



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Summary record of the 1028th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 18 May 2005, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Doek

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The meeting was called to order at 10.05 a.m.

Consideration of reports of States parties (agenda item 5) *(continued)*

Second periodic report of the Philippines (CRC/C/65/Add.31; HRI/CORE/1/Add.37; CRC/C/Q/PHL/2 (list of issues); CRC/C/RESP/84 (written replies of the Government of the Philippines, available in English only))

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of the Philippines took places at the Committee table.*
2. **Ms. Laigo** (Philippines) said that the Philippines had endeavoured to harmonize its domestic law with the provisions of the Convention. The principal legislative instruments recently adopted for the benefit of children included Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act No. 9209 (2004), Act No. 9231 prohibiting the employment of children in hazardous sectors, the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act (2004), the Birth Registration Act, the Dangerous Drugs Act (2002), and Act No. 9255 conferring on illegitimate children the right to use the family name of their father. The Parliamentary Committee on Justice had recently approved the bill establishing a comprehensive system of juvenile justice, which had been before parliament for the past three terms and should be adopted by 2007.
3. The local authorities, which ensured the supply of basic services to the public, operated within a decentralized framework. The national authorities were responsible for consolidating coordination between the various levels of government and for strengthening the capabilities of their local agents with a view, in particular, to ensuring the integrated implementation and funding of the Child 21 Programme, the Early Childhood Care and Development Programme, and the measures to combat malnutrition and failure at school.
4. The various programmes and projects were implemented in collaboration with the local authorities, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and communities. Information campaigns and planning activities were conducted at local level in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and the aims set out in the document "A World Fit for Children" adopted during the General Assembly Special Session on Children. Sixteen of the country's 79 provinces had now promulgated a Child Welfare Code and several had produced reports on the situation of children.
5. The efforts to promote and implement the rights of the child had been extended to include non-traditional partners such as inter-denominational groups, the media and the private sector. The participation of children was encouraged, with the appointment of members representing children and young people on the Council for the Protection of Children and the National Committee to Combat Poverty, and on the corresponding bodies at regional and subregional level.
6. Among the most recent Government initiatives, mention should be made of the campaign to develop children's potential, which stressed the need to coordinate all actions for the benefit of children, particularly in the areas of health and nutrition, education and psychosocial development, and which was thus part of a complete and comprehensive approach to the provision of basic services for children.
7. **Mr. Kotrane** said that the presence of a high-level delegation representing various departments responsible for children was an encouraging sign and showed the interest that the State party had in the Committee's work and its concern to engage in a constructive and fruitful dialogue with its members.
8. He welcomed the fact that, since its last report was considered in 1995, the State party had ratified the two optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child,

as well as the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, ILO Conventions No. 138, on the minimum age for admission to employment, and No. 182, on the prohibition of the worst forms of child labour, and the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families.

9. The State party had also made substantial progress in the legislative area with the adoption of the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act, the amendment of Act No. 7610, which provided for the elimination of the worst forms of child labour, the Anti-Violence against Women and their Children Act and the Act amending the Family Code.

10. Despite the appreciable efforts that had been made to harmonize domestic legislation with the international human rights instruments, the acts that had been adopted, notably the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act and the Special Protection of Children against Abuse, Exploitation and Discrimination Act, appeared not to have been implemented in practice, particularly at local level. Poverty and the development of sex tourism were still rife.

11. The Committee was aware of the particular problems associated with the geographical configuration of the country — an archipelago consisting of some 7,100 islands — which complicated the provision of health services and education, particularly for children living in rural areas and remote parts of the country. The Committee was also aware of the difficulties associated with the recent natural disasters, including the typhoons at the end of 2004 which had swept through a number of the country's provinces destroying their infrastructures and aggravating the economic and social difficulties, and of the negative effects of the political uncertainties associated, among other things, with the activities of groups of armed rebels.

