



Convention on the Rights of the Child

Distr.: General
15 November 2023

Original: English

Committee on the Rights of the Child

Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Finland*

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Finland¹ at its 2710th and 2711th meetings,² held on 15 and 16 May 2023, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2728th meeting, held on 26 May 2023.

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the combined fifth and sixth 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. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the constructive dialogue held with the multisectoral delegation of the State party.

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

3. The Committee welcomes the various legislative, institutional and policy measures taken by the State party to implement the Convention, including the development of its first National Child Strategy, in 2021, and the addition of new provisions on sexual offences to the Criminal Code, in 2023.

4. The Committee also welcomes the ratification of the following instruments:

- (a) Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on a communications procedure, in November 2015;
- (b) Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, in May 2016;
- (c) International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, in March 2023;
- (d) Paris Agreement, in November 2016.

III. Main areas of concern and recommendations

5. The Committee reminds the State party of the indivisibility and interdependence of all the rights enshrined in the Convention and emphasizes the importance of all the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee would

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

¹ [CRC/C/FIN/5-6](#).

² See [CRC/C/SR.2710](#) and [CRC/C/SR.2711](#).

³ [CRC/C/FIN/RQ/5-6](#).



like to draw the State party's attention to the recommendations concerning the following areas, in respect of which urgent measures must be taken: non-discrimination (para. 16); violence against children, including sexual exploitation and abuse (para. 23); children deprived of a family environment (para. 27); children with disabilities (para. 30); asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied children (para. 39); and administration of child justice (para. 41).

6. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict and the Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, throughout the process of implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. It urges the State party to ensure the meaningful participation of children in the design and implementation of policies and programmes aimed at achieving all 17 Sustainable Development Goals as far as they concern children.**

A. General measures of implementation (arts. 4, 42 and 44 (6))

Legislation

7. **While welcoming the legal reforms relating to the well-being services counties and the proposal put before Parliament to speed up the handling of crimes against children, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

- (a) **Consider the possibility of incorporating the Convention into national legislation;**
- (b) **Take measures to strengthen children's rights impact assessments in the legislative process;**
- (c) **Reform legislation relating to Sami people, in particular with regard to the cultural and linguistic rights of Sami children.**

Coordination

8. **The Committee welcomes the adoption of the National Child Strategy and the establishment of a permanent coordination function at the national level. The Committee recommends that the new body be responsible for ensuring the effective coordination of the implementation of the Convention at the central, regional and municipal levels and across various sectors, such as the education, health and social services sectors and the child justice system.**

Allocation of resources

9. **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) **Incorporate a children's rights-based approach into the State budgeting process;**
- (b) **Implement a system to track the allocation, use and monitoring of resources for children throughout the State party, including by the well-being services counties and municipalities, and assess the extent to which investments in all sectors serve the best interests of children;**
- (c) **Define budget lines for children in disadvantaged or vulnerable situations, including children with disabilities, children belonging to minority groups, children living in poverty and asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children;**
- (d) **Strengthen, at the national and municipal levels, the use of transparent and participatory budgeting processes in which civil society, the public and children can participate effectively.**

Data collection

10. While welcoming the development of indicators to assess trends in the realization of children's rights, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation⁴ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue strengthening its system for collecting data relating to both qualitative and quantitative indicators encompassing all areas of the Convention;

(b) Ensure that the data are disaggregated also by disability, migratory background, socioeconomic background, status as a member of a minority group (e.g. Roma) or an Indigenous People (Sami) and status as a child in a vulnerable situation, for example a child of imprisoned parents, in a situation of violence or in alternative care, in order to facilitate analysis of the situation of children;

(c) Ensure the effective coordination and sharing of data among relevant ministries and entities and the use of data for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and projects on children's rights.

