

ADVANCE UNEDITED VERSIONDistr.: General
5 February 2026

Original: English

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

1. The Committee considered the sixth and seventh periodic reports of Pakistan¹ at its 2914th and 2915th meetings,² held on 15 and 16 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 to seventh periodic reports of the State party and the written replies to the list of issues,³ which allowed for a better understanding of the situation of children's rights in the State party.⁴ The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the high-level delegation of the State party.

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

3. The Committee welcomes the progress achieved by the State party in various areas, including the establishment of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child in 2017 and the adoption of the Juvenile Justice System Act in 2018 as well as other measures aimed at the protection of children under the federal, provincial and territorial legislation.

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: the right to life, survival and development (para. 18), birth registration (para. 21), freedom of thought, conscience and religion (para. 23), violence against children (paras. 26 and 29), asylum seeking and refugee children (para. 41) and administration of child justice (para. 47).

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

¹ CRC/C/PAK/6-7.

² See CRC/C/SR.2892 and 2893.

³ CRC/C/PAK/RQ/6-7.

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 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. 1, 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

6. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party, including the adoption of the Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act, 2020, the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act 2021 as well as laws and legislative proposals in several provinces and territories of the State party, including the most recent child marriage restraint acts in Islamabad Capital Territory and Balochistan, and recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop a comprehensive law on children's rights and adopt the legislative proposals addressing the gaps in the legislation with regard to the legal age of marriage for girls in some provinces, child protection and civil registration and fully enforce the existing legislation that is in line with the Convention throughout the entire territory of the State party;

(b) Address concerns raised in the previous concluding observations with regard to sharia law, by repealing provisions of the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Sharia Nizam-e-Adl Regulation (Amendment) Act, 2025, the Zina and Hadood Ordinances, which are in conflict with the principles and provisions of the Convention and ensure that domestic laws, whether federal, provincial or territorial, are in conformity with the Convention, so that the principles and provisions of the Convention are recognized and enjoyed by children throughout the territory at the national, provincial, territorial and local levels.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

7. While welcoming the 2025 Child Protection Policy in Punjab and noting the State party's information concerning the initiatives undertaken in different territories and provinces, including a draft ICT Child Protection Policy as well as draft policies in Sindh and Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, the Committee recommends that the State party develop a comprehensive child rights policy at the federal level and corresponding policies at the provincial and territorial levels and on that basis develop strategies and corresponding action plans which will cover all areas under the Convention and the Optional protocols thereto, and have the necessary elements for its application, which is supported by sufficient human, technical and financial resources.

Coordination

8. The Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations that despite the devolution of powers to provinces and the different administrative arrangements of its territories, the State party remains responsible for the implementation of children's rights under the Convention throughout its territory. It also recommends that the State party ensure effective coordination of activities for the implementation of children's rights without undue overlaps in mandates at the federal and local levels, especially among the Ministry of Human Rights, National Commission on the Rights of Child and the Treaty Implementation Cells.

Allocation of resources

9. While concerned about the reports that the financial allocation for key areas for children such as education, health, nutrition and social protection have not kept pace with inflation, population growth and emerging needs and recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Adopt social affirmative actions and increase allocations of the budget into the above-mentioned key areas affecting children and increase budgetary allocations for children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations;
- (b) Further strengthen and expand the tracking system for the allocation and the use of resources for children throughout the budget at the federal, provincial and territorial levels.

Data collection

10. While noting the launching of the Child Protection Management Information Systems by the provincial governments and recalling its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Further improve its data collection system and ensure that data collected on children's rights covers all areas of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, with data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic, religious and national origin and affiliation and socioeconomic background in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of children, particularly those in situations of vulnerability;
- (b) Ensure that statistical data and indicators on children's rights are shared among the ministries concerned and relied on for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and projects for the effective implementation of the Convention;
- (c) Take into account the conceptual and methodological framework set out in the report of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) entitled *Human rights indicators: a guide to measurement and implementation* when defining, collecting and disseminating statistical information;
- (d) Continue its fruitful technical cooperation with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), among other entities.

Access to justice and remedy

11. 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 detention centers 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 and for children on child-friendly procedures and remedies, children's rights and the Convention;
- (d) Prohibit informal courts, such as jirgas and panchayats, even as platforms for arbitration, mediation, or negotiation, in cases involving

children, and carry out prompt and effective investigations into decisions taken by such courts with regard to persons under 18 years of age.