12. The Committee nevertheless remained concerned about a number of problems. The age of criminal responsibility for children, set at 9 years, was still very low and was contrary to the spirit of the Convention. The Philippine legislation made sexual abuse of children under 16 years of age a criminal offence but did not clearly specify the minimum age of consent to sexual relations. Discrimination was still rife in the country, particularly against young girls and children born out of wedlock. The principle of the best interests of the child, recently enshrined in law, did not appear to be taken fully into consideration in all decisions concerning children and in all the relevant administrative and judicial procedures.

13. Notwithstanding the increased funds allocated to programmes and social services for the benefit of children, particularly in connection with the implementation of the 20/20 Initiative, the priority given to programmes for the benefit of poor families and the establishment of a fund to combat poverty, the specific resources allocated to establishing the economic, social and cultural rights of children were still inadequate. It was also necessary to question the real results of the National Strategic Plan for Children 2001–2005, given the lack of adequate coordination between the bodies responsible for implementing and evaluating it, and the actual operation of the numerous monitoring mechanisms that had been established, including the Philippine Commission on Human Rights, the Council for the Protection of Children, the local councils for the protection of children and the various *barangay* mechanisms, particularly in respect of the human and financial resources at their disposal, the degree of independence they enjoyed, and whether they could receive complaints from children concerning violations of their rights.

14. It would be interesting to know what the Philippine authorities thought about the work of the children's parliament and what measures the Government proposed taking to combat the attitudes, still very prevalent in Philippine society, which prevented children from expressing their views.

15. Lastly, there were no statistical data on certain groups of children, in particular children with a disability, migrant children, children living in extreme poverty, children

who were victims of abuse and neglect, children in conflict with the law, children from minority groups and indigenous children.

16. **The Chairperson** asked whether the State party planned to negotiate a reduction in the cost of servicing its debt, which apparently accounted for almost 33 per cent of its national budget, and what measures the Philippines was taking to prevent certain trading partners from imposing conditions that would restrict the availability of generic medicines, for example. The delegation might explain the results achieved by the Poverty Alleviation Fund, particularly in the 20 or so provinces classified as having priority.

17. It would be useful to know whether the Government had taken any measures in response to information provided by the Special Rapporteur on torture about acts of violence committed by police officers or members of the armed forces against children held in custody or detention. He asked how many people in the Philippines had been sentenced to death and asked for information on the situation of minors who found themselves on death row, even though the country had officially prohibited capital punishment in the case of persons who were under 18 years of age at the time of the acts of which they were accused. It was not clear, in that connection, whether due attention was paid to the need to determine the precise age of persons summoned to appear before the courts.

18. **Ms. Smith** wished to know what specific criteria a child born out of wedlock had to meet in order to be able to use the father's family name and whether the Philippine authorities planned to make DNA paternity tests free of charge and to remove the adjective "illegitimate" from the terminology used in their legislation. It would be useful to have more information about the rights of children born out of wedlock with respect to inheritance, and about the real effectiveness of acts and programmes to combat discrimination in indigenous communities, which constituted at least 14 per cent of the Philippine population.

19. She asked for details of the methods employed in electing members of the children's parliament, the modus operandi of student councils and the content of the training programmes for professionals on the principle of children's participation. She also wished to hear the delegation's response to the allegations concerning local leaders' use of young people's associations for political purposes.

20. **Ms. Vuckovic-Sahovic** asked whether there was a regular training programme on the rights of the child designed for judges, police officers and members of the armed forces, and whether a specific budget was allocated to it.

21. It would also be useful to have information about the percentage of child victims of abuse who were taken into care by the authorities, about the monitoring of children placed in alternative care, and about the measures the State intended to take to prosecute and punish the perpetrators of crimes against children. She would like to know whether the bill on juvenile justice expressly provided for a ban on torture.

22. **Mr. Zermatten** wished to know whether, in addition to the numerous measures already taken (Presidential Decree No. 603, manuals for the use of teachers in public and private schools, specific rules for the conduct of enquiries and the rehabilitation of young offenders), the State party intended to include the prohibition of corporal punishment, particularly in the family context, in the Child and Family Welfare Code and to conduct an awareness-raising campaign to culturally eradicate the idea that corporal punishment could have a salutary effect in the education of children.

