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**Committee on the Rights of the Child****Concluding observations on the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ghana\*****I. Introduction**

1. The Committee considered the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of Ghana<sup>1</sup> at its 2910th and 2911th meetings,<sup>2</sup> held on 13 and 14 January 2026, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2936th meeting, held on 30 January 2026.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined sixth and seventh periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues,<sup>3</sup> 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 its high-level multisectoral delegation.

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

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State party, including the ratification in 2016 of the Optional Protocol of the Convention against Torture and the 1993 Hague Convention No. 33 on Protection of Children and Cooperation in Respect of Inter-country Adoption; the adoption of the National Strategic Framework for the Elimination of Child Marriage (2017-2026); the adoption of laws, such as the 2020 Cybersecurity Act, the 2024 Affirmative Action Act and the 2025 Social Protection Act; the progress made in reducing child mortality and child marriage and in improving access to education, especially among girls, and the initial steps being taken to mobilise as much resources as possible from domestic sources for the purpose of education, health and social protection measures.

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

4. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and

\* Adopted by the Committee at its hundredth session (12-30 January 2026).

<sup>1</sup> CRC/C/GHA/6-7.

<sup>2</sup> See CRC/C/SR.2910 and 2911.

<sup>3</sup> CRC/C/GHA/RQ/6-7.

exploitation (para. 23), harmful practices (para. 25), children with disabilities (para. 30), health (para. 32), standard of living (para. 36) and education (para. 39).

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict 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. 1, 4, 42 and 44 (6))**

### **Legislation**

6. Noting ongoing amendments to child-rights legislation, including to the 1998 Children's Act and the 2003 Juvenile Justice Act, so as to enable the laws to respond to contemporary challenges, the Committee reiterates that the State party should align all its legislation with the Convention, finalise such amendments urgently, and allocate adequate resources for its effective implementation.<sup>4</sup>

### **Comprehensive policy and strategy**

7. While taking note of the sectoral policies and strategies, including the recently adopted revised Early Childhood Care and Development Policy, the National Gender Policy, and the Domestic Violence Policy, the Committee reiterates that the State party should develop a comprehensive policy and strategy on children covering all areas under the Convention with dedicated resources for its implementation and regular evaluations.<sup>5</sup>

### **Coordination**

8. While welcoming the reinforced role of the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection (MoGCSP) as the national coordinating body, including through the Integrated Social Services (ISS) program, the Committee urges the State party to ensure further coordination and cooperation among government institutions to effectively implement the Convention at all levels and allocate adequate resources to that end, as previously recommended.<sup>6</sup>

### **Allocation of resources**

9. The Committee, while noting the reported budgetary increases for key child rights institutions and increased allocations for critical programmes such as the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) programme, is concerned about the significant declines in other public spending on children's policies especially when assessed against the increased child population and inflation, the absence of dedicated budget line for the implementation of the Convention, the high share of national revenue used for debt servicing. While recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016),<sup>7</sup> the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Earmark sufficient, targeted budgetary resources for the implementation of children's rights, particularly for healthcare, education and social protection, in line with Article 4 of the Convention;

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<sup>4</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para.9.

<sup>5</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para. 11.

<sup>6</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para. 13.

<sup>7</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para. 15.

- (b) Establish child-rights based budgeting with monitoring and evaluation mechanisms for assessing and tracking the impact of resource allocations on children's rights and strategic budgetary lines for children in vulnerable situations;
- (c) Set up safeguards to ensure that debt servicing and restructuring do not affect essential spending for children and protect them, as much as possible, during economic crisis;
- (d) Further combat corruption and wastage of resources that affect the implementation of the Convention.

#### **Data collection**

10. Welcoming the information shared during the dialogue that the State party plans to establish a comprehensive child rights information management system in 2026, and recalling its general comment No. 5 (2003), the Committee urges the State party to establish a comprehensive data-collection system with disaggregated data covering all areas of the Convention and children in vulnerable situations, as previously recommended,<sup>8</sup> and a mechanism for data sharing across all duty bearers for comprehensive data monitoring and management, including by seeking technical assistance from UNICEF and UNDP.

#### **Access to justice and remedy**

11. While noting the expansion of child-friendly courts from one in 2018 to 20 in 2025, and the adoption of standard operating procedures and training for judges, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that all children have access to: (i) confidential, child-friendly and independent complaint mechanisms in schools, foster care systems, alternative care settings and places of detention for reporting all forms of violence, abuse, discrimination and other violations of their rights; and (ii) legal support and age-appropriate information on access to counselling and remedies, including compensation and rehabilitation;
- (b) Raise awareness among children of their right to file a complaint under existing mechanisms;
- (c) Ensure systematic and mandatory training for all relevant professionals working with children on child-friendly procedures and remedies, children's rights and the Convention.

