search checks on children, and that the majority of them are conducted on children

⁷ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, paras. 22(b), 36.

⁸ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 37.

belonging to ethnic minority groups. Recalling its previous recommendations,⁹ the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Effectively enforce the prohibition of the use of non-statutory stop-and-search checks against children, prohibit their use in Northern Ireland, and remove provisions from the Public Order Bill that ease restrictions on their use;
- (b) Ensure that their statutory use is proportionate and non-discriminatory, including by implementing the best use of stop-and-search scheme, and conducting mandatory training for law enforcement officials;
- (c) Improve the monitoring of the use of stop-and-search checks on children, including through the collection and publication of related data, and investigate all allegations of their disproportionate or discriminatory use on children.

Access to appropriate information

29. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken to improve digital inclusion for children in disadvantaged situations, including during the Covid-19 pandemic. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue to improve digital inclusion for children in disadvantaged situations and in the Overseas Territories, including through accessible and affordable online services and connectivity, while ensuring that public services remain accessible to children who do not use or have access to digital technologies;
- (b) Adopt the Online Safety Bill and ensure that all laws and policies on the digital environment protect the rights, privacy and safety of children in the digital environment and from harmful content and online risks;
- (c) Enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, parents, caregivers and teachers, including by incorporating digital literacy into school curricula.

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

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

30. The Committee notes with appreciation the information provided by the State party on the regulations governing the use of electrical discharge weapons, pain-inducing techniques and seclusion on children, but remains deeply concerned at the large number of children who continue to experience such treatment, particularly children belonging to ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities. The Committee reiterates its previous recommendations¹⁰ and urges the State party to:

- (a) Take legislative measures to explicitly prohibit, without exception, the use of: (i) harmful devices including spit hoods, tasers, plastic bullets, attenuating energy projectiles and other electrical discharge weapons against children; (ii) strip searches on children; and (iii) solitary confinement, isolation, seclusion and restraint as disciplinary measures in schools and alternative care and health settings;
- (b) Develop statutory guidance on the use of restraint on children to ensure it is used only as a measure of last resort and exclusively to prevent harm to the child or others, and monitor its implementation;
- (c) Investigate all cases of abuse and maltreatment of children in alternative care and health settings, particularly among children with disabilities, adequately sanction perpetrators and provide reparation to victims.

⁹ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 38.

¹⁰ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 40.

Corporal punishment

31. **Recalling its previous recommendations,¹¹ the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Explicitly prohibit, as a matter of priority, corporal punishment in all settings, including in the home, throughout the State party, including the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies of Guernsey and the Isle of Man, and repeal legal defences of “reasonable punishment” in England and Northern Ireland;**

(b) **Monitor the implementation and impact of legislation prohibiting corporal punishment, including in Scotland, Wales and Jersey, with a view to informing measures aimed at promoting attitudinal change concerning corporal punishment in all settings;**

(c) **Strengthen awareness-raising campaigns for parents, teachers and other professionals working with and for children, to promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing.**

Abuse, neglect and sexual exploitation and abuse

32. The Committee welcomes the various legislative and policy measures to combat violence against children, including the adoption of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021, but remains seriously concerned about:

(a) The high prevalence of domestic abuse, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and other forms of violence against children, including in alternative care, and insufficient measures to investigate such cases and bring perpetrators to justice;

(b) Insufficient measures to identify and support children at risk of violence at home;

(c) Inadequate resources allocated to related services for child victims.