23. **Ms. Lee** noted with concern that, in his last report, the Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights and fundamental freedoms of indigenous peoples had remarked on the inadequacy of the social services provided for the indigenous population, given that some 15 per cent of the inhabitants of the Philippines were of indigenous stock.

24. Despite the lack of statistics on the proportion of the population aged 18 or under, it could be estimated, on the basis of extrapolation, to be in the region of 42 per cent, at a time when social services and health budgets appeared to be declining. Lastly, attention should be drawn to the confusion surrounding the precise nature of the system of basic services for children, since it was not clear whether it was a supervisory or implementing system.

25. **Ms. Aluoch** wished to know at what age a child could bring a legal action on its own account. The same question arose in connection with the exceptions provided in the Civil Code, which prohibited any change of forename or family name and any amendment of the birth certificate unless the family name was discredited to the point of being an object of ridicule.

26. **Ms. Khattab** asked how the data on HIV/AIDS were compiled and checked, in view of the apparent contradiction between the apparently low incidence of the disease and the multiplicity of risk factors (a large number of street children, trafficking in drugs, approval of sexual relations before marriage and the presence of sex workers).

27. A recent act allowed a child born out of wedlock to use its father's family name, but it was not clear which of the two, the father or the mother, took the requisite step, whether anyone else was entitled to do so, and what conditions had to be met.

28. The considerable economic disparities between the richest region and the poorest, Mindanao, which was the traditional home of the Muslim population, raised the question of the measures that had been taken to remedy the situation. It would also be good to have details of the precautions that had been taken to ensure that the war on terrorism, in which the Philippines was vigorously engaged at the United States' side, did not damage the rights of Muslim children.

29. **Ms. Ouedraogo** was concerned about the limited scope of the proposal on unrecorded births, because many children were not entered in the register of births, marriages and deaths, and about the obstacles posed by the cost of the procedure, the distance involved and the fact that the staff employed were not trained for the work, on top of the various reasons that tended to deter some sections of the population (religious minorities, indigenous peoples and illegal migrants) from registering their children. Another aspect to be taken into account was the creation of fake family connections invented to circumvent the current provisions on adoption. All those factors raised questions about the measures taken to enable all children living in the Philippines to be registered.

30. The Committee also considered that the fact that a birth certificate could be altered to suit the adoptive parents deprived the child of its right to an identity.

31. In the absence of legislation to protect children against information detrimental to their well-being and development, in particular violent or pornographic information distributed through the Internet and other media, the Committee wished to know what measures were planned to prevent children having access to such information.

32. **Mr. Siddiqui** wished to know what impact the apparent weakness of the family planning system and the large number of children born as a result — especially in the poorest sections of the population — had on the protection of the rights of the child. He observed that literacy and vaccination rates appeared to be higher among girls than among boys, although there were more boys than girls, and asked the delegation to explain that intriguing phenomenon.

33. The substantial number of illegitimate children raised the question whether there was any connection between that state of affairs and the difficulty of obtaining a divorce, to which the very high number of extramarital relationships was attributable. The Committee also wished to know whether there were any statistics on the number of children enlisted in

the armed forces on all sides and whether the authorities had planned to take any measures in that connection.

34. **Mr. Filali** asked whether the Government of the Philippines was a party to bilateral agreements or international conventions which provided for the possibility of recovering maintenance payments abroad.

35. The report dwelt at length on the abuse of children, which raised questions about the means employed to remedy the situation and about the prosecution or impunity of the perpetrators.

36. He asked whether structures had been established to combat corruption and what effect they had on the living conditions of children.

37. According to some information, people, including families with children, who occupied accommodation illegally were summarily evicted en masse, raising the question whether the principle of the best interests of the child were taken into account.