Independent monitoring

11. While noting the strengthening of the resources of the Ombudsman for Children, the Committee recalls its previous recommendation⁵ and recommends that the State party:

(a) Allocate sufficient economic and technical resources for the regular monitoring and evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the Convention;

(b) Continue to strengthen the independence of the Ombudsman for Children, including by ensuring that the results-based management arrangement to which it is subject does not compromise its functional independence;

(c) Strengthen awareness-raising to ensure that all children are aware of their right to file complaints with the various complaints procedures, including the Parliamentary Ombudsman, and receive the necessary support to do so, and ensure that all the complaints received are investigated and addressed in a child-friendly manner;

(d) Strengthen awareness among children and parents of the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

12. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue to raise awareness of children's rights among the public and professionals, including by disseminating child-friendly educational materials, and promote the active involvement of children in civil society, including in large-scale projects;

(b) Provide ongoing, systematic training on children's rights, the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, including the Optional Protocol on a communications procedure, for all professionals working for and with children.

International cooperation

13. The Committee commends the State party for its long-term commitment to official development assistance but notes that the State party did not meet its commitment of reaching the internationally agreed target of 0.7 per cent of gross national income by 2015. The Committee encourages the State party to continue strengthening the implementation of a children's rights-based approach in the context

⁴ CRC/C/FIN/CO/4, para. 19.

⁵ Ibid., para. 15.

of its trade agreements and development aid policy and programmes, including through children's rights impact assessments of international assistance and cooperation programmes.

Children's rights and the business sector

14. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of a national plan for the implementation of the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights but is concerned about the lack of legal accountability for business enterprises that have violated children's rights. Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Enact national legislation on the corporate responsibility of business enterprises and their subsidiaries operating in or managed from the territory of the State party in order to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for activities that negatively affect human rights or endanger children's rights, including the risks posed by global warming;

(b) Establish monitoring mechanisms for the investigation of and provision of redress for violations of children's rights by business entities with a view to improving accountability and transparency;

(c) Require companies to undertake assessments of and consultations on the environmental, health-related and other children's rights impacts of their business activities, to fully disclose those impacts and to submit their plans for addressing them.

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

Non-discrimination

15. The Committee welcomes the Action Plan for Combating Racism and Promoting Good Relations between Population Groups, the action plan on bullying, the National Roma Policy (2023–2030) and the National Action Plan on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities but is deeply concerned about persistent discrimination against children and adolescents on the basis of gender, age, language, national or ethnic origin, migratory background, disability and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender or intersex status and about bullying.

16. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen the fight against discrimination, including racial discrimination, hate speech and hate crimes;

(b) Redouble its efforts to strengthen the impact of targeted policies and programmes to eliminate discrimination against children in all spheres and sectors of Finnish society, with the involvement of civil society, communities and children and adolescents themselves from an early age;

(c) Introduce awareness-raising campaigns that promote equality and that, through the media, contribute to changing conduct and behaviour with a view to transforming social norms that contribute to discrimination, in particular discrimination based on ethnicity, immigration status, disability, religion, sexual orientation and gender identity, among other grounds.

Best interests of the child

17. While welcoming the incorporation of the principle of the best interests of the child into numerous laws, the Committee is concerned that it is often not consistently applied. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Guarantee the correct and systematic application of the principle of the best interests of the child in all areas of rights protection, in accordance with the

Committee's general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration;

(b) Establish mechanisms to monitor the impact of the application of the principle of the best interests of the child in the execution of programmes, in legislative, administrative and judicial procedures and in relation to custody and contact with parents, alternative care modalities, justice for adolescents in conflict with the law, asylum, in particular in the event of the return of parents whose asylum applications have been refused, and support for children who are victims or witnesses of crimes;

(c) Provide guidance and training to all professionals who work to provide services to children and adolescents and to uphold their rights, and reinforce and intensify training for all authorities responsible for applying the principle of the best interests of the child.

Right to life, survival and development

18. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts to prevent suicide among children, including children with disabilities, children who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth, transgender children and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, and set up inter-agency child death review teams with the aim of strengthening preventive measures. The Committee also recommends that the State party continue to act with a sense of urgency to repatriate all children of Finnish nationals in armed conflict areas.