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

(a) **Ensure that child protection systems take a child rights-based approach in preventing and addressing cases of abuse and neglect, including psychological violence; that social services and other mechanisms for identifying and supporting children at risk of violence as well as child victims of violence are adequately resourced; and that child victims are fully recognized as victims and have access to community-based, trauma care and child-sensitive support services;**

(b) **Ensure that the Victims Bill clearly defines the criminal exploitation of children, protection for children who are victims of violence, and the roles and responsibilities of domestic and sexual violence advisors;**

(c) **Promptly and effectively investigate and intervene in all cases of violence against children, including domestic violence, sexual exploitation and abuse of children, in and outside the home, in the digital environment, in religious and educational institutions and in alternative care settings, and ensure expert support to child victims and that perpetrators are brought to justice;**

(d) **Strengthen measures aimed at tackling violence against children, including by implementing the recommendations of the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse in England and Wales, the Gillen Review in Northern Ireland, the Scottish Child Abuse Inquiry and other relevant inquiries and investigations conducted by independent bodies;**

(e) **Develop measures aimed at preventing violence against children in alternative care, children with disabilities, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children and children belonging to minority groups;**

¹¹ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 41.

(f) Ensure that all children who are victims or witnesses of violence have prompt access to child-sensitive, multisectoral and comprehensive interventions, services and support, including forensic interviews and psychological therapy, with the aim of preventing the secondary victimization of those children, and allocate sufficient resources for the implementation and expansion of the *barnahus* and similar models such as the Lighthouse in London;

(g) Ensure a child rights and trauma care-based approach in the provision of support services for victims, including the Bairns' Hoose standards in Scotland, and that such services and support are also available for, and address the specific needs of, all victims of violence;

(h) Ensure that all child victims of violence, including sexual abuse, are allowed as child witnesses to provide video recorded evidence for testimony and cross-examination during the pre-trial stage as a default process in judicial procedures under Sections 21 and 28 of the Youth Justice and Criminal Evidence Act, and that they have access to appropriate therapy without delay;

(i) Strengthen efforts to train professionals working with and for children, including social workers, law enforcement authorities and the judiciary, to identify and effectively respond to cases of violence, including sexual exploitation;

(j) Strengthen the implementation of legislation protecting children from "abuse of trust" in all environments and extracurricular activities in Northern Ireland;

(k) Ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on child protection issues and violence against children to inform the implementation of national strategies on violence and child sexual abuse, including by: (i) creating a national database for missing children; (ii) collecting data on cases that have been reported, investigated and prosecuted; and (iii) ensuring that data on the sexual exploitation and abuse of 16- and 17-year-old children is disaggregated as children.

Freedom of the child from all forms of violence

34. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Prevent and combat gang-related violence and knife crime, and protect children from such violence, including by: (i) addressing the social factors and root causes of gang-related violence and knife crime among adolescents; (ii) establishing child-sensitive early warning mechanisms for children who seek protection against violence of gangs; (iii) adopting programmes that provide children in gangs with assistance and protection to leave gangs and be reintegrated into society; and (iv) putting an end to the recruitment of children as informants for law enforcement and intelligence bodies;

(b) Strengthen measures to protect children from intimidation, racist attacks and other forms of violence committed by non-State actors, including so-called "paramilitary organisations" in Northern Ireland, and from recruitment by such actors into violent activities.

Harmful practices

35. Recalling joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child on harmful practices (2014) and its previous recommendations,¹² the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop national strategies aimed at eliminating and preventing harmful practices affecting children, including child marriage, female genital mutilation and violence committed in the name of so-called honour, and ensure that it includes effective measures for raising public awareness, training relevant professional groups,

¹² CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 47.

identifying victims and addressing data gaps and low rates of reporting and prosecution;

(b) Prohibit the promotion, facilitation and delivery of so-called “conversion therapies” aimed at changing the sexual orientation and gender identity of children, in line with its commitment made in 2018, with particular attention paid to the vulnerabilities of children who may be subject to such harm;

(c) Publish the results of the 2019 call for evidence issued by the Government Equalities Office on the experiences and needs of people who have variations in sex characteristics;

(d) Legally prohibit non-urgent and non-essential (including feminizing or masculinizing) medical or surgical treatment of intersex children before they are of sufficient age or maturity to make their own decisions; ensure that such incidents are investigated and provide redress and psychosocial support to victims; and establish a mechanism to independently monitor implementation of the legal prohibition.