38. **Ms. Ortiz** asked what part the Special Committee for the Protection of Children played in connection with entries in the register of births, marriages and deaths, what that committee's modus operandi was and how it was funded.

39. **Mr. Kotrane** asked for detailed information on cases of births out of wedlock that were not declared by the parents, and on the situation of parents who were illegal migrants and whose children sometimes found themselves deprived of the right to have their birth registered, to a name, to a nationality and to an identity.

The meeting was suspended at 11.10 a.m. and resumed at 11.25 a.m.

40. **Ms. Laigo** (Philippines) stressed the progress that had been made, although she recognized that a number of acts left something to be desired. The Council for the Protection of Children was continuing to harmonize the legislative texts that were adopted with the provisions on the rights of the child. Those legislative issues, particularly in connection with child pornography, were on the political agenda and had already been discussed in the competent committees of the House of Representatives and the Senate.

41. On the question of monitoring the situation of children, even if the data that had been collected were not as comprehensive and as disaggregated as might be wished for, the Council for the Protection of Children had established a system of monitoring at two levels, a macro-level based on the administrative data collected by national institutions and a micro-level based on the data collected at community level. There was thus a breakdown by problems and by areas. The system was in the trial phase and it was to be hoped that it would be operational the following year.

42. **Mr. Manalo** (Philippines) said that the very slow overall growth in the national budget had repercussions for all sectors, including health and the rights of the child. However, the aggregated nature of data contained in the national budget masked the fact that local authority budgets for children had been increasing for several years.

43. The Philippines had always been concerned to reduce the cost of servicing its debt. It was currently investigating the possibility of establishing a free-trade agreement with two major trading partners and the negotiations conducted in that connection would certainly be marked, on the part of the Philippines, by full and complete compliance with the provisions of the Doha Declaration on the TRIPS Agreement and Public Health, particularly on the availability of generic medicines.

44. **Ms. Laigo** (Philippines) explained that the local authorities had their own budgets, funded by local revenue from sources such as business tax or tax on furnished

accommodation. They also received a grant from the central government based on the size of their population.

45. **Ms. Domingo** (Philippines) explained that the main purpose of the Special Committee for the Protection of Children, a recently-established inter-institutional body, was to follow up cases of abuse and exploitation of children, record complaints and provide the victims with legal aid and support, i.e. ensure that the victims were represented by counsel, that the offenders' names were entered on a list of persons to be kept under surveillance and that the victims were removed from the family or steered in the direction of bodies that could help them.

46. Various measures had been taken to implement the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act adopted in 2004, in particular the Strategic Action Plan against Trafficking in Persons, which covered a period of six years and included sections on prevention, protection, ways of ensuring respect for the law, prosecution, rehabilitation and reintegration. The plan had already resulted in the production of guidelines on the formation of special local teams involving the national police service, the National Bureau of Investigation and the Bureau of Customs and Immigration, among others, tasked with coordinating the activities of law enforcement bodies in the areas of surveillance, interception, investigation and arrest. There were teams of that kind in all international ports and airports and in land transport terminals. It should also be noted that guidelines had been produced on the introduction of mechanisms at local level to coordinate and monitor operations to combat trafficking in persons. The Minister of Justice had appointed a special team of 14 prosecutors to handle trafficking cases and had issued a circular containing instructions addressed to all prosecutors. Through its witness protection programme, the Ministry encouraged victims to speak out so that offenders could be prosecuted.

47. The relevant regional service of the Ministry of Social Welfare and Development was immediately notified when any young offender was taken into custody and the service informed the judicial system. Since 2000, persons under 21 years of age who had been sentenced to death were no longer held in the same facilities as adults. The Government of the Philippines had launched a pilot project in cooperation with Japan resulting in the establishment of a retraining centre for up to 24 young offenders, where they could follow a programme designed to change their behaviour and give them some form of training. A study of 48 young offenders who had been sentenced to a term of imprisonment showed that age had been held to be an extenuating circumstance in 18 cases. In the other cases, the Supreme Court had referred the case back to the original, lower, court in order to ascertain the defendant's age at the time of the acts in question.