Independent monitoring

12. The Committee notes that the National Commission on Human Rights was accredited an A status by GANHRI, but regrets that the Commission does not have a specific unit on children's rights. The Committee also notes the establishment of the National Commission on the Rights of the Child and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Amend its legislation to grant full independence to the National Commission on the Rights of the Child or establish a separate unit on children's rights under the National Commission for Human Rights and provide it with necessary mandate and resources to enable it to receive, investigate and address complaints by children in a child-friendly manner;
- (b) Ensure the privacy and protection of child victims, and undertake monitoring, follow-up and verification activities for victims.

Children's rights and the business sector

13. While noting the National Action Plan on Business and Human Rights launched in 2021 and recalling its general comment No. 16 (2013) and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, endorsed by the Human Rights Council in 2011, the Committee recommends that the State party establish and implement regulations to ensure that the business sector complies with international and national human rights, labour, environment and other standards, particularly with regard to children's rights. In particular, it recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure effective implementation by companies of international and national environment and health standards, effective monitoring of implementation of these standards and appropriately sanction companies as well as provide remedies to victims of violations;
- (b) Require companies to undertake assessments, consultations, 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;
- (c) Require companies to undertake due diligence in their operations and across supply chain with regard to the harmful effects of environmental degradation on children's rights.

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

Non-discrimination

14. While noting that the Constitution of the State party provides for the principle of non-discrimination, the Committee recommends that the State party adopt a comprehensive anti-discrimination law operational across the country aimed at eradicating discrimination against, *inter alia*, children belonging to religious and ethnic minorities, children with disabilities, children living in street situations, children living in poverty, migrant, asylum seeking and refugee children and LGBTI children, and ensure its effective implementation throughout its territory.

15. Seriously concerned that, despite its previous recommendations, discrimination against girls remains widespread and systematic including due to pervasive traditional norms and attitudes, the Committee urges the State party to combat and eradicate discrimination against girls including by changing traditional norms, attitudes and behaviours that contribute to

discrimination and raise public awareness regarding the prohibition of discrimination, especially in the areas of education and child marriages.

Best interests of the child

16. Recalling its general comment No. 14(2013), the Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Implement its legislation which anchors the best interests of the child, including the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018, the Islamabad Capital Territory Child Protection Act 2018 and other laws at the provincial and territorial levels;
- (b) Evaluate and eliminate policies, services, programs and practices that may not be in the best interests of the child.

Right to life, survival and development

17. The Committee is seriously concerned about the reports that:

- (a) Multiple children were killed on both sides in the 2025 crossfire between Pakistan and India in Kashmir;
- (b) Many children continue to die as a result of sectarian clashes, including between Shia and Sunni Muslims;
- (c) Children continue being sentenced to the death penalty and individuals who were below the age of 18 when the crime was committed remain on death row, due to low levels of birth certification, inadequate age determination procedures and the absence of legal safeguards such as legal aid;
- (d) Children, especially girls, continue to be killed in the name of so-called honour, and such cases remain significantly underreported;
- (e) High rates of neonatal, infant and under 5 mortality persist, especially among rural children and children living in poverty;

18. The Committee urges the State party:

- (a) To take all measures necessary to protect children, and to provide clear instructions to the armed forces and security forces to prevent any possible killings and injuries of children in line with the international humanitarian law principles of distinction, proportionality and precaution;
- (b) To protect children during and following sectarian clashes and improve the protection provided to schools, including by continuing the implementation of the the Pakistan School Safety Framework and in other areas with a high concentration of children;
- (c) To implement effectively the prohibition of the death penalty for children or individuals who had committed a crime while under the age of 18 years, including by applying the principle of presumption of minority in cases of doubt, and to launch a review of all cases where the death penalty was handed down to children or individuals who had committed a crime while under the age of 18 years and where there is, or was, any indication that they were juveniles;
- (d) To put an end to killings committed in the name of so-called honour and to ensure the prompt and effective investigation into such reports and bring those responsible to justice;
- (e) To take further measures to reduce the under 5 and neonatal mortality rates and address the underlying causes of such mortality, including by improving the quality of and access to antenatal and postnatal services and improving the quality of and expanding preventive interventions in primary health care.

Respect for the views of the child

19. While noting the initiatives undertaken by the State party aimed at promoting child participation, the Committee regrets that the efforts in this regard remain very few and insufficient. Recalling its general comment No. 12 (2009), the Committee recommends that the State party promote meaningful participation of all children within the family, communities and schools and include children in decision-making in all matters related to them. In particular, it recommends that the State party:

- (a) Adopt a legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal proceedings, including by establishing systems and/or procedures to comply with this right;
- (b) Conduct research to identify the issues that are most important to children, to hear their views on those issues, to find out how their voices are heard and the channels through which they currently and potentially have the most influence on national and local decision-making;
- (c) Take measures to ensure that children's, including girls', views are heard in family decisions affecting their lives;
- (d) Further strengthen student councils and institutionalize the Children's Parliament as a regular event and ensure that it is provided with a meaningful mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources, in order to facilitate children's effective engagement with national legislative processes on issues that affect them.

