



Convention on the Rights of the Child

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

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

I. Introduction

1. The Committee considered the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Albania¹ at its 2730th and 2731st meetings,² held on 4 and 5 September 2023, and adopted the present concluding observations at its 2756th meeting, held on 22 September 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 high-level and multisectoral 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 since the previous review, including the adoption of Law No. 18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child, in 2017, and the five instructions and 18 by-laws for its implementation, Law No. 37/2017 on the Code of Criminal Justice for Children, in 2018, and the relevant by-laws, the amendments to Law No. 9062/2003 on the Family Code, in 2015, and other institutional and policy measures relating to children's rights.

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: non-discrimination (para. 17); violence against children (para. 25); sexual exploitation and abuse (para. 27); social security and standard of living (para. 36); and education, including vocational training and guidance (para. 39).

5. **The Committee recommends that the State party ensure the realization of children's rights in accordance with the Convention, the Optional Protocol on the**

* Adopted by the Committee at its ninety-fourth session (4–22 September 2023).

¹ [CRC/C/ALB/5-6](#).

² See [CRC/C/SR.2730](#) and [CRC/C/SR.2731](#).

³ [CRC/C/ALB/RQ/5-6](#).



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

6. While welcoming the positive developments in the State party's legislation and policies to protect children's rights, the Committee recalls its previous recommendations⁴ and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Continue strengthening legal frameworks, policies and institutional arrangements for the effective implementation of its legislation relating to children;
- (b) Ensure that the human, technical and financial resources for the implementation of legislation providing for children's rights are adequate.

Comprehensive policy and strategy

7. While noting the information provided by the State party on the adoption and implementation of various policies and strategies, such as the National Agenda for Child Rights and Protection (2021–2026) and the Social Protection Strategy (2015–2023), the Committee recommends that the State party improve the implementation of such policies and strategies at the central and local levels, provide adequate human, technical and financial resources for their implementation and improve accountability mechanisms and regular monitoring and evaluation in respect of the outcomes of such policies and strategies that relate specifically to children.

Coordination

8. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations⁵ and recommends that the State party ensure that:

- (a) The National Council on Children's Rights and Protection has greater authority over the implementation of the National Agenda for Child Rights and Protection (2021–2026);
- (b) The State Agency for Children's Rights and Protection and the Minister of State for Youth and Children, a post established in 2021, have adequate human, technical and financial resources to fulfil their responsibilities;
- (c) The roles and duties of the central, regional and local bodies responsible for children's rights are clarified, and that subnational and local authorities are provided with the resources and capacity necessary to deliver their services to children;
- (d) All activities relating to the implementation of the Convention across all sectors and at all levels are coordinated and monitored.

Allocation of resources

9. Concerned about the lack of public data on the specific budget allocations for advancing children's rights and recalling its general comment No. 19 (2016) on public budgeting for the realization of children's rights, target 16.5 of the Sustainable Development Goals and its previous recommendations,⁶ the Committee recommends that the State party:

⁴ CRC/C/ALB/CO/2-4, para. 10.

⁵ Ibid., para. 14.

⁶ Ibid., para. 16.

(a) Conduct a comprehensive assessment of budget needs in relation to children, allocate adequate budgetary resources, in accordance with article 4 of the Convention, for the implementation of children's rights and, in particular, increase the budget allocated to education, health care, especially primary health care, and social protection;

(b) Ensure transparent and participatory budgeting through public dialogue, in particular with children, and the proper financing and accountability of local authorities;

(c) Take immediate measures to combat corruption, which affects the implementation of children's rights, and strengthen institutional capacities to effectively detect, investigate and prosecute any case of corruption.

Data collection

10. Recalling its general comment No. 5 (2003) on general measures of implementation of the Convention, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Expeditiously improve the data-collection and data-sharing system managed by the Institute of Statistics and ensure that data collected on children's rights cover all areas of the Convention and the Optional Protocols thereto, with data disaggregated by age, sex, disability, geographical location, ethnic and national origin, religious affiliation and socioeconomic background, in order to facilitate the analysis of the situation of children, in particular those in situations of vulnerability, with due regard to privacy laws;

(b) Ensure that data and indicators are shared among ministries and relevant central and local State agencies and are used for the formulation, monitoring and evaluation of policies and activities for the effective implementation of the Convention.