48. The minimum age of consent to sexual relations was not defined in the text of any act. The 1997 Anti-Rape Act provided for capital punishment if the victim was under 12 years of age.

49. Children born out of wedlock could claim only 50 per cent of the estate that would pass to them if they were officially recognized. They could take their biological father's family name if he allowed them to do so or if they could prove that he had recognized them. Recourse to DNA tests to establish paternity was an option, but the technique was still too expensive and the State did not have sufficient resources at its disposal to meet the relevant costs.

50. The State ensured that evictions in which children might be involved were ordered only if the families could be rehoused immediately and guaranteed access to all basic services. It also ensured that such evictions were carried out in the school holidays in order to avoid any break in the schooling of the children concerned, and that they were accompanied by nutritional programmes in order to avoid any adverse effects on their health.

51. There were indeed reliable reports of summary extrajudicial executions and acts of torture in the Philippines, but the Government endeavoured to bring such cases to light and was unsparing in its efforts to investigate those brought to its attention and to punish those responsible. However, many witnesses and plaintiffs refused to give evidence for fear of reprisals, and the State was therefore engaged in developing the witness and plaintiff protection system by providing various benefits in order to put an end to those intolerable practices — which it did not condone in any circumstances.

52. Under the proposed framework law on juvenile justice the age of criminal responsibility was to be raised from 9 to 12 years and extrajudicial procedures were to be permitted, provided that the offender recognized the acts of which he was accused.

53. **The Chairperson** asked for more information about the situation of the seven young people who had been sentenced to death for crimes committed when they were minors and, in particular, whether there was any hope that they might be granted a pardon. He also asked whether measures had been taken to require the courts to establish the age of defendants as a matter of course and whether recourse to medical examinations might be considered in cases where there were no identity documents.

54. **Ms. Hidalgo** (Philippines) said that in the cases in question, the lower courts had not ascertained the age of the young people who had been sentenced to death and the Supreme Court had referred the cases back to the original courts for them to remedy the omission. In order to prevent any recurrence of such cases, the Ministry of Justice had adopted a directive requiring public prosecutors in future to collect all the information needed to determine the age of offenders, who were given a lighter sentence if they had been minors at the time of the acts in question. The minors who had been sentenced to death, and about whom the members of the Committee had expressed deep concern, would most probably be granted a presidential pardon.

55. **Ms. Caraballo** (Philippines) said that, under the law on juvenile justice, adults must be held separately and those responsible for the administration of justice for minors were encouraged to hold regular meetings with persons whose occupation brought them into contact with young offenders — police officers, social workers and judges in particular. Specialized training courses on the Convention on the Rights of the Child were also included in the police academy curriculum.

56. The National Council on the Welfare of Disabled Persons had a department responsible for conducting a programme for the benefit of young children, the purpose of which was to detect any backwardness or disabilities at an early age. Another programme enabled children with a disability from very poor families to be cared for and to attend normal schools. Some 500 of the 900 NGOs in the National NGO Coalition were concerned with children in general and children with a disability in particular.

57. One particularly disturbing problem that needed to be settled was the problem of migrants' children who had no access to basic services because they had not been registered at birth. Most of those children were to be found in the southern part of the country, close to Malaysia where their parents were employed illegally in the state of Sabah. The two countries had decided to join forces in an attempt to solve the problem, which affected indigenous children in particular. The National Commission on Indigenous Peoples had been incorporated with the department responsible for land reform in order to deal more effectively with the problems in connection with land ownership by those sections of the population.

58. Children involved in armed conflict, either as soldiers or as casualties, received some protection in the sense that they were evacuated to centres specially designed to receive them and provide them with psychological care.

59. There was at present no law expressly banning pornography on the Internet, but any activity of that kind would become a criminal offence under the framework law on juvenile justice that was currently under consideration. The Government of the Philippines had established programmes to identify child abusers and prioritize prevention.