Respect for the views of the child

19. Noting that children's views are not systematically taken into account in decisions affecting them and that the Child Welfare Act (No. 417/2007) grants the formal opportunity to be heard only to children aged 12 or over, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Guarantee that all children can express their opinion and be heard in relation to all decisions affecting them, whether in court or in the context of administrative proceedings, in particular in relation to decisions regarding migration and asylum, custody, residence, contact with parents, adoption of measures to protect children in alternative care settings, social services and domestic violence, without the requirement for the consent of a parent or guardian;

(b) Adopt relevant legislative amendments to ensure that, regardless of their age, children have their views heard and taken into account in relation to the above-mentioned decisions;

(c) Take the measures necessary to guarantee that all municipalities establish policies and structures, such as youth councils, to enforce the right of children to participate in all areas of society, in particular in local decision-making;

(d) Reinforce measures to promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children, including children in disadvantaged situations, within the family, communities and schools, and include children in decision-making on all matters relating to children in the context of policymaking at the municipal and national levels;

(e) Guarantee and strengthen the systematic provision of training for all professionals working with and for children, including judges, teachers and youth care professionals, on the right of children to be heard and to have their opinions taken into account in accordance with their age and maturity.

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

Nationality

20. The Committee is concerned about the risk of statelessness resulting from the failure of government officials to ensure that children are duly registered as having been born in the State party before deportation and recommends that the State party:

(a) Take further steps to facilitate the acquisition of nationality at birth for children who might otherwise be rendered stateless and, in particular, ensure that government officials duly register all children born in the State party before deportation, as failure to do so might jeopardize access to citizenship and basic services and might increase the risk of statelessness;

(b) Adopt pending legislative amendments relating to the prevention and reduction of statelessness and related procedures.

Right to privacy and access to appropriate information

21. Recalling its general comment No. 25 (2021) on children's rights in relation to the digital environment, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Strengthen regulations and safeguarding policies to protect the rights and safety of children in the digital environment;

(b) Ensure that laws on access to information and the digital environment protect children from harmful content and materials and online risks;

(c) Continue efforts to enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, teachers and families.

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

Violence against children, including sexual exploitation and abuse

22. While welcoming the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children (2020–2025), the action plan on bullying (2021), the *barnahus* project and the amendments to the Criminal Code relating to sexual abuse, the Committee is deeply concerned about:

(a) The high prevalence of violence against children, including sexual harassment, rape, sexual abuse, sexual exploitation, gender-based violence and online violence;

(b) The particular vulnerability of girls, children with disabilities, children in alternative care settings, migrant and refugee children and children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations;

(c) The lack of a legislative framework to ensure multisectoral coordination and quality standards for conducting forensic interviews in a child-friendly environment, the lack of comprehensive support services for victims of violence (the *barnahus* model) and the fact that not all children have access to specialized support;

(d) The lack of defined and allocated resources for the implementation of the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children and the lack of clearly defined responsibilities for the implementation of the Action Plan at different levels;

(e) The insufficient resources allocated to social services and the inaccessibility of social services offices in the context of cases of child abuse and domestic violence;

(f) The lack of a centralized mechanism to collect data on child sexual abuse and exploitation.

23. The Committee urges the State party:

(a) To respond to all forms of violence against children in all settings, including by providing sufficient human and financial resources to effectively implement the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan for the Prevention of Violence against Children (2020–2025) and ensure the legal basis for the coordination of intersectoral and child-friendly *barnahus* services;

(b) To ensure that strategies and plans include targeted measures for girls, children with disabilities, children in socioeconomically disadvantaged situations, migrant children and children belonging to minority groups (Roma and Sami) and that such strategies and plans are adequately resourced and comprehensively address sexual exploitation and abuse;

(c) To ensure the implementation of effective measures to prevent and protect against online and offline violence, including bullying in schools, and to carry out research on the root causes of violence;

(d) To take measures against all forms of bullying, to adopt, update and follow up on the various programmes to prevent bullying and to amend legislation accordingly;