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

Family environment

36. Noting with appreciation the various childcare services provided by the State, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen measures to enable working parents and caregivers to balance their professional and family responsibilities, including by allocating sufficient resources for childcare services, encouraging parents to take parental leave and ensuring access to affordable childcare options for socioeconomically disadvantaged families, families in rural and remote areas and families with irregular work schedules;

(b) Expand eligibility criteria for State-subsidised childcare, such as the Childcare Offer and Flying Start childcare in Wales, and establish childcare strategies in Northern Ireland, the Overseas Territories and Crown Dependencies where such a strategy is not in place, to ensure that all children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations have access to free childcare;

(c) Train professionals working with and for children, including teachers, to identify “young carers”, and provide their families with the support necessary to relieve such children of their responsibilities; and allocate sufficient resources for implementing, and raising awareness of, the national identification card system in Wales to ensure that such children are identified and have access to support services.

Children deprived of a family environment

37. The Committee notes with appreciation the measures taken to support children deprived of a family environment, including grant funding for local authorities to maintain services, the independent review of children’s social care published in 2022 and the Adoption and Children Act (Northern Ireland) adopted in 2022. Nonetheless, the Committee is deeply concerned about:

(a) The large number of children in alternative care, including in unregulated accommodations such as hotels, and unnecessary or frequent transfers of alternative care or changes in social workers assigned to children;

(b) The placement of children, including children in situations of vulnerability, in secure care and residential care homes, sometimes amounting to deprivation of liberty;

(c) Insufficient support services for children living in and leaving alternative care.

38. Drawing the State party’s attention to the global study on children deprived of liberty and the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the Committee urges the State party to:

(a) Invest in measures to prevent and reduce the number of children placed in alternative care, including by allocating sufficient resources for early intervention and preventive services, including for infants and toddlers, increasing and strengthening the number of trained social workers, and improving multiagency coordination;

(b) Allocate sufficient resources for the implementation of the recommendations of the independent review of children's social care, including the provision of advocacy services for all children as an "opt-out", rather than an "opt-in", service, with a view to ensuring that all children in alternative care: (i) have access to independent, well-resourced child-friendly advocacy services and specialised support, including mental health and therapeutic services; and (ii) are able to maintain contact with their family members and communities, including by ensuring their access to independent visitor services in Wales;

(c) Prevent frequent or unnecessary transfers of children in alternative care settings, ensure that children are consistently supported through individualized care plans and by a social worker throughout their time in care, and conduct regular and substantive reviews of placements in care;

(d) Develop a legislative framework for ensuring a child rights-based approach to the support of children who are placed in alternative care far from their place of residence, including children from Jersey who are placed in alternative care off-island, and ensure that such placements take place only as a measure of last resort;

(e) Prohibit and prevent the placement of children in secure care, residential care homes without appropriate safeguards or unregulated alternative care, including hotels and bed and breakfast accommodation;

(f) Allocate sufficient funds for family- and community-based care options for children who cannot stay with their families, and facilitate the reintegration of children into their families and communities whenever possible;

(g) Ensure that children are heard in decisions affecting them in alternative care placement throughout their stay, and that relevant authorities and professionals have the technical capacities required to guarantee respect for children's views in alternative care;

(h) Strengthen measures, including through increased funding, aimed at providing education, skills, housing and opportunities for independent living for children leaving alternative care.

Children of incarcerated parents

39. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the best interests of the child are the primary consideration in all decisions taken, including when sentencing caregivers, and that alternatives to incarceration are considered;

(b) Ensure that children of incarcerated parents can maintain personal relations with their parents and have access to adequate services, accessible information and appropriate support, including by a social worker and financial support for visits and remote contact.

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

40. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Assess the impact of welfare changes on children with disabilities and their families, and increase social welfare payments accordingly to ensure that policies do not have a discriminatory effect on them and that such payments are sufficient in ensuring their right to an adequate standard of living;

(b) Reduce waiting times and strengthen the system for early detection and intervention, including for children with autism and developmental disorders, in order to facilitate access for children with all types of disabilities to education, health care, social protection and support services;

(c) Strengthen support for the social integration and individual development of children with disabilities, including by providing capacity-building to professionals working with and for children on the rights and specific needs of children with disabilities, and ensuring their access to personal assistance, rehabilitation and assistive devices;

(d) Ensure the right of children with disabilities to be heard in all decisions that affect them.