60. Young people were invited to participate in public life through the medium of youth councils at *barangay* level, and the Sanguniang Kabataan (youth council) fund had undertaken to promote their participation. At school level, student councils enable young people to express an opinion on the proposed school activities and to take part in the current educational reforms. Within the framework of the "Schools First Initiative", to be launched at the beginning of the school year in September 2005, schools would have to accept that the community should have a right to look into every aspect of school life. Generally speaking, teachers and supervisory staff welcomed all initiatives tending to give to students a greater say in taking decisions that affected them, except for decisions on matters connected with the actual management of the school.

61. **Mr. Villaverde** (Philippines) said that the rate of vaccination cover, like most other health indicators, had always been better among girls than among boys. Philippine State policy on family planning had long been designed to encourage the inhabitants to be responsible and to plan births. The only development recorded in that connection in the past few years was that the State had stopped supplying goods and services designed to promote family planning, and had delegated the task to the local authorities. However, the State continued to organize information campaigns at national level. It was also endeavouring to get the Catholic Church to support the cause, despite some reservations.

62. AIDS had not spread to any great extent since the first case of seropositivity was recorded in the early 1980s and it was still confined to certain sections of the population. Monitoring showed that the incidence of the disease was low among the general public and not very high even among prostitutes, due in part to the fact that the practice of injecting drugs was not at all widespread and the sexual practices at risk related only to urban areas. The monitoring system covered only part of the overall territory because the budget was limited, but it was operational in strategically selected sensitive areas.

63. The country consisted of so many islands and islets that it was in fact difficult to guarantee that everyone had access to health care, but the authorities were continually engaged in promoting the improvement of local health infrastructures. Current policy was to provide preventive services in the immediate neighbourhood and treatment in hospital. The Government had also ascertained from a pharmaceutical market study that the cost of medicines in the Philippines was among the highest in the region, and it was establishing a system to make cheaper drugs available, particularly for the poorest sections of the population, aiming to halve the price of medicinal products.

64. **Mr. Kotrane** noted that the feminization of poverty was causing a mass exodus of women seeking work abroad. The divorce rate among migrant women was five times the rate among women who remained in the country. That raised problems in connection with recovering maintenance payments. While it was difficult to conclude agreements on the subject with the 150 or so countries receiving migrants from the Philippines, it should be feasible to conclude agreements with the countries that received most of them, primarily Japan. The question also arose as to what the State was doing to improve the difficult situation in connection with adoptions, most of which took place outside the legal system because of the costs and the procedures entailed in going through official channels. The social influence of the Church also remained to be determined, particularly in connection with young people's access to information.

65. The programme for the reintegration of child soldiers, adopted in 2001, demonstrated a laudable awareness but by no means all the children in question were

reached by it, since the programme only covered those who had already been demobbed. It was not clear what the State party intended doing to limit the involvement of children in armed conflicts in the future.

66. The State party had ratified a certain number of International Labour Organization conventions and participated in the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC), but child labour was still a very serious problem, so the delegation might indicate what the State could and would do to control it. The delegation might also provide details of the situation and role of the cartels which apparently played a major role in the sexual exploitation of children — to which, it seemed, parents themselves sometimes consented.

67. **The Chairperson** wished to know the Government's position on the telephone counselling service, which was privately funded at present when it should be funded by the State, as that would have the advantage of ensuring full national coverage. The service was not only of interest in providing children with a place where they could speak, it also provided the State with an extremely useful instrument for identifying cases where assistance and alternative care were needed. Perhaps the delegation could also provide further information about what it understood by the expression term "falsified adoptions".

68. **Ms. Anderson** was surprised that the critical issue of workers who had emigrated was not addressed in the report, and asked about the living conditions of the numerous children separated from parents who worked abroad and whether there were any programmes providing special support for children in such circumstances. The children of some female migrant workers were born abroad, and it was not clear how well those children integrated when the family returned to the Philippines and to what extent their parents were informed of the services to which their children should have access. She would like to have any recent statistics on the number of migrants returning to the country, which appeared to have dropped, and wished to know whether there was any organization to help migrants who wanted to move back to the Philippines.