#### **Independent monitoring**

12. Recalling its general comment No.2(2002), the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice, particularly its Women and Children's Unit, with a view to expanding its investigative mandate to deal with complaints not only on the basis of complaints but also on a proactive basis, and allocate sufficient human, technical and financial resources in compliance with the Paris Principles.

#### **Dissemination of the Convention and awareness-raising**

13. Welcoming human rights education programmes at the district level, the Committee recommends that the State party expand these programmes to all localities and ensure that professionals, traditional leaders, parents, caregivers and children themselves, especially those in vulnerable situations, benefit from awareness-raising activities about the Convention and its Optional Protocols.

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<sup>8</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para. 16.

### **Children's rights and the business sector**

14. Welcoming the development of the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights with child participation, the Committee recalls its general comment No.16 (2013) and recommends that the State party ensure the implementation and monitoring of its Action Plan and establish a regulatory child protection framework for companies operating under its jurisdiction, in order to prevent, report and address children's rights violations.

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

### **Non-discrimination**

15. Welcoming the State party's pledge to end all forms of stigma and discrimination and the 2024 Affirmative Action Act which promotes gender equality, the Committee notes with serious concern the reintroduction of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill in 2025, which could have a discriminatory effect on LGBT adolescents. Recalling its previous recommendations, the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Eliminate de facto discrimination against children in vulnerable situations, in particular children with disabilities, children living in poverty, girls, LGBT adolescents, children with albinism, children with HIV/AIDS, migrant, stateless, asylum-seeking and refugee children, children living in rural areas, children in street situations and nomadic children;
- (b) Provide them with access to education, healthcare and a decent standard of living on an equal basis with other children;
- (c) Withdraw aspects of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill as it stands at 28 February 2024<sup>9</sup> that are not in compliance with the Convention and, in particular, articles 4 (prohibition of LGBTTQAP+ and related activities), 8 (prohibition of gross indecency), 10-11 (prohibition of propaganda of, promotion of and advocacy for activities prohibited under this Act and such activities directed at a child), and 14 (prohibition of LGBTTQAP+ group, society, association, club or organisation) ;
- (d) Expand public awareness and education to combat discrimination against children.

### **Best interests of the child**

16. Noting that the principle of the best interests of the child is reflected in the legislation, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 14(2013) and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that this right is consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions, policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to, and have an impact on, children;
- (b) Develop an impact assessment mechanism for legislation and policies and procedures and criteria for determining best interests, including in relation to custody, alternative care, disability, healthcare, education, child justice, migration and asylum, and provide guidance and training to professionals on its implementation.

### **Respect for the views of the child**

17. Welcoming the Children's Model Summit of the Future in 2024, the Committee notes with concern that children's voices are not heard and channels for children's participation in decision-making are missing. Recalling its general comment No.12(2009), the Committee recommends that the State party:

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<sup>9</sup> Date of the passage by the Parliament. Text available at: [Anti-LGBTQ-Bill-Human-Sexual-Rights-and-Family-Values-Bill-2024.pdf](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Countries/Pages/GHANationalActionPlan.aspx)

- (a) Recognise the right of the child, including children in vulnerable situations, to be heard in any decision affecting them and ensure that children's views are given due weight, in accordance with their age and maturity;
- (b) Establish rules and procedures for judicial and administrative authorities and social workers to comply with this principle and provide training in this regard;
- (c) Conduct research to identify the issues that are most important to children, hear their views on those issues and find out how well their voices are heard on decisions affecting their lives, especially in family, at school and in community;
- (d) Further strengthen school clubs, Student Representative Councils and peer networks, including with capacity-building and financial resources, and raise awareness among children, parents and teachers of children's right to be heard;
- (e) Develop toolkits for public consultation on national policy development, particularly with children on issues that affect them, and standardize such consultations.

### C. Civil and political rights (arts. 7–8 and 13–17)

#### Birth registration

18. While welcoming the progress in birth registration and the State party's statement during the dialogue that 91 per cent of births have been registered, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources to achieve universal birth registration, with particular attention to rural and remote areas;
- (b) Provide a birth certificate for every registered birth and ensure that all children without a birth certificate can access essential services;
- (c) Review inter-agency coordination in birth collection to enhance the quality of birth registration data;
- (d) Expand mobile and online birth registration;
- (e) Review the 1992 Refugee Law, the legal framework on birth registration and related administrative procedures to ensure the issuance of birth certificates and, where relevant, their substitutes to recognised refugee children born outside the State party;
- (f) Abolish fees for late birth registration and promote programmes to register the birth of all children who were not registered at birth;
- (g) Conduct community outreach programs and media campaigns to raise awareness on the importance and process of birth registration.