(e) To strengthen and standardize the national implementation of the *barnahus* model to ensure that all children who are victims of any form of violence, including sexual abuse and sexual exploitation, have access to multidisciplinary support, medical assessment and trauma-focused therapy;

(f) To ensure the effective investigation of and an effective response to all cases of violence against children, both inside and outside the home, and ensure that perpetrators are prosecuted and receive penalties commensurate with the gravity of their acts and that the appropriate therapy, rehabilitation, social reintegration and compensation are available to victims;

(g) To strengthen the response to violence between children, including sexual abuse and violence in the context of sports and leisure activities;

(h) To ensure that children have access to confidential and child-friendly complaint mechanisms, including helplines, for the reporting of all forms of violence and abuse, and to encourage children to use those mechanisms;

(i) To further strengthen awareness-raising and educational programmes, including campaigns, with the involvement of children in order to enhance awareness of all forms of violence and abuse among members of the public, teachers, health-care professionals, social workers and other professionals working with and for children, and to identify and report to the relevant agencies;

(j) To incorporate educational programmes on violence against children into relevant higher education courses and ensure that professionals working with and for children receive mandatory training on violence;

(k) To ensure the systematic collection and analysis of data on all reported, investigated and prosecuted cases of violence against children and carry out comprehensive and regular victim surveys to inform the implementation of the Non-Violent Childhoods Action Plan.

Harmful practices

24. Recalling joint general recommendation No. 31 of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women/general comment No. 18 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2019) on harmful practices, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the performance of unnecessary medical or surgical treatment on intersex children is safely deferred until the children are able to provide their informed consent, and provide adequate social, medical and psychological services, counselling and support for intersex children and their families;

(b) Provide reparations and support to intersex children who received unnecessary medical or surgical treatment, including irreversible medical interventions, sometimes without their consent, by ensuring that their access to justice is not hindered by any statute of limitations;

(c) Strengthen measures aimed at preventing female genital mutilation, including through the allocation of sufficient resources for awareness-raising campaigns, support for victims and training for relevant professional groups on identifying potential victims.

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

Family environment

25. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Continue strengthening the provision of social services throughout the country by ensuring the effective coordination of social services at the local level and among well-being services counties;

(b) Strengthen family support, including mediation services in divorce and separation cases, and provide children with appropriate counselling and trauma support when needed;

(c) Promote joint parenting after divorce and separation and provide family counselling, including with the aim of ensuring regular contact between the child and both parents in situations in which one parent is living abroad;

(d) Take measures, with the aim of avoiding family separation, to provide appropriate interventions and treatment services for parents with alcohol or substance abuse problems and provide the children with specialized support.

Children deprived of a family environment

26. While welcoming the measures taken to strengthen childcare and child protection legislation, the Committee remains concerned about:

(a) The high number of children deprived of a family environment;

(b) The insufficient human and financial resources for the implementation of the Child Welfare Act;

(c) The insufficient monitoring of the conditions and quality of care in residential homes and foster homes, including with regard to the protection of children from violence and abuse;

(d) The insufficient access of children in alternative care settings to information about their rights and to child-friendly channels for reporting violence;

(e) The insufficient measures taken to support children leaving care.

27. Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt a comprehensive strategy on alternative care for children and ensure that children are separated from their families only when necessary and in their best interests and that placement decisions are regularly reviewed, with the aim of family reunification;

(b) Guarantee sufficient human and financial resources to implement such a strategy and the Child Welfare Act, including by increasing the number and the capacity of professionals;

(c) Ensure that adequate mechanisms are in place to monitor the conditions and quality of care in alternative care settings;

(d) **Ensure that children in alternative care settings have access to child-friendly information about their rights and that they can express their views on placement decisions throughout their time in such settings;**

(e) **Ensure that accessible and child-friendly channels for reporting and remedying violence or abuse are available and that children are regularly informed of their rights;**

(f) **Ensure that individual post-care pathways are designed with the aim of providing social, educational and other appropriate support for successful reintegration into the family and the community.**

Children of incarcerated parents

28. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the capacity of municipalities to provide information and assistance to children with incarcerated parents as well as support to enable them to maintain regular personal contact with their parents.**

F. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

29. While welcoming the second National Action Plan on the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Committee is concerned about:

(a) The fact that children with disabilities are not successfully included in general education;

(b) Long-term placements of children with intellectual disabilities in institutions;

(c) The fact that the views of children with disabilities are not sufficiently taken into account;

(d) Social barriers to the inclusion of children with disabilities.