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

Health and health services

41. Recalling its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen measures aimed at ensuring the availability of quality, child-sensitive and age-appropriate paediatric primary and specialist health care services to all children, and ensure that children's perspectives are included in the development and implementation of all health services, health and social care commissioning, and policy and practice reviews;

(b) Develop a strategy to address health inequalities, including the underlying causes, and in particular in respect of children in disadvantaged situations including children with disabilities, children belonging to ethnic minorities, socioeconomically disadvantaged children, children living in rural areas and transgender children;

(c) Expand health services available to asylum-seeking and migrant children, children without a regular residence status and children in the Overseas Territories to ensure their access to affordable health and mental health services, including by providing interpretation services and repealing regulations of the National Health Service that prevent such children from accessing health services due to their parents' immigration or financial status;

(d) Urgently address the long waiting times faced by transgender and gender-questioning children in accessing specialized health services, improve the quality of such services, and ensure that their views are taken into account in all decisions affecting their treatment;

(e) Strengthen measures to address child malnutrition, food insecurity and growing trends in overweight and obesity, including by: (i) ensuring all children's access to nutritious foods and reducing their reliance on food banks, regardless of their or their parents' migration status; (ii) expanding the free school meals programme to all children in disadvantaged situations, including children whose parents receive Universal Credit; (iii) addressing the root causes of food insecurity including poverty; (iv) providing nutrition services in schools and communities; and (v) promoting healthy lifestyles and physical activity;

(f) Continue its efforts to promote breastfeeding, including by: (i) strengthening support for mothers, including through flexible working arrangements; (ii) fully implementing the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes and strengthening relevant legislation; and (iii) raising awareness of the importance of breastfeeding among families and the general public.

Mental health

42. The Committee is deeply concerned about the long waiting lists for children seeking mental health services and the large number of children with mental health issues, learning disabilities and autism placed in detention and adult psychiatric wards under the Mental Health Act 1983.

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

(a) **Urgently reform the Mental Health Act, in line with previous commitments and the policy position set out in the 2021 White Paper, and ensure that it:**

(i) **Explicitly prohibits the detention or placement in adult psychiatric units or police stations of children with mental health issues, learning disabilities and autism;**

(ii) **Guarantees children's right to be heard in decisions regarding their mental health care, to access therapeutic mental health services and to receive support from Independent Mental Health Advocates;**

(iii) **Establishes standards for determining the duration of inpatient mental health care and for appropriate follow-up, with a view to preventing unnecessary and prolonged stays in inpatient mental health care.**

(b) **Ensure that the Major Conditions Strategy includes infants, children and young people's health, and prioritises the mental health of infants, children and young people;**

(c) **Develop or strengthen strategies, with sufficient resources, for ensuring the availability of community-based therapeutic mental health services and programmes for children of all ages, and for providing comprehensive mental health promotion, screening for mental health issues and early intervention services in schools;**

(d) **Urgently address the long waiting times for accessing mental health services, without stigma, including in the Overseas Territories; and ensure 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 and close to where they live;**

(e) **Develop adequately funded mental health services that are tailored to the specific needs of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, migrant children, children with disabilities and "young carers", including through sufficient investments in specialist services;**

(f) **Address the overrepresentation of children belonging to minority groups, children with autism and children with learning disabilities in inpatient mental health care;**

(g) **Strengthen measures to address the underlying causes of poor mental health, eating disorders and other self-harming behaviours among children, and invest in preventive measures.**

Adolescent health

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

(a) **Ensure access for adolescent girls to age-appropriate family planning services, affordable contraceptives and safe abortion and post-abortion care services, particularly in Northern Ireland and the Overseas Territories, with a view to ensuring that no adolescent girl has to travel to other jurisdictions of the State party to access reproductive health care;**

(b) **Integrate comprehensive, age-appropriate and evidence-based education on sexual and reproductive health into mandatory school curricula at all levels of education and into teacher training, and ensure that it includes education on sexual**

diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights, responsible sexual behaviour and violence prevention, without the possibility for faith-based schools or parents to opt out of such education;

(c) Strengthen measures to provide adolescents with information on preventing substance abuse, including of tobacco and alcohol, and to ensure the early identification and adequate referral of adolescents requiring treatment;

(d) Ensure the availability of accessible, community-based drug dependence treatment services for adolescents, and ensure their complementarity with mental health services as relevant.