#### Nationality

19. Noting that nationality at birth is not granted to children born on the territory of the State party who would otherwise be stateless, such as children of refugee parents and of Fulani herders, the Committee reiterates its recommendations that the State party align its legislation with international standards on prevention, reduction and protection of stateless children, consider ratifying the Statelessness Conventions and conduct a mapping study on statelessness.

#### Access to appropriate information

20. Noting with concern the persisting disparities in accessing digital information and the increasing child safety risks in the digital environment, the Committee recalls its general comment No.25(2021) and recommends that the State party:

- (a) **Expand the connectivity, internet access and digital knowledge programmes, such as the Digital Literacy Package, to rural, remote and marginalised areas;**
- (b) **Continue to improve access to information and services in meaningful formats for children and adolescents, while ensuring that such information and services remain accessible to children who do not use or have access to digital technologies;**
- (c) **Develop and implement a comprehensive child-rights based regulatory framework, including incentives for public and private companies and mechanisms to report for the purpose of prosecuting violations, to ensure children's safety in the digital environment;**
- (d) **Develop and implement guidelines and codes of conduct for the media and training for journalists to protect children in the media and safeguard their privacy in reporting;**
- (e) **Enhance awareness-raising activities about the online risks, including child sexual exploitation and abuse, privacy risks and other harmful impacts.**

**D. Violence against children (arts. 19, 24 (3), 28 (2), 34, 35, 37 (a), and 39 of the Convention**

**Corporal punishment**

21. Noting the efforts to combat corporal punishment at school, the Committee is concerned about the high prevalence of violent discipline and corporal punishment and recommends that the State party explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings, including at home, review the legislation accordingly and promote positive, non-violent and participatory child-rearing and discipline through large-scale programmes and campaigns.

**Abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation**

22. Commending the establishment of the Domestic Violence and Victims Support Unit (DOVVSU) under the Ghana Police Service which provides a one-stop service for the victims, with children's interview rooms and child-friendly court rooms, as well as counselling, investigation, prosecution, and referral to social services and noting the efforts to strengthen the child-protection system, the Committee remains seriously concerned about:

- (a) The high incidence of domestic violence, gender-based violence and child abuse and neglect, with increased cases of child sexual abuse, including online and in tourism, while data to assess the magnitude of the problem is missing;
- (b) The inadequacy of resources allocated to combat all forms of violence and abuse, provide protection to victims and promote attitudinal change;
- (c) The insufficient child protection infrastructure and social, health and judicial interventions.

23. **Recalling its general comment No.13(2011), the Committee urges the State party to:**

- (a) **Undertake a study on the extent, causes and nature of violence against children and, on that basis, develop, implement and monitor a comprehensive policy and strategy for prevention and intervention in cases of violence;**
- (b) **Allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources to combat and prevent all forms of violence against children;**
- (c) **Increase the number of professionals, interview rooms and child-friendly court rooms, and strengthen their capacity to timely identify, refer and respond to cases of all forms of violence, raise awareness about existing support services at regions and districts, including the child helplines and increase their availability and access;**

(d) Ensure the mandatory reporting of all forms of violence against children and promote awareness among parents, professionals and children on the importance of reporting and early intervention in cases of child abuse and violence;

(e) Expand the Domestic Violence Resource Centers and temporary shelters for children who were victims of violence and ensure the availability of independent complaint mechanisms, prompt and comprehensive support, including healthcare, legal and trauma-focused support services, free of charge, to ensure their recovery and reintegration and that they are not subjected to revictimization;

(f) Ensure that all cases of violence against children, including sexual abuse, are promptly investigated, applying a child- and gender-sensitive and multisectoral approach, with the aim of avoiding the revictimization of the child, that perpetrators are prosecuted and sanctioned with commensurate penalties, and that reparations are provided to victims;

(g) Consider as a standard procedure the acceptance of audio-visual recordings of the child's testimony as evidence followed by cross-examination without delay in child friendly facilities avoiding re-traumatisation in court proceedings;

(h) Strengthen awareness-raising measures, educational programmes and professional training to prevent and combat all forms of violence against children and promote attitudinal change.