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

(a) **Strengthen measures to provide inclusive education in mainstream schools for all children with disabilities, including by adapting curricula and training, providing adequate resources and expertise and assigning specialized teachers and professionals so that children with disabilities and learning difficulties receive individualized support and due attention;**

(b) **Prevent and reduce long-term placements of children with intellectual disabilities in institutions and prioritize family and community-based services for such children;**

(c) **Ensure the right of children with disabilities to receive all the information necessary to form their opinions, to be heard and to receive appropriate communication support in relation to all decision-making that affects them;**

(d) **Reinforce support for the social inclusion and individual development of children with disabilities.**

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

Health and health-care services

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

(a) **Strengthen measures, including through training for health-care professionals, to ensure prompt and efficient access to high-quality health-care services for children throughout the country, paying particular attention to children in disadvantaged or marginalized situations, including children in alternative care settings, children living in poverty, Sami children, asylum-seeking and refugee children, children**

who do not identify with the gender assigned to them at birth and children without, or at risk of losing, parental care;

(b) Provide health-care and social services to all children and pregnant women, regardless of the documents that they hold;

(c) Raise awareness of the importance of breastfeeding among families and monitor the implementation of the International Code of Marketing of Breast-milk Substitutes;

(d) Ensure that children's rights to self-determination and participation are considered as a cross-cutting issue in all areas of social welfare and health care.

Mental health

32. While welcoming the National Mental Health Strategy and Suicide Prevention Agenda, the Committee notes with concern the prevalence of depression, anxiety and self-harm among children and recommends that the State party:

(a) Expeditiously provide adequate resources, implement the National Mental Health Strategy and substance abuse services and reform the Child Welfare Act;

(b) Strengthen mental health services and programmes for children, including by ensuring:

(i) The availability of therapeutic mental health services in schools, detention facilities and communities, in all regions;

(ii) A sufficient number of qualified professionals, including child psychologists and psychiatrists, to meet children's mental health needs in a timely manner;

(iii) That such services, in particular services for preventive and early intervention, are tailored to the specific needs of girls, asylum-seeking and refugee children, children in low-income households, children with disabilities and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children;

(c) Invest in preventive measures, address the underlying causes of the high suicide rate and mental health issues among children and ensure that children's perspectives are taken into account in the development of the response services available to them;

(d) Ensure that medication for children, including for anxiety, depression, psychosomatic disorders and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, is prescribed only when strictly medically indicated and after an individualized assessment of the best interests of the child and that medical practitioners, children and their parents are properly informed about non-medical alternatives to and the possible side effects associated with such medication;

(e) Provide community-based education and support, including periodic home visits, for the parents and caregivers of children with mental health issues.

Adolescent health

33. While welcoming the inclusion of sex education in the national core curriculum, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence and recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt a comprehensive and effective gender-sensitive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and raise awareness among health-care professionals of the health of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children and adolescents, in particular transgender adolescents;

(b) Ensure that all children receive age-appropriate sexual and reproductive health education that includes education on gender equality, sexual diversity, sexual and reproductive health rights, responsible parenthood and sexual behaviour, and violence prevention;

- (c) Strengthen efforts to prevent and address drug, alcohol and tobacco use by adolescents, in particular in schools, and ensure the early identification and adequate referral of adolescents requiring treatment;
- (d) Ensure that children and adolescents with gaming disorders or gambling or other online addictions receive the necessary help and support;
- (e) Put in place early detection programmes and mechanisms to address the high number of girls with eating disorders and take action to promote healthy lifestyles.