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

Birth registration

20. The Committee welcomes the increase in birth registration and fee waivers introduced in some of its provinces as well as the reduction in processing fees in others. However, it remains seriously concerned about the alarmingly high numbers of unregistered children in the State party and is particularly concerned about:

- (a) The reports of barriers to birth registration, including outdated legislation, poor enforcement, complex procedures, ambiguity in roles and responsibilities among institutions and governments;
- (b) Continuous lack of effective measures to ensure the birth registration of children belonging to marginalized and disadvantaged groups;
- (c) Absence of legal provisions to provide birth registration to non-nationals, including to asylum seeking and refugee children, such as Afghan children.

21. Taking note of target 16.9 of the SDGs, the Committee strongly urges the State party:

- (a) To amend its legislation and establish effective procedures to ensure the issuance of birth certificates for all children born in its territory, immediately after the birth;
- (b) To further abolish all birth registration fees across the country and ensure that all children, including children of asylum seeking, refugee and internally displaced parents, are properly registered at birth, including by raising awareness on the importance of birth registration among the population;
- (c) To seek technical assistance from UNICEF among others, for the implementation of these recommendations.

Freedom of thought, conscience and religion

22. The Committee is deeply concerned about the reports of:

- (a) Discrimination, hate speech, violence and intimidation against religious minorities, in particular the Christian, Ahmadi, Hindu, Shia Muslims and Sikh minorities;
- (b) Children being detained on charges under blasphemy laws, including for online blasphemy under cybercrime laws;
- (c) Forced conversions through marriages of girls from religious minorities.

23. **The Committee urges the State party:**

- (a) **To protect the freedom of religion of all children, including Shia Muslim, Hindu, Christian and Ahmadi children and ensure that children are able to choose their religion, or not to profess any religion at all;**
- (b) **To prevent and investigate promptly and effectively all acts of discrimination, hate speech and violence against religious minorities, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and, if convicted, sanctioned with penalties commensurate with the gravity of their crime;**
- (c) **To prevent misuse or misinterpretation of blasphemy laws and ensure that children under the age of 18 years are exempt from criminal responsibility for such crimes;**
- (d) **To criminalize forced conversions as a distinct offence to ensure accountability to all parties involved in the process, provide comprehensive support services for survivors of such crime and take measures to uphold freedom of religion and equality of all religious minorities;**
- (e) **To raise awareness of the society on respect towards freedom of religion.**

Right to privacy and access to information

24. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2021) and the 2026 Joint Statement on Artificial Intelligence and the Rights of the Child, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) **Develop regulations and safeguarding policies for the media and in the digital environment to protect the privacy of children as well as to prevent children's exposure to harmful content, materials and online risks, and provide for mechanisms to prosecute violations;**
- (b) **Develop regulations with respect to artificial intelligence to increase opportunities for children and protect them from the harm imposed on them by artificial intelligence;**
- (c) **Improve digital inclusion for children in disadvantaged situations, including by means of accessible and affordable online services and connectivity across the country.**

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

Abuse, neglect, sexual abuse and exploitation

25. The Committee welcomes the measures taken by the State party such as the amendments to the Pakistan Penal Code and the Anti-Rape (Investigation and Trial) Act of 2021, which mandate specialized investigations and evidence-based prosecutions to prevent release of offenders or private settlement as well as

legislative and policy initiatives at the provincial and territorial levels. Despite these efforts, the Committee remains seriously concerned about the reports that:

- (a) Significant proportion of children experience physical, psychological, sexual and other forms of violence in various settings and that the child protection legislations in provinces and territories are not properly implemented;
- (b) Large numbers of children, including boys, continue to be victims of sexual abuse and exploitation, including in the digital environment, while the perpetrators enjoy impunity;
- (c) Gender-based violence, such as marital rape and crimes in the name of so called “honour”, especially against girls, is on the rise, while there is a significant underreporting and extremely low rates of prosecutions and convictions for such violence.