69. The report stated that children of school age could stay with their mother if she was held in custody or in prison; it would be useful to know how the rule was applied in practice, how the rights of the children concerned were guaranteed, and what facilities and services were available to them in detention centres.

70. **Mr. Liwski** wished to know the current status of the strategies adopted for children with disabilities. Certain popular beliefs appeared to present an obstacle to the more general use by the disabled of material and devices to help them move about, particularly in rural areas, and that called for comment. He asked how matters stood with the rehabilitation programme conducted at local level; what lessons had been learned from the extension of areas of rehabilitation; whether the objectives had been achieved; and whether the plan to establish the office for special education for the disabled had made any progress.

71. The adoption of the Rooming-in and Breastfeeding Act, the Total Protection and Development of Children Act in villages and the Generics Act, among others, was to be welcomed, but it was not clear whether sufficient budget resources had been unblocked to ensure that those acts were effectively implemented. He asked what progress had been made in the plan to introduce universal medical coverage, what proportion of the costs of the health sector reform programme was covered by central Government, by the local authorities and by private funds, and what the effect had been of giving public hospitals a greater measure of fiscal autonomy.

72. Despite the encouraging drop in the infant mortality rate, the figure was still too high and efforts had to continue. The rumour that the tetanus vaccine induced abortion was disturbing and, together with others of the same ilk, probably explained the recent reversal observed in the trend in vaccination coverage.

73. Many food programmes funded from external sources — the World Bank, UNICEF and others — were currently up and running, but it was important that the Philippine State too should contribute in order to ensure that the programmes survived if the external funds dried up. It was surprising to learn from the report that only 33 per cent of pregnant women were informed of the dangers associated with pregnancy and that only 56 per cent of births were attended by health professionals. That was another area in which progress was needed.

74. **Ms. Ortiz** observed that only 34 per cent of babies were delivered in hospital, and that that public health problem was also conducive to the falsification of birth certificates and thus to illegal adoption. The time had come to appoint a public body to look into the problem of illegal adoptions, which affected children's right to an identity and their right to live with the members of their family. The State party's legislation on adoption was consistent with the Convention on the Rights of the Child and with the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, so it was the implementation of the legislation that was in question. The number of children who had been officially declared available for adoption was declining and the reasons for that would have to be identified. There was a shortage of reception centres for children pending an official declaration that they were available for adoption and, in the case of those who had been declared available, the time spent in an institution was generally too long. The delegation might indicate what stage the bill on foster families had reached.

75. **Ms. Lee** observed that, because of inconsistencies in the minimum age, children could start work before they reached the official school-leaving age. It would be useful to know what percentage of the population had no access to education and which specific sections of the population were affected. She asked what results the "Education for All" strategy had produced, and what was being done to improve the indigenous peoples' access to water and sanitation in certain regions.

76. **Mr. Krappman** noted that the free compulsory primary and secondary education guaranteed by the Constitution was not always available in reality, and that was probably due partly to the indirect and hidden costs of education, which had to be reduced or even eliminated. A great many programmes had been established to combat truancy and dropping out of school but they appeared to have limited cover, and the Committee wished therefore to know how many students benefited from those programmes and how far the results were monitored and evaluated. At present, a third of children apparently did not complete their primary education, proving that the existing programmes were not producing the expected results and raising the question of what could be done to achieve the aim of education for all.

77. In addition to that problem, there was also a serious problem concerning the quality of the education provided. It would be helpful if the delegation could indicate what arrangements were in place to monitor it and to what extent they covered private schools. Perhaps it could also share its own conclusions about the experience of the Lingua Franca project mentioned in the report.

78. As the success of schooling depended largely on motivating pupils, a process that started when they were very young, it would be interesting to know what proportion of children had access to preschool education and whether preschool education was free.

79. It would also be useful to know what percentage of pupils who did not go on to higher education had access to vocational training.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.