Independent monitoring

11. Welcoming the amendment to the Law on the Ombudsperson that established the Section for Children's Rights Protection and Promotion, which has been fully operational since 2018, under the Office of the People's Advocate, and noting the improvement of child participation mechanisms, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Adopt further steps to guarantee the independence of the Section for Children's Rights Protection and Promotion, including with regard to funding, mandate and staffing, and ensure its full compliance with the principles relating to the status of national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights (the Paris Principles);

(b) Further strengthen the mechanisms for receiving, investigating and addressing complaints by children in a child-sensitive and child-friendly manner, while ensuring the privacy and protection of the victims, undertake monitoring and follow-up in respect of those mechanisms and ensure their visibility to children across the country;

(c) Prioritize the systematic and effective implementation of recommendations addressed by the Office of the People's Advocate to different State authorities in relation to the protection of the rights of the child.

Dissemination, awareness-raising and training

12. The Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure systematic, mandatory and ongoing training on children's rights for all professionals working with and for children, including police officers, members of the judiciary, lawyers, teachers and social workers;

(b) Fully fund and implement the Strategy on the Legal Education of the Public and ensure that children's rights are integrated into national education curricula;

(c) **Promote the active involvement of children in public outreach activities, including measures targeting parents and caregivers, social workers, teachers and law enforcement officials.**

Cooperation with civil society

13. **The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen the participation of civil society organizations, children's organizations and child human rights defenders in children's rights matters and in the development, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of policies, programmes and legislation relating to children's rights.**

Children's rights and the business sector

14. **Recalling its general comment No. 16 (2013) on State obligations regarding the impact of the business sector on children's rights and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Establish and implement regulations to ensure that the business sector complies with international and national human rights, labour, environmental and other standards, in particular with regard to children's rights;**

(b) **Undertake awareness-raising campaigns with the tourism industry and the general public on the prevention of the sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism and widely disseminate the Global Code of Ethics for Tourism among travel agents and entities active in the tourism industry.**

B. Definition of the child (art. 1)

15. **The Committee urges the State party to remove all exceptions that allow marriage for children under 18 years of age.**

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

Non-discrimination

16. **The Committee is deeply concerned that:**

(a) **Discrimination against children in disadvantaged situations, including children from Roma, Egyptian and other minority groups, children with disabilities, girls, children living in rural areas and LGBTI+ children, persists, noting in particular the limited ability of children in disadvantaged situations to benefit from basic services in such areas as education, health care and protection from violence, including hate speech, and to enjoy an adequate standard of living;**

(b) **Insufficient urgent and systematic efforts have been made to combat the persistence of traditional attitudes and norms that drive discriminatory practices, in particular towards girls;**

(c) **Many of the recommendations of the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination remain unaddressed.**

17. **Recalling its previous recommendations⁷ and targets 5.1 and 10.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party combat discrimination against children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, including by:**

(a) **Strengthening legislation, institutional arrangements and programmes to address negative social norms and stereotypes and promote attitudinal change in society, monitoring and combating discrimination and hate speech and ensuring accountability and redress;**

⁷ Ibid., para. 28.

(b) Investing resources in the implementation of existing cross-sectoral strategies and action plans relating to children, gender equality, disability, minorities and LGBTI+ persons;

(c) Ensuring that the recommendations of the Commissioner for Protection against Discrimination, in particular those concerning children, are fully implemented.

Best interests of the child

18. Recalling its general comment No. 14 (2013) on the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Ensure that the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration is appropriately integrated and consistently interpreted and applied in all legislative, administrative and judicial proceedings and decisions and in all policies, programmes and projects that are relevant to, and have an impact on, children;

(b) Strengthen the capacity of all relevant professionals to assess and determine the best interests of the child and to give that principle due weight as a primary consideration;

(c) Establish compulsory processes and develop and implement a tool for ex ante and ex post impact assessments of the extent to which all laws and policies relating to children realize the right of the child to have his or her best interests taken as a primary consideration.

Right to life, survival and development

19. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations⁸ and recommends that the State party address the underlying determinants of infant and child mortality, including social and economic deprivation and inequality.