26. **In the light of its general comment No. 13(2011), the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Finalize adoption of a strategy to address and prevent all forms of violence against children throughout its territory and to strengthen the child protection infrastructure at the local level to respond to all forms of violence against children;**
- (b) **Ensure mandatory child-friendly reporting of all forms of violence against children, including by implementing it effectively throughout the country, identifying accessible focal points that should receive such reports, and promoting awareness among parents, care-givers, professionals and children themselves on the importance of reporting and on early intervention in cases of child abuse and violence;**
- (c) **Ensure that all cases of the abuse of children, including sexual violence, are promptly investigated, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach with the aim of avoiding the revictimization of the child, that perpetrators are prosecuted and duly sanctioned and that appropriate reparations are provided to victims;**
- (d) **Consider as a standard procedure the acceptance of audiovisual recordings of the child victim's testimony as evidence, and conduct cross-examination without delay in child-friendly facilities;**
- (e) **Implement its legislation that prohibit child sexual abuse and exploitation, including through addressing sexual offences against boys effectively, as well as initiate a child-friendly system for the mandatory reporting of cases of child sexual abuse and exploitation, and investigate all reports and allegations of child sexual abuse and exploitation and punish perpetrators;**
- (f) **Prevent, detect and investigate all cases of online violence against children, including child online sexual abuse and exploitation cases and strengthen the National Cybercrime Investigation Agency through ensuring sufficient human, material and financial resources for their effective functioning;**
- (g) **Enhance awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation among the members of the public and professionals working with and for children and respond to all forms of child sexual exploitation and abuse, including by strengthening the professional capacity and software tools to detect and investigate such abuse and raising awareness of parents and teachers about online and offline risks;**
- (h) **Enforce legislation criminalizing all forms of violence against women and girls, including domestic violence, marital rape, and crimes committed in the name of so called “honour”, establish a national database on**

all cases of domestic violence against children, and undertake a comprehensive assessment of the extent, causes and nature of such violence.

Corporal punishment

27. The Committee notes that laws prohibiting corporal punishment have been enacted in Sindh, Islamabad Capital Territory and Gilgit Baltistan. Recalling its general comment No. 8 (2006), the Committee urges the State party:

- (a) To amend its legislation which allows corporal punishment by parents, guardians and teachers, in particular section 89 of the penal code, the Punjab Destitute and Neglected Children Act 2004 and the Khyber Pakhtunkhwa Child Protection and Welfare Act 2010 and explicitly prohibit corporal punishment in all settings both at the federal and local levels;
- (b) To promote positive, non-violent and participatory forms of child-rearing and discipline;
- (c) To conduct awareness-raising campaigns for parents and professionals working with and for children to promote attitudinal change, within the family and the community, with regard to corporal punishment.

Harmful practices

28. The Committee notes that some of the State party's provinces and territories have adopted laws that raised the age of marriage to 18 years. Nevertheless, it is deeply concerned about:

- (a) The recent rulings by the Lahore High Court and Islamabad High Court that have validated marriages of 15-year-old girls on the basis of puberty;
- (b) The practice of child marriages continuing to affect large numbers of girls and are legally authorized in some parts of the country;
- (c) The harmful practices of *watta satta* and *swara/vani* continuing to take place in rural areas.

29. Recalling joint general recommendation No. 31 CEDAW/general comment No. 18 of the CRC (2019) on harmful practices, and taking note of target 5.3 of the SDGs, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Strengthen awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on the harmful effects of child marriage on the physical and mental health and well-being of girls and boys, targeting households, local authorities, religious leaders, judges and prosecutors;
- (b) Establish protection schemes for victims of child marriages who file a complaint;
- (c) Take active measures to put an end to harmful practices against children in the State party;
- (d) Ensure that all cases of the harmful practices against children, including child marriages and *watta satta*, *swara/vani*, are promptly reported, investigated, and that perpetrators are prosecuted and duly sanctioned and that reparations are provided to victims, as appropriate.

Torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment

30. Concerned about the reports of systematic abuse of children by the police and recalling its general comment No. 13 (2011), the Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts:

- (a) To continue to implement the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018 which exempts children below the age of 18 years from punishment for *Hadood* offences;

- (b) To launch an independent inquiry into all allegations of torture and ill-treatment of children, in particular those committed by law enforcement and security officers;
- (c) To enforce the prohibition of torture and ensure that allegations of torture or cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment of children are duly investigated, that perpetrators are punished in a manner commensurate with the gravity of their acts and that children who are victims receive adequate remedies;
- (d) To ensure that children have access to confidential, child-friendly complaint mechanisms for the reporting of torture and ill-treatment in detention facilities;
- (e) To enforce the Zainab Alert Response and Recovery Act of 2020 and accelerate the adoption of the Bill aimed at criminalizing enforced disappearances and to ensure that persons below the age of 18 years are not subjected to arbitrary detention and to promptly and effectively investigate all cases of enforced disappearances of children.