#### **Harmful practices**

24. The Committee welcomes the measures taken, including the National Strategic Framework for the Elimination of Child Marriage (2017-2026) and community engagement, that contributed to a decline in child marriage from 20.7% to 16.1% in 2022. It also notes the efforts made to set child victims of *trokosi* (ritual servitude) free. However, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) High prevalence of child marriage in North East, Northern and Savannah regions;

(b) The persistence of female genital mutilation (FGM), despite criminalisation, particularly in the Upper East Region and as a cross-border activity with Burkina Faso and Togo;

(c) Insufficient efforts to eliminate the practices of *trokosi* (*ritual servitude*), witchcraft accusations and placement in witch camps, that subject girls to life-long stigma, forced labour, violence, sexual slavery and deprivation of education and life opportunities.

25. Recalling joint general comment No.18(2019), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Enhance its efforts to eliminate child marriage, including by enforcing legislation, implementing its strategic framework, allocating adequate resources to monitoring, community engagement, girls' protection and empowerment, campaigns to alter social norms and club activities at schools, in cooperation among ministries, civil society and community-based organisations;

(b) Intensify its efforts to eradicate FGM, raise awareness about its criminalisation, promptly investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators, including cross-border cases, and allocate adequate resources to surveillance and enforcement, especially in remote and cross-border areas, and to awareness-raising on the negative consequences and prohibition of FGM, in cooperation with traditional and religious leaders;

(c) Accelerate the secure reintegration of children in so-called "witch camps" to communities, urgently close such camps and accelerate the enactment of the amended Criminal Offences Bill and the Private Members Bill criminalising witchcraft accusations;

(d) Renew its political will and allocate adequate resources to eradicate *trokosi*, ensure that cases are promptly investigated, prosecuted and punished, and that

children affected are released and reintegrated, and raise awareness about the negative consequences and prohibition of *trokosi*;

(e) Expand protective mechanisms for children, especially girls, to safeguard children at risk of being subjected to harmful practices, and ensure access to social, medical, psychological, and reintegration services, including education and life skills, and legal redress for victims.

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

**Family environment**

26. The Committee takes note of social education programmes and family reconciliation procedures aiming to strengthen families and prevent family separation. It encourages the State party to strengthen the capacity of social services to identify and support families in need and at risk of separation; further enhance the number, coverage and impact of its family and positive parenting support initiatives; and facilitate the work of civil society organisations in this regard, with particular attention to single-parent, poor families and other families in vulnerable situations.

**Children deprived of a family environment**

27. Noting the National Care Reform Roadmap (2024–2028) aiming to reduce institutional placements by 30 per cent by 2028 and the measures taken to regulate foster care, the Committee is concerned that 17 per cent of children were not living with their biological parents in 2018. Recalling its Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children,<sup>10</sup> the Committee recommends that the State party allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources to:

(a) Implement the National Care Reform Roadmap with a view to supporting the transition to family-based care and community-based services;

(b) Establish adequate safeguards and clear criteria, based on the needs and best interests of the child, for determining whether a child should be placed in alternative care, ensuring that poverty and disability should never be the sole justification for removing a child from parental care, and ensure that decisions on child removal are subject to judicial review;

(c) Ensure sufficient alternative family-based and community-based care options for children who cannot stay with their families, including by allocating sufficient financial resources for foster care, providing training to foster and adoptive parents and facilitating the reunification of children with their families when in their best interests;

(d) Establish quality standards for all alternative care settings, ensure periodic review of the placement of children and monitor the quality of care regularly and systematically, including by providing accessible channels for reporting, monitoring and remedying maltreatment of children and deploying Visiting Committees on mental health;

(e) Improve living conditions in existing residential institutions to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children to the greatest extent possible and ensure the registration, certification and licensing of existing alternative care centers for children;

(f) Provide support to children leaving care to help them start independent lives.

<sup>10</sup> A/RES/64/142

### Adoption

28. Welcoming the establishment of the Central Adoption Authority and the 2018 Adoption Regulations, the Committee recommends that the State party ensure that the best interests of the child are the paramount consideration in the adoption procedures and guarantee effective oversight and monitoring of domestic and inter-country adoptions and post-adoption follow-up.

## F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

29. The Committee remains seriously concerned that:

- (a) Children with disabilities are often institutionalised, subjected to inhumane and degrading treatment, confined to “prayer camps,” where they are deprived of food and water and denied education and medical care, or even killed;
- (b) The prevalence of superstitious beliefs concerning children with disabilities and other child victims of abusive socio-cultural practices remain very high in the population;
- (c) The legislation, including the 2006 Persons with Disabilities Act (Act 715), relies on the medical model of disability;
- (d) Children with disabilities lack access to support services, education and healthcare, particularly mental healthcare;
- (e) There is a lack of data on children with disabilities, especially with psychosocial disabilities, and those living in “prayer camps”.