Respect for the views of the child

20. The Committee remains concerned that children's views are still not systematically taken into account in decisions affecting them. Recalling its general comment No. 12 (2009) on the right of the child to be heard and its previous recommendations,⁹ the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Take measures to ensure the effective implementation of legislation recognizing the right of the child to be heard in relevant legal proceedings, including by establishing systems and/or procedures for social workers and courts to respect that right;

(b) Ensure that all professionals working with and for children systematically receive appropriate training on the right of children to be heard and to have their opinions taken into account, in accordance with their age and maturity;

(c) Promote the meaningful and empowered participation of all children within the family, communities and schools and include them in decision-making in all matters relating to children, including environmental matters.

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

Birth registration and nationality

21. Noting that children from Roma and Egyptian minority groups, migrant children, children not born in health-care institutions, children living in rural areas and children born abroad, including to Albanian parents in refugee camps in the Syrian

⁸ Ibid., para. 32.

⁹ Ibid., para. 34.

Arab Republic, experience disproportionately low rates of birth registration, and recalling target 16.9 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Ensure the issuance of birth certificates to all children born in its territory, immediately after birth, regardless of the immigration status of the child or the parents, including those who are undocumented;
- (b) Improve collaboration between civil registry authorities and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to facilitate the registration of children born abroad;
- (c) Expand community education and outreach regarding the registration process and legal aid available, targeting children whose registration continues to present challenges;
- (d) Consider ratifying the Council of Europe Convention on the Avoidance of Statelessness in relation to State Succession.

Freedom of association and peaceful assembly

22. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen children's right to freedom of association and peaceful assembly, including by re-establishing the Youth Parliament as a child-led structure in which children of all ages are represented and child representatives are elected by children.

Right to privacy and access to appropriate information

23. 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) Ensure that Law No. 18/2017 and the 2017 Audiovisual Media Broadcasting Code are effectively implemented in the process of protecting children from harmful content and risks online and provide for mechanisms to respond to violations;
- (b) Strengthen laws to ensure the right of the child to privacy, including in the media;
- (c) Expand the access of children to the Internet, in particular in remote and rural areas, enhance the digital literacy and skills of children, teachers and families and protect children from information and material harmful to their well-being.

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

Violence against children

24. The Committee is seriously concerned about:

- (a) Reports of torture and inhuman or degrading treatment of children by public officials and police officers in residential care and pretrial detention centres, in particular in the context of public protests and the right to freedom of expression and assembly;
- (b) The lack of due recognition and the underreporting and insufficient investigation of violence against and abuse, including online abuse, and corporal punishment of children, in particular children from minority groups;
- (c) The very limited number of child protection professionals and lack of relevant professional training capacity, in particular to train members of the child protection units and child protection workers, and the failure to implement effective procedures to prevent, identify, report and respond to violence against children in a child-sensitive manner, including to provide victim support and access to remedies;
- (d) The insufficient implementation of the last two National Agendas for Child Rights and Protection and of other laws and policies relating to the protection of children from violence;

(e) The increase in the number of police officers in schools, as foreseen in the National Education Strategy 2021–2026.

25. **Recalling its general comments No. 13 (2011) on the right of the child to freedom from all forms of violence and No. 8 (2006) on the right of the child to protection from corporal punishment and other cruel or degrading forms of punishment and targets 5.2, 16.1 and 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee urges the State party:**

(a) **To ensure that all cases of child abuse, including sexual abuse and inhuman or degrading treatment by public officials and the police in residential care facilities and pretrial detention centres, are promptly reported and investigated, applying a child-friendly and multisectoral approach with the aim of avoiding the revictimization of the child, that the perpetrators are prosecuted and duly punished and that reparations are provided to victims, as appropriate;**

(b) **To provide adequate resources to train and employ additional child protection workers and child protection unit staff, to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of child protection unit staff and to clarify their role as a point of contact with needs assessment and referral units for improved coordination of social care provision at the local level;**

(c) **To raise awareness and widely disseminate information about accessible, confidential and child-friendly mechanisms to facilitate and promote the mandatory reporting of violence against children, including by strengthening capacity for a multidisciplinary approach to case management and ensuring a focus on child protection networks at the municipal level;**

(d) **To develop protocols and guidance on the role of teachers, psychosocial support staff, security officers and other professionals in identifying, reporting and referring cases of all types of violence in schools and alternative care and detention settings, in line with Law No. 18/2017 on the Rights and Protection of the Child and in coordination with the child protection units;**