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

Family environment

31. Drawing the State party's attention to its statement under article 5 of the Convention and recalling its previous concluding observations, the Committee recommends that the State party further strengthen its efforts:

- (a) To increase financial assistance to families living in poverty and psychological and social support and guidance to help them fulfil their parental responsibilities;
- (b) To secure children's right to grow up in a family environment where parents have equal rights in all matters relating to marriage and family relations, by amending its legislation to ensure that those laws that violate the rights of children, be repealed;
- (c) To consider ratifying the Hague Convention of 23 November 2007 on the International Recovery of Child Support and Other Forms of Family Maintenance, the Hague Protocol of 23 November 2007 on the Law Applicable to Maintenance Obligations and the Hague Convention of 19 October 1996.

Children deprived of a family environment

32. While noting with concern that children deprived of family care continue to be institutionalized in private orphanages and large institutions, including religious institutions, that are poorly regulated or monitored by the State party and drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Strengthen its promotion of and support for family-type and community-based alternative care for children deprived of parental care, in order to reduce reliance on institutional care;
- (b) Establish a clear regulation on alternative care for children, including provisions for quality care standards, a periodic review of placements and the right of the child to be heard at all stages of the procedure;
- (c) Provide adequate training for staff in care settings, and ensure that children have access to appropriate channels for reporting ill-treatment, including through complaints mechanisms, and implement measures to

monitor and remedy the ill-treatment of children and ensure family reintegration, when possible;

(d) Ensure that adequate human, technical and financial resources are allocated to alternative care centres and relevant child protection services, as well as medical, psychological and educational services, in order to facilitate the rehabilitation and social reintegration of children resident therein.

F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

33. The Committee welcomes the laws concerning the rights of persons with disabilities adopted at the provincial and territorial levels, including the Islamabad Capital Territory Rights of Persons with Disability Act of 2020 and programmes and policies empowering persons with disabilities. Recalling its general comment No. 9 (2006), the Committee urges the State party to adopt a human rights-based approach to disability and:

(a) To ensure implementation of its laws and policies providing for the rights of children with disabilities by allocating adequate human, technical and financial resources and strengthening the capacity of persons in charge of their implementation;

(b) To update the existing legislation in instances where the laws overlook specific rights of children with disabilities and fail to establish strong linkages with other child protection, labour, and education laws, to ensure that they are in line with the Convention, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other international norms and standards on the right of children with disabilities;

(c) To guarantee access to all services available, by removing barriers faced by children with disabilities in accessing education, health, including early detection and intervention, communication, transportation and other social services, by improving infrastructure, technological and other forms of support and reasonable accommodation;

(d) To adopt a national strategy specific to the rights of persons with disabilities with special attention to children, and undertake awareness-raising campaigns to combat the stigmatization of and prejudice against children with disabilities by promoting a positive image of such children;

(e) To strengthen its social protection system that provides sufficient financial support at the household level and services for children with disabilities;

(f) To organize the collection of data on children with disabilities and develop an efficient and harmonized system for disability assessment in order to facilitate access for children with all types of disabilities to the above mentioned services.

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

Health and health services

34. While welcoming the National Emergency Action Plan 2024-2025, prioritizing polio eradication and recalling its general comment No. 15 (2013), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Improve access to quality and affordable primary health care services, maternal and newborn health and community-based services and infrastructure especially for children living in rural areas, children living in poverty and children with obesity and those with chronic diseases, including diabetes, as well as expanding preventive interventions in primary health care;

(b) Further expand the immunization coverage against preventable diseases, in particular polio, throughout the country, especially in some areas of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Baluchistan and Sindh provinces, and undertake measures to raise awareness in communities about the importance of vaccination;

(c) Address malnutrition and stunting especially among children under 5 years of age, by allocating sufficient financial resources, monitoring the expenditure and providing for accountability mechanisms for expenditure for treatment and prevention of malnutrition and stunting throughout its territory and increase efforts to support breastfeeding programs;

(d) Seek financial and technical assistance from UNICEF and WHO, among other entities, in this regard.

Mental health

35. The Committee regrets the lack of information with regard to the State party's efforts to address mental health challenges among its children, recalls its previous concluding observations and recommends that the State party:

(a) Take measures to prevent suicide among children;

(b) Increase psychological counselling services and the number of social workers and other specialized mental health professionals in schools and communities;

(c) Ensure that all professionals working with children are adequately trained to identify and refer situations presenting early suicidal tendencies and mental health problems;

(d) Collect data and adopt a comprehensive national child mental health policy, ensuring that mental health promotion, counselling, prevention of mental health disorders in primary health care, schools and communities and child-friendly mental health services are integral features of the policy.