30. Recalling its general comment No.9(2006) and its previous recommendations,<sup>11</sup> the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based/social model of disability and:

- (a) Harmonize legislation, including the Persons with Disabilities Act, with the human rights model of disability;
- (b) Organize the collection of data on children with disabilities and accelerate the implementation of the Disability Data Framework, and conduct a study on their situation, including on the violence and deprivation affecting them;
- (c) Develop a policy and strategy on children with disabilities, allocate adequate resources to its implementation and establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms;
- (d) Prohibit the admission and treatment of children with disabilities in “prayer camps”;
- (e) Investigate and prosecute perpetrators of acts of inhuman and degrading treatment and killing of children with disabilities;
- (f) Develop a coordinated approach for disability assessment with a view to facilitating access for children with all types of disabilities to services;
- (g) Safeguard adequate resources to ensure access to good-quality healthcare, including early identification, intervention and rehabilitation programmes and mental health programmes, and an adequate number of trained healthcare personnel;
- (h) Expand communication programmes and public awareness campaigns on social and behavioural change in cooperation with religious and traditional leaders and community structures to protect children with disabilities, combat stigmatization, prejudice, superstitious beliefs and maltreatment, and promote their image as rights-holders.

<sup>11</sup> CRC/C/GHA/CO/3-5, para. 48.

## G. Health (arts. 6, 24 and 33)

### Health and health services

31. The Committee notes the decrease in new-born deaths, in the prevalence of malaria, in the number of children living with HIV and in new HIV infections among children and that the estimated 99 per cent of pregnant women received treatment to prevent vertical HIV transmission in 2024. However, the Committee remains concerned about:

- (a) Insufficient funding of the health sector, with 20 per cent reliance on foreign aid in 2023;
- (b) The persistently high neonatal and under-five mortality and the particularly high maternal mortality (263 deaths per 100,000 life births in 2020) over three times exceeding the SDG target of 70, particularly in rural areas;
- (c) The lack of quality care and trained practitioners, especially in rural and remote areas;
- (d) Gaps in primary healthcare infrastructure and delays in the implementation of the Agenda 111 initiative to build 101 district hospitals and 10 regional and specialised hospitals;
- (e) Barriers to universal vaccination;
- (f) The continuously high prevalence of HIV, particularly in women, and AIDS-related deaths among children;
- (g) The high number of children who lost parents due to AIDS;
- (h) Insufficient information about breastfeeding;
- (i) The prevalence of child malnutrition and anaemia.

32. Recalling its general comment No.15(2013), the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Allocate adequate funding to the health sector, with particular focus on essential care services, develop detailed costed action plans, secure funding and identify innovative funding sources to alleviate donor dependence;
- (b) Prioritize programmes aimed at achieving universal health coverage and improving the quality of care, healthcare infrastructure and training and recruitment of doctors and healthcare personnel for antenatal, neonatal and postnatal care, and their equitable distribution across the country;
- (c) Ensure that all children receive all necessary vaccinations, in accordance with WHO standards, timely allocate resources to vaccine supply and cold chain infrastructure, pursue community engagement and outreach activities to improve coverage and provide accurate information about the benefits of vaccination;
- (d) Strengthen measures to further reduce and mitigate malaria infections, including improved sanitation and preventive education campaigns, the availability of impregnated nets and insecticides, particularly in highly endemic regions;
- (e) Intensify the elimination of mother-to-child HIV transmission, including by linking testing, care and treatment, strengthening preventive measures and ensuring access to breast-milk substitutes for HIV-positive mothers;
- (f) Provide protection and support to children deprived of their family environment due to AIDS;
- (g) Systematically collect data on food security and nutrition for children, including those relevant to breastfeeding, stunting, underweight, wasting, and anaemia, to identify and address the root causes of child food insecurity and malnutrition;

- (h) Promote exclusive breastfeeding during the first 6 months and an appropriate infant diet thereafter, and provide nutritional support for breastfeeding mothers;
- (i) Improve food security and promote healthy nutritional practices, including by monitoring the Ghana School Feeding Programme, establishing school gardening, providing iron supplements and social protection interventions for children and families in vulnerable situations;
- (j) Seek technical assistance from WHO, UNICEF, UNAIDS and UNDP.