Environmental health and the impact of climate change on the rights of the child

45. The Committee welcomes the State party's commitment to bring all greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050 but is concerned about the large number of children living in areas with unsafe levels of air pollution and toxic air, the particular vulnerability of children in the Overseas Territories to the effects of natural disasters, and insufficient measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Reduce greenhouse gas emissions in line with its national and international commitments;

(b) Adopt legislation on air quality and urgently take measures to ensure children's environmental health, including by improving air quality in urban areas, preventing children's exposure to environmental toxins and high levels of lead;

(c) Ensure that national policies and programmes on addressing environmental protection, climate change and disaster risk management, including in the Overseas Territories, are developed and implemented in accordance with the principles of the Convention and take into account children's needs and views;

(d) Strengthen climate change mitigation and adaptation measures to storms and hurricanes, in particular in relation to children's food, water and energy insecurity in the Overseas Territories;

(e) Promote, with the active participation of schools, children's awareness of and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters, especially in the Overseas Territories that are particularly vulnerable to the consequences of climate change, and strengthen awareness-raising among children on relevant climate legislation and their right to a clean environment and the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health;

(f) Undertake legislative and other measures to uphold its extraterritorial obligations concerning impacts on the environment, including in the context of international cooperation.

Standard of living

46. Noting with deep concern the large number of children living in poverty, food insecurity and homelessness, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop or strengthen existing policies, with clear targets, measurable indicators and robust monitoring and accountability mechanisms, to end child poverty and ensure that all children have an adequate standard of living, including by increasing social benefits to reflect the rising costs of living and abolishing the two-child limit and benefit cap for social security benefits;

(b) Address the root causes of homelessness among children, strengthen measures to phase out temporary and "contingency" accommodation schemes, and significantly increase the availability of adequate and long-term social housing for families in need, with a view to ensuring that all children have access to affordable quality housing;

(c) Ensure that the best interests of the child are given primary consideration in all eviction matters, that evictions are not targeted at families belonging to minority groups and that any evictions are always subject to adequate alternatives;

(d) Ensure that measures to combat poverty comply with a child rights-based approach and include a particular focus on children in disadvantaged situations, especially children of single parents, children with disabilities, Roma, Gypsy and Traveller children and children belonging to other minority groups, asylum-seeking and refugee children, children in large families, and children leaving care.

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

Education

47. Noting with concern inequalities in educational attainment and outcomes for children in disadvantaged situations, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen measures to address inequalities in educational attainment and improve educational outcomes for children in disadvantaged situations, including children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations, children belonging to ethnic minority groups, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, children with disabilities and “young carers”, including by: (i) providing financial and other support for such children to finish school; (ii) developing guidelines for responding to cases of school absenteeism; and (iii) collecting and analysing data disaggregated by ethnic origin, educational outcomes and other relevant indicators on completion rates, educational outcomes and exclusions to inform policies and programmes;

(b) Ensure inclusive education in mainstream schools for all children with disabilities, including by adapting curricula and training and assigning specialized teachers and professionals in integrated classes, so that children with disabilities and learning difficulties receive individual support and due attention;

(c) Continue efforts to ensure that all children, particularly children in the Overseas Territories, have access to adequate and affordable early childhood education;

(d) Monitor the use of exclusions and ensure that they are prohibited in primary schools and used in secondary schools only as a measure of last resort; prohibit the use of informal exclusions and so-called “off-rolling” and provide for appropriate alternatives; and develop measures to address their overuse in general as well as their disproportionate use on children belonging to ethnic minority groups and children with disabilities;