Adolescent health

36. The Committee regrets the lack of information on sexual and reproductive health services for children and to address drug abuse among children. Recalling its general comment No. 4 (2003) and general comment No. 20 (2016), the Committee recalls its previous concluding observations and recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and ensure that sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum and is targeted at adolescents, with special attention on preventing early pregnancy and sexually transmitted infections;

(b) Ensure that adolescent girls have access to menstrual health and hygiene information and affordable menstrual hygiene materials;

(c) Review its legislation with a view to ensuring that children, including unmarried girls, have access to contraception, safe abortion and post-abortion care services, and that the views of girls should always be heard and taken into account in abortion related decisions;

(d) Develop and implement a policy to protect the rights of pregnant teenagers, adolescent mothers and their children and to combat discrimination against them;

(e) Address the prevalence of drug use by children and adolescents by, *inter alia*, providing children and adolescents with accurate and objective information and life skills education on preventing substance abuse — including tobacco and alcohol;

(f) Develop specialized and child-friendly drug-dependence treatment for adolescents placing the emphasis on public health responses that prioritize prevention, harm reduction and rehabilitation over punishment.

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

37. The Committee welcomes the Benazir Income Support Programme and Unconditional Cash Transfers to support families in need, but notes that, despite some progress, large number of children continue to live in extreme poverty and that access to safe drinking water and sanitation services remain limited. In this regard the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Guarantee an adequate and sustainable standard of living for all children with a particular focus on children in the most marginalized and disadvantaged situations, and improve social benefits and security schemes for families with children living in poverty;
- (b) Take further measures to ensure that all children within its territory, in particular children in rural and remote areas, have access to safe drinking water and sanitation services.

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

38. While noting the efforts made by the State party, in particular the National Adaptation Plan 2023 and the Resilient Recovery, Rehabilitation, and Reconstruction Policy in response to the 2022 floods, the Committee is concerned about the reports that climate-related disasters such as flooding had a devastating effect on children, especially girls, subjecting them to the risks of child marriages, gender-based violence and school dropout. Recalling its general comment No. 26 (2023), the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Further improve its preparedness for natural disasters such as floodings and earthquakes;
- (b) Adopt legislative and administrative measures to address the adverse effects of environmental degradation and climate change on the enjoyment of children's rights;
- (c) Increase children's awareness and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters by incorporating it into the school curriculum and teachers' training programmes and increase the participation of children in the elaboration of adaptation programmes;
- (d) Seek bi-lateral, multi-lateral, regional and international cooperation in implementing these recommendations.

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

Education: aims and coverage

39. Concerned about the alarmingly high numbers of out-of-school children in the State party, despite the efforts made, including the announcement of the nationwide education emergency by the Prime Minister in 2024, the National Education Policy Framework in 2018 and the National Fund for Out-of-School Children, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that all girls and boys complete free, equitable and quality primary and secondary education leading to relevant and effective learning outcomes, including by fully implementing its legislation aimed at ensuring

universal, free, and compulsory primary education and guaranteeing access to free secondary education for all children, including asylum seeking and refugee children, who are present in the State party's territory;

(b) **Further address the high and increasing number of out of school children in the country and increase the enrolment to and retention of children, especially girls, by tackling socio-cultural practices and other barriers to education;**

(c) **Take the necessary measures to improve accessibility and the quality of education, and provide quality training and incentives for teachers, with particular emphasis on rural areas, and ensure monitoring of the school curricula and teaching methods;**

(d) **Ensure that pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers are supported and assisted in continuing their education in mainstream schools;**

(e) **Ensure that all children with disabilities have access to inclusive education by improving facilities and accessibility of schools, including by ensuring that schools are equipped with trained teachers, accessible infrastructure and teaching materials adapted to the needs of children with disabilities;**

(f) **Improve school infrastructure, especially in schools affected by natural disasters or conflict, and provide basic necessities, including safe drinking water, toilets and heating;**

(g) **Allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education, based on a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and development.**

40. **Furthermore, while noting the Societies Registration (Amendment) Act passed in December 2024 aimed at enhancing oversight and registration of madrassas, the Committee reiterates its previous concluding observations and urges the State party:**

(a) **To implement and strengthen monitoring of registered and unregistered private madrassas, using adequate mechanisms, in order to prevent any possibility of abuse and exploitation;**

(b) **To ensure that the curricula of madrassas follow the overall State curriculum and do not teach religious or sectarian intolerance, are designed in the spirit of human rights and include subjects on children's rights and international human rights instruments to which the State is a party.**