Impact of climate change on the rights of the child

34. While welcoming the State party's adoption of the Climate Act in 2022, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that national policies, laws, strategies and programmes on climate change and mitigation and adaptation measures are implemented in accordance with the rights enshrined in the Convention, integrate the protection of children and take into account the urgency of children's needs and views;
- (b) Evaluate the possible effects of climate actions and mitigation measures on children, including Sami children, and their rights;
- (c) Undertake legislative and other measures to uphold its extraterritorial obligations concerning environmental impacts that affect children's rights abroad, including in the context of business operations and international cooperation initiatives in or managed from the territory of the State party.

Standard of living

35. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Avoid cuts to social security benefits that will affect children at risk of poverty and exclusion;
- (b) Further strengthen its policies to ensure that all children enjoy an adequate standard of living, including by improving the financial situation of and increasing social benefits for children with disabilities, asylum-seeking children and children with an irregular residence status;
- (c) Develop measures to prevent homelessness and expeditiously provide adequate and long-term social housing and other support measures for families in need;
- (d) Collect and publish statistics on the number of children in street situations and children living in temporary accommodation and take measures to adequately address their needs.

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

Education, aims of education and human rights education

36. While noting the State party's promotion of the principle of inclusive education, the Committee remains concerned about disparities in access to quality education, the large gap in knowledge between children of immigrant origin and other children and discrimination, harassment and the high incidence of bullying in schools. The Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure the equal access of children from disadvantaged groups, including Roma children, children with disabilities, asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, children in alternative care settings and children from socioeconomically disadvantaged families, to quality education, including by:
 - (i) Allocating resources to ensure the high quality and accessibility of public education and regulating and monitoring private schools and home schooling with the aim of addressing inequality in the education system;

- (ii) Providing children with a migrant background with high-quality preparation for basic education;
- (iii) Making primary and secondary education compulsory for all children in the State party, including asylum-seeking children, children with an irregular residence status and children on a temporary residence permit;
- (b) Reduce and prevent school dropouts and absenteeism, including by adopting a national strategy, developing guidelines for identifying, registering and responding to such cases and regularly collecting data to inform the implementation of related measures;
- (c) Ensure the availability of quality multilingual and intercultural education for migrant, Roma and Sami children that is free from discriminatory attitudes, including by providing appropriate materials, multilingual teachers and educational tools;
- (d) Strengthen measures to combat violence in schools, including sexual harassment, bullying, cyberbullying and online violence, and ensure that the measures in place encompass prevention, early detection mechanisms, intervention protocols, mandatory training for teachers, the empowerment of children and awareness-raising on the harmful effects of bullying and violence;
- (e) Ensure the active participation of children and adolescents in the formulation of educational policies;
- (f) Strengthen teaching on human and children's rights and the principles of the Convention as part of mandatory school curricula in all educational settings and as part of the training of and support for teachers and other education professionals;
- (g) Develop human rights education materials that promote intercultural dialogue and foster respect for and appreciation of racial, cultural, gender and other diversities, and enhance teacher training on cultural diversity, the rights of minorities and non-discrimination.

Rest, leisure, recreation and cultural and artistic activities

37. Recalling its general comment No. 17 (2013) on the right of the child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities, cultural life and the arts, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure that sporting, recreational, leisure, cultural and artistic activities are available, safe and accessible to girls, children with disabilities, asylum-seeking and migrant children, socioeconomically disadvantaged children and children living in rural areas;
- (b) Ensure that every municipality offers free-of-charge or affordable leisure activities for children;
- (c) Strengthen measures to combat segregation, abuse and harassment in sport and promptly investigate all reports of abuse or harassment;
- (d) Fully involve children in planning, designing and monitoring the implementation of policies and programmes relevant to leisure, play, recreation, cultural life and the arts.

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

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, including unaccompanied children

38. Recalling joint general comments No. 3 and No. 4 of the Committee on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families/No. 22 and No. 23 of the Committee on the Rights of the Child (2017) on the human rights of children in the context of international migration, the Committee is seriously concerned about current

practices regarding unaccompanied children and family reunification, including obstacles relating to legal and income requirements for family reunification, processing times for asylum applications, access to services and the practice of detaining asylum-seeking and migrant children.