(e) Ensure the right of children to appeal against their exclusions and provide them with legal advice and representation, where appropriate, in line with the Committee’s previous recommendations;¹³

(f) Increase efforts to eliminate discrimination and bullying, including cyberbullying, on the grounds of race, sexual orientation, gender identity or sex characteristics, disability, migration or other status in the school context, and ensure that such measures: (i) are adequately resourced and developed in consultation with children; (ii) address the root causes of bullying; and (iii) encompass prevention, early detection mechanisms, awareness-raising on its harmful effects, the empowerment of children, mandatory training for teachers, intervention protocols and consistent and robust recording and monitoring of bullying behaviour;

(g) Develop guidance, with the participation of civil society and children, for the inclusion of trans and gender-questioning children in schools in all constituent countries, and ensure that such guidance fully respects their rights, including their rights to identity and to privacy;

¹³ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 73 (c).

(h) Remove “colonising” and discriminatory language from textbooks and curricula and develop educative materials that foster respect for and appreciation of racial, cultural, gender and other diversities;

(i) Ensure 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;

(j) Explicitly prohibit the use of restraint and seclusion in educational settings and adopt a child rights-based approach to addressing violence or other disturbances in schools, including by prohibiting the presence of police in schools and providing regular training for teachers on relevant guidance for addressing such disturbances in a child-sensitive manner;

(k) End practices, including academic selection and testing measures, which contribute to the high levels of stress felt by students owing to academic pressure, and ensure that children benefit from a creative learning environment.

Rest, leisure, recreation, and cultural and artistic activities

48. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop a strategy, with sufficient resources, aimed at ensuring children’s right to rest, leisure and recreation, including free outdoor play;

(b) Integrate children’s right to play into school curricula and ensure that children have sufficient time to engage in play and recreational activities that are inclusive and age-appropriate;

(c) Strengthen measures to ensure that all children, including children with disabilities, young children, children in rural areas and children in disadvantaged socioeconomic backgrounds, have access to accessible, safe, public outdoor play spaces;

(d) Involve children in decisions regarding urban-planning processes, including public transportation, and in the development of spaces for children to play.

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

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

49. The Committee is deeply concerned about:

(a) Restrictions to the rights of asylum and family reunification, the criminalization of arrival without prior permission and the introduction of a two-tiered system for identifying refugee children, under the Nationality and Borders Act of 2022;

(b) The potential impact of the Illegal Migration Bill on children, which includes a ban on the right to claim asylum, allows for the prolonged detention and removal of children, creates barriers for acquiring nationality, and lacks a consideration of the principle of the best interests of the child;

(c) The persistent use of unreliable methods for determining a child’s age, the large number of children whose age has been disputed, and the lack of data on the number of asylum-seekers claiming to be children who have been assessed and sometimes detained as adults by immigration officials.

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

(a) Urgently amend the Illegal Migration Bill to repeal all draft provisions that would have the effect of violating children’s rights under the Convention and the

1951 Refugee Convention, and bring the Bill in line with the State party's obligations under international human rights law to ensure children's right to nationality, to seek asylum and to have their best interests taken as a primary consideration, as well as to prevent their prolonged detention and removal;

(b) Amend the Nationality and Borders Act to abolish the designation of "Group 2" status to certain groups of refugee children, and ensure that all asylum-seeking and refugee children, including unaccompanied children, are not criminalized and have access to necessary support and services;

(c) Review and strengthen the asylum process to ensure that children receive age-appropriate information and legal advice about their rights, asylum procedures and requirements for documentation; that their best interests are given primary consideration in all asylum processes; that their views are heard, taken into account and given due weight; and that they have access to child-friendly justice mechanisms and remedies;

(d) Strengthen measures to ensure that all asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children have equal and prompt access to education, health services, housing, psychosocial support, and social protection including benefit entitlements;