#### **Mental health**

33. Noting the establishment of the Mental Health Board, the Mental Review Tribunal and the Visiting Committees, the Committee recommends that the State party allocate adequate resources to:

- (a) Ensure that those structures are able to implement their mandate;
- (b) Collect data on mental health issues among children and adolescents;
- (c) Develop, adopt and implement a mental health strategy and action plan;
- (d) Ensure an adequate number of trained child psychologists and psychiatrists and access to mental health support services, including at schools, across the country.

#### **Adolescent health**

34. The Committee notes that adolescent health features in the Ghana Reproductive, Maternal, Newborn, Child and Adolescent Health and Nutrition Strategic Plan (2020-2025), as well as the Strategic Plan to Address Adolescent Pregnancy (2018-2020) and the installation of adolescent and youth-friendly health services. However, it is seriously concerned about the increase in adolescent pregnancy, unsafe abortions, substance abuse, and new HIV infections among adolescents. Recalling its general comments No.4(2003) and No.20(2016), the Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Evaluate the completed strategic plans, adopt and implement a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health (SRH) strategy for adolescents compounded with community sensitization activities to address adolescent pregnancies and negative perceptions of the use of SRH services by adolescents;
- (b) Strengthen the school curriculum on SRH with accurate information, including on early pregnancy and STI and HIV prevention; ensure adequate capacity building for teachers and provide standardized teaching and learning resources linked to appropriate SRH services;
- (c) Increase infrastructure and personnel to ensure the delivery of quality, affordable and confidential adolescent-friendly health services and information with particular focus on SRH, including free access to contraceptives, especially in rural, remote and marginalised areas;
- (d) Decriminalize abortion in all circumstances, prevent unsafe clandestine abortions, and ensure access to safe abortion and post-abortion care services for girls;
- (e) Strengthen public HIV awareness campaigns and awareness-raising activities to prevent new infections and promote responsible sexual behaviour;
- (f) Address the prevalence of alcohol, tobacco and drug abuse, including the prescription of opioids to children, including by developing and implementing rehabilitation programs and drop-in centres for adolescents, limiting the prescription of drugs and strengthening education programmes in schools on substance abuse;
- (g) Seek technical assistance from UNICEF, WHO and UNODC.

## **H. Standard of living (arts. 18 (3), 26 and 27 (1)–(3))**

35. The Committee notes various initiatives to alleviate child poverty, including the Integrated Social Services, the expansion of the LEAP programme, the National Health Insurance Scheme and the increase of the budget dedicated to these policies. However, it is seriously concerned that 28 per cent of children experienced monetary poverty, while 73 per cent suffered multi-dimensional poverty in 2020, and that only one fifth of Ghanaians have access to safely managed drinking water and basic sanitation.

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

- (a) **Allocate adequate resources to ensure the implementation of the 2025 Social Protection Act;**
- (b) **Strengthen measures to combat child poverty, including by raising social expenditure, increasing the coverage of social protection interventions and financial support programmes and improving the identification and targeting of the most vulnerable households;**
- (c) **Prioritize the provision of safe drinking water and environmental sanitation for household use and conduct behaviour change communication activities to encourage hygiene and sanitation practices.**

## **I. Children's rights and the environment (arts. 2-3, 6, 12-13, 15, 17, 19, 24, 26-31)**

37. The Committee notes that environmental and climate change issues are taught at school and that the assessment of environmental impacts on children's health was conducted by the State party. It notes with concern the negative effects of polluted air, water and waste and environmental emergencies, such as the 2023 Lower Volta Floods and the 2024 droughts, on children's life, health, safety and wellbeing. Recalling its general comment No. 26(2023), the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) **Develop and implement strategies to address environmental health risks affecting children and a mechanism to monitor children's environmental health;**
- (b) **Devise a shock-responsive social protection strategy with dedicated funds to respond to unanticipated environmental emergencies;**
- (c) **Involve communities and children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes to address environmental issues, climate change and disaster risk management, and ensure that children's special vulnerabilities, needs and views are taken into account;**
- (d) **Strengthen preventive measures and climate resilience of social services, industries and the population, including children, in the light of increasing temperatures and erratic rainfall patterns.**

## **J. Education, leisure and cultural activities (arts. 28–31)**

### **Education: aims, coverage and quality**

38. The Committee welcomes the expansion of the gross enrolment rate in the secondary high school to 60.7 per cent in 2022/2023, especially among girls, as well as the Pre-Tertiary Education Act of 2020, which guarantees the right to free compulsory universal basic education and free school uniforms, the programmes aimed at promoting cycling to school, the 2018 Early Childhood Care and Development Standards and the significant increase in the number of crèches and kindergartens. The Committee is however concerned that:

- (a) The investment into senior secondary education, coupled with the reduced investment in the education sector, led to a reduced allocation to primary education and important delays in the payment of teachers' salaries;