39. **The Committee urges the State party to ensure full respect for the rights of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children by:**

(a) **Strengthening measures to ensure that the legal principle of the best interests of asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children is a primary consideration in all asylum processes and migration decisions and procedures, in particular those concerning unaccompanied children, and that their views are heard, including by:**

(i) **Ensuring that all asylum claims are individually assessed in a child-sensitive manner;**

(ii) **Considering the possibility of integrating a children's best interests determination process into immigration legislation;**

(iii) **Ensuring that children who are put into care after being subjected to violence or abuse by their parents are not deported with their parents;**

(b) **Reduce processing times for asylum applications and put in place legislation that ensures that all children seeking asylum or who have received temporary protection, including unaccompanied children, have prompt, affordable and quality access to psychosocial and integration support and health-care, welfare and education services, including day-care services;**

(c) **Grant asylum to all unaccompanied children, remove legal and income obstacles to family reunification, making it a possibility for all refugees and asylum-seeking children, without discrimination, and introduce alternative care arrangements for unaccompanied children;**

(d) **Ensure that unaccompanied children are promptly assigned to a qualified guardian and receive regular support that is tailored to their specific needs;**

(e) **End the detention of asylum-seeking and migrant children.**

Administration of child justice

40. The Committee is concerned about:

(a) The length of trials;

(b) The fact that children are sometimes held in isolation during pretrial detention;

(c) The fact that some children serve their sentences in the same facilities as adults;

(d) The low quality of education in detention facilities.

41. **Recalling its general comment No. 24 (2019) on children's rights in the child justice system, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Develop a strategy for the prevention of child offending on the basis of research on and an analysis of the root causes of children's involvement in crime, in particular organized crime, and ensure that it provides for early intervention directed at children at risk or in vulnerable situations and support for their families;**

(b) **Reduce the length of trials;**

(c) **Ensure that children are not held in isolation during pretrial detention;**

(d) **Actively promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation, counselling and evidence-based therapeutic services, for children accused of criminal offences and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial measures, such as probation or community service, establish time frames for probation and clarify that it does not imply proof of guilt;**

(e) Ensure, for the exceptional situations in which deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, that children do not serve sentences in the same facilities as adults, that the deprivation of liberty is for the shortest possible period and that it is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to its withdrawal;

(f) Systematically provide long-term services to children who are detained and ensure the quality of education in detention facilities.

J. Recommendations concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

42. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Prevent and prohibit in national legislation the trade in and export of arms, including small arms, light weapons and components for weapons systems, to countries in which children are known to be, or may potentially be, recruited or used in hostilities;

(b) Establish a mechanism for the early identification of children who may have been recruited or used in hostilities and ensure that they receive support for their physical and psychological recovery and reintegration into society.

K. Ratification of international human rights instruments

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

L. Cooperation with regional bodies

44. The Committee recommends that the State party continue to cooperate with the Council of Europe on the implementation of the Convention and other human rights instruments, both in the State party and in other States members of the Council.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

45. 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 fifth and sixth 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

46. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its mechanism for reporting and follow-up by making it a standing government structure that is mandated to coordinate and prepare reports to and engage with international and regional human rights mechanisms and to coordinate and track national follow-up to and implementation of treaty obligations and the recommendations and decisions emanating from such mechanisms. 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 Finnish National Human Rights Institution and civil society.

C. Next report

47. The Committee will establish and communicate the due date of the combined seventh and eighth periodic reports of the State party in due course, in line with the envisaged predictable reporting calendar based on an eight-year review cycle, and following the adoption of a list of issues and questions prior to reporting, if applicable, for the State party. The report should be in compliance with the Committee's harmonized treaty-specific reporting guidelines⁶ and should not exceed 21,200 words.⁷ 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.

⁶ [CRC/C/58/Rev.3](#).

⁷ General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.