(e) Put an end to the use of unreliable and invasive procedures for determining a child's age; develop an age determination procedure that is child- and gender-sensitive, includes multidisciplinary assessments conducted by relevant professionals of the child's maturity and level of development, and respects the legal principle of the benefit of the doubt; and ensure that children have access to legal advice throughout the process and, if necessary, can challenge the outcome of such assessments;

(f) Ensure that children and age-disputed children are not removed to a third country;

(g) Develop a consistent, statutory system of independent guardianship for all unaccompanied children, and ensure that all unaccompanied children throughout all jurisdictions of the State party are promptly identified and appointed a professionally trained guardian;

(h) Review its system of family reunification involving unaccompanied children, with a view to ensuring that children have an unqualified right to apply for family reunification and that applications are considered in a consistent, expeditious and child rights-based approach, and that the best interests of the child are a primary consideration in all related decisions.

Children without a regular residence status

51. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Repeal its "Hostile Environment" policy and ensure the access of children without a regular residence status to independent legal representation, social protection and welfare benefits;

(b) Remove the designation of children without a regular residence status and their families into administrative categories that prevent them from accessing certain services, such as the "No Recourse to Public Funds" throughout all jurisdictions of the State party or "non-belonger" in the Overseas Territories;

(c) Implement long-term solutions for the regularization of children without a regular residence status, including by ensuring that all such children in the Overseas Territories are issued identity documents, and strengthen measures to prevent their social exclusion.

Trafficking

52. **Noting with appreciation the piloting of a new national referral mechanism on trafficking and a system of independent child trafficking guardians, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Continue to strengthen measures aimed at ensuring the identification and referral of child victims of trafficking to appropriate child-friendly services, including by implementing the national referral mechanism throughout the State party;**

(b) **Ensure that child victims of trafficking are always treated as victims and have access to the necessary support and services, including psychological support and legal assistance; and establish the system of independent child trafficking guardians throughout the State party;**

(c) **Investigate all cases of trafficking of children, using intersectoral and child-sensitive proceedings, and bring perpetrators to justice.**

Administration of child justice

53. The Committee is deeply concerned about the draconian and punitive nature of its child justice system, and the limited progress in implementing the Committee's previous recommendations to bring the State party's child justice system in line with the Convention,¹⁴ in particular:

(a) The low minimum ages of criminal responsibility at 10 or 12 years throughout all jurisdictions of the State party, and the State party's position that "children aged 10 can differentiate between bad behaviour and serious wrongdoing";¹⁵

(b) That children who are 16 and 17 years of age are not always treated as children in the justice system;

(c) That children can be remanded in police custody, sometimes staying overnight in prison cells;

(d) The continued use of solitary confinement on children, and segregation and isolation in child detention facilities, and that legislation allows for life imprisonment of children;

(e) The overrepresentation of children belonging to ethnic minority groups in detention;

(f) The large number of cases of violence, including sexual abuse, committed by staff against children in the child justice system, and the findings of the independent inquiry into child sexual abuse that such complaints are rarely investigated.

54. **Recalling its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system, the Committee reiterates its previous recommendations¹⁶ and urges the State party to bring its child justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards and to:**

(a) **Raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age;**

(b) **Take legislative and other measures to ensure that: (i) children are not prosecuted as adult offenders, without exception; (ii) the child justice system is applied to all children who were below the age of 18 years when the offence was committed; (iii) rehabilitation periods are determined based on the date the offence was committed, and not the date of conviction; (iv) detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period of time and is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to its**

¹⁴ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 73 (c).

¹⁵ CRC/C/GBR/6-7, para. 295.