- (b) With various fees and accessory costs incumbent on parents and caregivers, education remained not genuinely free;
- (c) The quality of education remained inadequate and marked by regional disparities, the lack of basic facilities, the development of unchecked private schools, the absence of monitoring and supervision, with the 2022 National Standardized Test results showing that 58 per cent of fourth grades did not have basic proficiency in English and/or mathematics;
- (d) Girls continue to face stigmatization and barriers to education, including in relation to menstruation and pregnancy;
- (e) Eight percent of primary school age children were out of school in 2022 and training needs of out-of-school children are not properly addressed;
- (f) Insufficient water, sanitation and hygiene access in schools, including gender-disaggregated toilets and spaces for menstrual hygiene management;
- (g) The coverage of pre-school education, at around 15 per cent in the 2018/2019 academic year, remains insufficient, especially in rural, remote and marginalised communities.

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

- (a) Continue to invest in education to achieve a balance between primary and secondary education, to ensure full free primary education for all children and sustain increased access to secondary education, with particular attention to remote, rural and disadvantaged areas and poor and vulnerable populations, including by increasing their benefits to cover education-related costs and ensuring that it is gradually made completely free of charge;
- (b) Strengthen the quality of education and school infrastructure, including by investing in teacher training and recruitment, ensure regular payment of their wages, monitor teaching and learning practices, enhance curriculum for better student outcomes and career readiness, implement targeted literacy and numeracy programs and learning assessments, distribute textbooks and learning materials, deploy differential learning programmes and adopt innovative tools;
- (c) Assess barriers to girls' education, deploy social and behavioural change communication programmes, and provide the necessary assistance and support to ensure that girls, particularly pregnant girls and adolescent mothers, enrol and remain in school including by expanding the various cycling skills programmes enabling their participation in school;
- (d) Develop policies to address the root causes of school dropout, focus efforts on finalizing the safe school policy, expand Complementary Basic Education programmes and reform Technical, Vocational Educational Training institutions, among others, to provide career opportunities for children not covered by formal education;
- (e) Enhance monitoring of public and private schools, as well as improve infrastructure for public schools with appropriate operation and maintenance, implement the Safe School policy, equip schools with handwashing facilities, improved and gender-disaggregated toilets and clean water and menstrual hygiene material;
- (f) Allocate adequate resources to strengthen and expand early childhood education, guarantee at least one year of free and compulsory pre-primary education, with particular attention to rural, remote and most undeserved areas and parents with low education levels.

**Inclusive education**

40. Noting the 2015 Inclusive Education Policy which aims to accommodate, among others, children with disabilities, children with HIV/AIDS, nomadic children and children in street situations, the Committee notes with concern that only 0.3 per cent of children with disabilities are enrolled in school and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Allocate adequate human, financial and technical resources for accelerating the implementation of the Inclusive Education Policy and its monitoring;
- (b) Ensure that all children with disabilities have access to inclusive education in mainstream schools, including through physically-accessible school environments, adequately trained teachers, accessible infrastructure, including toilets, and adapted teaching and learning materials;
- (c) Ensure that the specific needs of children with HIV/AIDS are addressed, including access to psychological support, health services and safe spaces, and build the capacity of educators to support affected children.

**Rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts**

41. Recalling its general comment No.17(2013), the Committee recommends that the State party provide children, including those with disabilities and children in vulnerable situations, with safe, accessible, inclusive and smoking-free spaces for play and socialization, and public transport to access them.

## **K. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d))**

**Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children**

42. The Committee welcomes the efforts made to accommodate refugee, asylum-seeking and migrant children, including Burkinabe children, affected by the Sahel crisis, and to strengthen its institutional framework. Noting with concern the reported deportation of Burkinabe children; that the Immigration Act allows detention without specifying age; that migrant children, especially those in irregular situation, rarely benefit from protection and services; and that tensions and potential for conflict between local border communities and asylum-seeking and refugees emerge over access to social services, and recalling the joint general comments No.22-No.23(2017) and No.6(2005), the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Review and implement legislation to explicitly prohibit immigration detention of children and families with children and ensure family unity;
- (b) Cease forced return of children and ensure that the principle of non-refoulement is applied;
- (c) Facilitate access to the asylum system for children in need of international protection, in line with articles 6, 22 and 37 of the Convention, and ensure that the specific needs of asylum-seeking children are considered during the refugee status determination procedures;
- (d) Develop and implement clear procedures for the identification, protection, registration, and referral of all migrant children, including those in irregular situation, to appropriate assistance and services, including legal aid, and ensure the appointment of guardians;
- (e) Ensure child-rights monitoring at border communities, as well as protection and safe and durable resettlement of asylum-seeking and refugee children, expand access to services and encourage reconciliation and cohesion between asylum-seeking, refugee and local border communities;
- (f) Seek technical assistance from UNHCR.