K. Special protection measures (arts. 22, 30, 32–33, 35–36, 37 (b)–(d), and 38–40 of the Convention and the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict)

Asylum-seeking, refugee, internally displaced and stateless children

41. While noting that the State party hosts large numbers of refugees mostly from Afghanistan, the Committee is seriously concerned about:

(a) **Deportation of large numbers of Afghan children, including unaccompanied children, under the Illegal Foreigners' Repatriation Plan phases I, II and III, without any assessment of individual risks, to Afghanistan exposing them to serious child rights violations during detention and border crossings, including family separation, exploitation and abuse, forced marriage, child labor, and psychological distress;**

(b) **The absence of a legal framework providing for the right to seek asylum and reliance on short term administrative measures in dealing with asylum seeking and refugee children;**

(c) Stateless children, including those belonging to Bengali, Bihari and Rohingya communities living in informal settlements with poor hygiene and sanitation facilities, who are denied access to basic services due to the absence of national identification documents;

(d) Lack of effective measures to protect internally displaced children, exposing them to risks of exploitation, violence affecting their mental health and with limited access to food, shelter and education.

42. Recalling the joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the CMW/No. 22 and No. 23 of the CRC (2017) and its General Comment No. 6 (2005), the Committee urges the State party:

(a) To adopt a national refugee law and establish a national asylum system in order to register and provide long term solutions to refugee children, especially those from Afghanistan, and ensure unimpeded access for them to all services, including access to the social protection system;

(b) To uphold the principle of *non-refoulement* and reconsider the Illegal Foreigners Repatriation Plan, which poses serious risks for children, especially Afghan children, including unaccompanied children, who are being returned;

(c) To grant citizenship to children, in particular children from Bengali, Bihari and Rohingya communities who would otherwise be stateless, and to provide such children with all services available for Pakistani nationals, including access to health, education and social protection services;

(d) To consider ratifying the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

(e) To develop a national policy on internally displaced persons aimed at ensuring effective protection for displaced children from exposure to exploitation and violence and providing access to basic necessities, including health and education.

Children belonging to minority groups

43. The Committee notes the establishment of the National Commission for Minorities in 2025 and urges the State party to take urgent measures:

(a) To combat hate crimes, attacks, mob lynching and any other crimes against ethnic and religious minority groups, involving or affecting particularly children;

(b) To ensure reporting of each incidence, prompt and effective investigation into reports and prosecution of perpetrators;

(c) To provide members of religious and ethnic minority groups with economic, social and cultural rights and opportunities.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

44. Concerned that child labour remains prevalent in the State party, including among children below the age of 14 years and among asylum seeking and refugee children, who work in the informal sector, especially in agriculture, mining and domestic work in hazardous conditions, despite the legislative measures taken at the provincial level, the Committee takes note of target 8.7 of the SDGs, and urges the State party:

(a) To implement federal and provincial laws that prohibit child labour, and strengthen monitoring mechanisms to guarantee effective enforcement of the law by increasing human, technical and financial resources to labour inspection mechanisms;

(b) To take legislative measures to prevent and prohibit economic exploitation of children in the informal sectors, including in domestic work, throughout the country and ensure effective enforcement of those that exist such as the Punjab Domestic Workers Act of 2019;

(c) To ensure that no child engages in hazardous work and raise public awareness of child labour, its exploitative character and its consequences;

(d) To take measures to protect asylum seeking and refugee children from economic exploitation by including them in social protection schemes and guaranteeing access to public education;

(e) To seek technical assistance from the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour of the International Labour Office in this regard.

Children in street situations

45. Drawing attention to its general comment No. 21 (2017), the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Assess the number of children living and/or working in the streets, and update studies on the root causes of their situations and address the root causes of the problem, in order to prevent children from leaving families and schools for the streets;

(b) Undertake appropriate measures to prevent this phenomenon and to ensure protection and social assistance to those already in the street;

(c) Develop a strategy to effectively protect and ensure social integration of children in street situations and accelerate the adoption of child protection policies;

(d) Ensure access of children in street situations to birth registration and identification documentation, education, health and employment opportunities as well as to safe shelters and child care centres for physical and psychological recovery and reintegration;

(e) End all arrests and detention of children in street situations and ensure that these children are provided with protection and assistance from social services and are not handled within the framework of criminal justice system.