¹⁶ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 73 (c).

withdrawal; and (v) life imprisonment is abolished for children and young people who committed offences when they were below the age of 18;

(c) Develop early intervention for children and actively promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation and counselling, for children accused of criminal offences, and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial measures for children, such as probation or community service;

(d) Ensure the provision of qualified and independent legal aid to children alleged to have, accused of, or recognized as having infringed criminal law at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings;

(e) Repeal the practice of remanding children into police custody, ensure that no child is held in police custody overnight, and avoid the use, and reduce the maximum duration, of pretrial detention;

(f) For the few situations where deprivation of liberty is used as a measure of last resort, continue to strive for full compliance with the international requirement to detain children separately from adults and ensure that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services, including mental health services;

(g) Address the overrepresentation of children belonging to minority groups in detention and develop measures, in consultation with affected children and their families, to prevent racial profiling by law enforcement authorities;

(h) Ensure capacity-building for judges, prosecutors, police officers and other professionals, including in the Overseas Territories, on child-friendly justice procedures, children's rights and the Convention;

(i) Promptly investigate, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach, all allegations of cases of violence, including sexual abuse, against children in detention; prosecute and duly sanction perpetrators; and provide reparations to victims as appropriate;

(j) End the use of solitary confinement and ensure that any separation of the child from others is for the shortest possible time and is used only as a measure of last resort for the protection of the child or others, in the presence of, or under the close supervision of, a suitably trained staff member;

(k) Adopt a child justice strategy for Jersey and ensure that all Overseas Territories have adopted legislation on child justice in line with the Convention, including by expeditiously adopting child justice bills in Montserrat and the British Virgin Islands.

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

55. Recalling its guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol¹⁷ and its previous recommendations,¹⁸ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that all children under 18 years of age, including 16- and 17-year-olds, who are victims of offences under the Optional Protocol, including sexual exploitation, sexual abuse material and sexual exploitation in prostitution, are treated as victims, receive adequate protection under the law and have access to remedies;

¹⁷ CRC/C/156.

¹⁸ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, para. 83.

(b) Amend the Modern Slavery Act to clarify that children can never consent to their own sale or exploitation;

(c) Take all necessary measures to prevent, prosecute and eliminate the sale and exploitation of children including by: (i) requiring the digital business sector to put in place child protection standards; (ii) ensuring that Internet service providers control, block and promptly remove online sexual abuse material of children; and (iii) undertaking awareness-raising campaigns aimed at prevention for professionals working with and for children, parents and the public at large.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

56. Noting with concern reports of advertising of and marketing for military service aimed at children and the overrepresentation of socioeconomically disadvantaged children in the armed forces, the Committee recalls its previous recommendations¹⁹ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Consider withdrawing its interpretative declaration on article 1;

(b) Consider raising the minimum age of voluntary recruitment into the armed forces to 18 years;

(c) Prohibit all forms of advertising and marketing for military service targeted at children, in particular at schools and targeting children belonging to ethnic minority groups and socioeconomically disadvantaged children;

(d) Ensure that safeguards for voluntary recruitment are sufficient, including by ensuring that no child from a separated family is recruited with the consent of only one parent;

(e) Ensure that children currently enlisted in the armed forces do not serve a minimum period that is longer than those who enlisted as adults and that they have the right to leave the armed forces with no notice period;

(f) Promptly investigate any reports of sexual abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of violence against children in the armed forces, particularly during armed forces training, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and sanctioned;

(g) Take measures to address the reported heavy mental health burden among child recruits, including incidence of suicide among infantry personnel who enlisted when they were under the age of 18;

(h) Ensure that all children under 18 years of age receive special protection under the Joint Doctrine Publication 1-10 for Captured Persons, including by amending the definition of the child in line with the Convention;

(i) Ensure the early and effective identification of all asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children who may have been recruited or used in armed conflicts abroad upon entering the State party;

(j) Prohibit the export of arms, including small arms and components for weapons systems, to countries where children are known to be recruited or used in hostilities.

L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

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

¹⁹ CRC/C/GBR/CO/5, paras. 85, 87; CRC/C/OPAC/GBR/CO/1.

M. Ratification of international human rights instruments

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

N. Cooperation with regional bodies

59. 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 States members of the Council.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

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

B. Next report

61. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the eighth periodic report of the State party in line with a future predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines²⁰ and should not exceed 21,200 words.²¹ In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report in accordance with the above-mentioned resolution. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the treaty body cannot be guaranteed.

²⁰ CRC/C/58/Rev.3.

²¹ General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.