**Economic exploitation, including child labour**

43. Noting the Ghana Accelerated Action Plan against Child Labour (2023-2027) aiming to eradicate worst forms of child labour, including by addressing poverty as a root cause, the Committee is concerned about the increased prevalence of child labour, especially in hazardous conditions, with every fourth child aged 5-17 being engaged in paid work. The Committee urges the State party to:

- (a) Allocate adequate resources to accelerate the implementation and monitoring of the Action Plan;
- (b) Expand and intensify labour inspections and ensure enforcement of legal provisions on child labour and sanctioning of those who exploit children;
- (c) Address the socio-economic factors justifying child labour and raise awareness about its consequences;
- (d) Strengthen multisectoral social service provision to prevent child labour, expand victim support and facilitate reintegration into school and society;
- (e) Seek technical assistance of the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Office in this regard.

#### **Children in street situations**

44. Noting the strategic plan for street-connected children and young persons (2024-2028) and the efforts to reintegrate children with their families, the Committee notes with concern that the lack of reliable data and funding deters accurate assessment and implementation. Recalling its general comment No.21(2017), the Committee reiterates that the State party should conduct an in-depth study to assess the number and condition of children in street situations and provide them with the needed support, including access to essential services and reintegration, with particular attention to migrant children and children who were victims of violence, abuse and sexual exploitation.

#### **Trafficking**

45. Noting the Anti-Trafficking National Action Plan (2022-2026), the Committee is concerned that children fall victims to child trafficking for sexual and labour purposes, with poor children, children in child marriage, LGBT children, Ghanian Fulbe children, asylum-seeking and migrant children, being more vulnerable to trafficking. The Committee recommends that the State party allocate adequate resources to:

- (a) Ensure effective enforcement of its legislation and policies, through increased coordination between law enforcement, prosecutors, and social workers;
- (b) Effectively investigate, prosecute and punish perpetrators with commensurate penalties, including for complicity;
- (c) Systematise professional training on anti-trafficking legislation and child- and gender-responsive approaches to handling trafficking cases to avoid retraumatization of victims;
- (d) Strengthen the identification of child victims and referral to quality services, and increase shelter capacity, with particular attention to children in vulnerable situations;
- (e) Strengthen efforts to prevent child trafficking and address its root causes.

#### **Administration of child justice**

46. Welcoming the 2015 Justice for Children Policy and the establishment of 20 child-friendly courts, the Committee notes with concern that children lack legal representation and are often detained with adults. Recalling its general comment No.24(2019), the Committee urges the State party to bring its child justice system fully into line with the Convention and other relevant standards and in particular to:

- (a) Review the Juvenile Justice act to bring it fully in line with the Convention, including by raising the legal age of criminal responsibility from 12 to at least 14 years of age;
- (b) Allocate adequate resources to expeditiously expand the establishment of child-friendly courts, child panels for minor offences and procedures across the whole country;

(c) Ensure free legal aid for children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law from the very early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings;

(d) Actively promote amongst relevant professionals non-judicial measures, such as diversion and mediation for children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service, and provide health and psychosocial services;

(e) Ensure that detention is used as a last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time, and is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to releasing the child;

(f) For the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, ensure that the children are not detained together with adults and that detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health services, and ensure that remand homes and detention facilities are monitored by an independent National Preventive Mechanism under the Optional Protocol of the UN Convention against torture, once it is established.

## **L. Ratification of the Optional Protocols to the Convention**

47. The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocols on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography and on a communications procedure. It urges the State party to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, which has been overdue since 9 December 2016.

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

48. The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.

## **N. Cooperation with regional bodies**

49. The Committee recommends that the State party cooperate with the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child of the African Union on the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other States members of the African Union.

# **IV. Implementation and reporting**

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

50. 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 those in the most disadvantaged situations. The Committee also recommends that the combined sixth to seventh 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**

51. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the State party in due course, 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 guidelines<sup>12</sup> and should not exceed 21,200 words.<sup>13</sup> In the event that a report exceeding the established word limit is submitted, the State party will be asked to shorten the report. If the State party is not in a position to review and resubmit the report, translation thereof for the purposes of consideration by the Committee cannot be guaranteed.

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<sup>12</sup> [CRC/C/58/Rev.3](#).

<sup>13</sup> General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.