Trafficking

46. While welcoming the Trafficking in Persons (TIP) Act, 2018, enhancing the penalties for offences involving children, the Committee recommends that the State party take measures to implement the Act and the Section 369-A of the Penal Code to combat child trafficking. In addition, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure the effective provision of referral and support services to children who are victims of trafficking;

(b) Investigate all cases of trafficking of children, including corruption in such cases, and bring perpetrators to justice;

(c) Conduct awareness-raising activities in order to make both parents and children aware of the dangers of trafficking.

Administration of child justice

47. The Committee notes the measures taken, especially the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018, the decision by the Peshawar High Court in April 2023 mandating that children charged with terrorism-related offenses be tried in juvenile

courts and the establishment of child courts in Peshawar and Lahore in 2019 and 2017 respectively. However, the Committee is seriously concerned about the systematic violations of the rights of children in the criminal justice system. In particular, it is concerned that:

- (a) The implementation of the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018 is weak due to lack of adequate resources and limited monitoring of its implementation;
- (b) The minimum age of criminal responsibility is very low which is exacerbated by low levels of birth registration and birth certification;
- (c) The timely legal aid for children in the justice system remains inaccessible;
- (d) The State party criminalizes poverty-related offences such as vagrancy, beggary, and other similar offences that disproportionately target children from marginalised and disadvantaged groups;
- (e) The Penal Code provides for the life imprisonment, including indeterminate sentences, for children and for persons who were below the age of 18 at the time of commission of the offence;
- (f) Children are routinely held in unlawful detention following arrest, often far exceeding the limits stipulated by law;
- (g) The release of children from lengthy pre-trial detention is conditioned by monetary securities disadvantaging children from low socioeconomic background;
- (h) Children are frequently detained alongside adults in overcrowded, unsanitary and unsafe conditions.

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

- (a) To implement the Juvenile Justice System Act of 2018 and to ensure that child courts have exclusive jurisdiction in cases in which a child is accused of commission of an offense, including security related offenses, in particular in Baluchistan and in other provinces and territories;
- (b) To expand the specialized child court facilities and procedures to the entire territory of the State party and provide it with adequate human, technical and financial resources, designate specialized judges for children and ensure that such specialized judges receive appropriate training;
- (c) To raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility to at least 14 years of age in line with Committee's General Comment No 24;
- (d) To introduce compulsory procedures and mechanisms to establish the age of a child, including a presumption of validity of official records such as birth certificates and ensuring the presumption of minority, placing the onus on the State to prove adulthood beyond reasonable doubt;
- (e) To ensure the provision of free and specialised legal aid to children alleged as, accused of or recognized as having infringed criminal law at an early stage of the procedure and throughout the legal proceedings;
- (f) To decriminalise poverty-related offences by repealing or amending laws on vagrancy, beggary, and other related offences that disproportionately target children from marginalised and disadvantaged groups;
- (g) To actively promote 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 ensure that health and psycho-social services are provided to such children;

(h) To abolish all forms of life imprisonment, including indeterminate sentences, for all offences committed by persons who were below the age of 18 at the time of commission of the offence;

(i) To put an end to unlawful detention of children and implement the legally established timeframes;

(j) To ensure that release from pre-trial detention, is not conditioned by monetary securities (bail) and ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest appropriate period of time and is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to the release of children;

(k) For the few situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, to 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, health and sanitation services;

(l) To carry out systematic and regular monitoring of detention facilities where children are detained and investigate any reports of violations.

Children in armed conflict

49. The Committee recommends that the State party explicitly criminalize the recruitment of children by non-State armed groups and take all possible measures to prevent such recruitment and use of children in armed campaigns, especially in areas bordering with Afghanistan. It also urges the State party to prevent attacks on schools, especially girls' schools, and other areas with a high concentration of children.

L. Ratification of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure

50. The Committee recommends that the State party ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on a communications procedure.

51. The Committee urges the State party to fulfil its reporting obligations under the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict, given that the related report has been overdue since 17 February 2018.

M. Ratification of international human rights instruments

52. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the following core human rights instruments:

(a) Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance;

(b) International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

53. 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 and 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. National mechanism for reporting and follow-up

54. The Committee recommends that the State party establish a standing government structure and ensure that it has the mandate and adequate human, technical and financial resources to coordinate and engage with, and prepare reports to, international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track national follow-up to, and the implementation of, treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms effectively. The Committee emphasizes that such a structure should be adequately and continuously supported by dedicated staff and should have the capacity to consult systematically with the national human rights institution and civil society.

C. Next report

55. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined eighth and ninth periodic reports of the State party in due course, in line with the envisaged predictable reporting calendar, 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 guidelines⁵ and should not exceed 21,200 words.⁶ 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.

⁵ CRC/C/58/Rev.3.

⁶ General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.