(e) **To fully implement the current National Agenda for Child Rights and Protection (2021–2026), Law No. 47/2018 on Measures against Violence in Family Relations and the legal provisions prohibiting corporal punishment in all settings and to provide adequate resources for their implementation;**

(f) **To provide adequate resources for the activities of the National Referral Mechanism in all municipalities, the services for children who are victims of domestic violence provided by the National Reception Centre for Victims of Domestic Violence and the activities of the emergency centres for women and girls who are victims of domestic violence;**

(g) **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 violence against children, including corporal punishment;**

(h) **To allocate sufficient resources for the provision of child-friendly and comprehensive support, including trauma-focused therapy, to children who are victims of violence, including sexual violence, and abuse.**

Sexual exploitation and abuse

26. The Committee is deeply concerned about:

(a) The high rates of sexual exploitation and abuse of children in various settings, including homes, schools, community and residential care centres and online;

(b) Denials by public officials of child sexual exploitation and abuse and the social and cultural tolerance of that crime;

(c) The lack of an adequate response to the sexual exploitation and abuse of children.

27. Recalling targets 5.2, 16.1 and 16.2 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recalls its previous recommendations¹⁰ and urges the State party:

(a) To amend the Criminal Code to ensure that all children under the age of 18 are protected against sexual exploitation and abuse, that violence is not a constituent element of the crime of rape and that sexual maturity is not mentioned as a justification in that context;

(b) To establish mechanisms, procedures and guidelines to ensure mandatory reporting, multi-agency intervention, investigation, prosecution and the provision of therapeutic services in all cases of the sexual exploitation and abuse of children, with the aim of preventing revictimization and ensuring the proper recovery of children who are victims of such crimes;

(c) To ensure that audiovisual recordings of forensic interviews with children who are victims are made and accepted as evidence in court proceedings and that cross-examination, if requested, can take place without delay, at the pretrial stage, to prevent the child from having to testify further;

(d) To implement the measures necessary to enhance awareness of child sexual abuse and exploitation among both members of public and professionals working with and for children and respond to all manifestations of child sexual exploitation and abuse, in particular online, including by strengthening professional capacity and software tools for the detection and investigation of such abuse and promoting training for parents and teachers on online risks and the risks associated with sexting;

(e) To provide adequate resources and training for members of the judiciary, police officers, social workers and other relevant groups of professionals on child-sensitive procedures for handling cases and supporting children who are victims of sexual violence.

Harmful practices

28. Noting the persistence of child marriage in the State party, which is disproportionately experienced by girls from Roma and Egyptian minority groups, and 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) Train judicial officials to conduct due diligence, apply the principle of the best interests of the child in cases of suspected child marriage and establish protection schemes for victims of child marriage who file complaints;

(b) Develop systematic awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on the harmful effects of child marriage on the physical and mental health and well-being of children, targeting families, local authorities, religious leaders, judges and prosecutors;

(c) Continue to ensure the implementation of the prohibition of blood feuds, investigate, prosecute and punish the perpetrators of crimes relating to blood feuds and implement awareness-raising campaigns and programmes on the harmful effects of blood feuds on the well-being of children.

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

Family environment

29. While noting the establishment of the Social Fund and the measures taken to increase cash transfers, the Committee is concerned about the lack of positive parenting programmes, limited financial assistance and support for parents and family

¹⁰ Ibid., para. 46.

separations due to migration. The Committee recommends that the State party strengthen its efforts:

- (a) To increase social assistance benefits and implement positive parenting programmes;
- (b) To strengthen the availability of affordable childcare options for working parents, including by significantly increasing the resources allocated to childcare;
- (c) To ensure protection for children whose parents are working abroad.

Children deprived of a family environment

30. Drawing the State party's attention to the Guidelines for the Alternative Care of Children,¹¹ the Committee recalls its previous recommendations¹² and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Speed up deinstitutionalization by shifting planning and budgetary allocations from institutional settings towards community-based and family-based alternative care settings;
- (b) Adopt regulations to incentivize municipalities to provide a minimum package of childcare services and prevent the unnecessary separation of children, paying particular attention to low-income families and families with children with disabilities;
- (c) Ensure sufficient alternative family-based and community-based care options for children who cannot stay with their families, including by allocating adequate financial resources for foster care and adoption, regularly reviewing placement measures and facilitating the reunification of children with their families, whenever possible;
- (d) Ensure that financial and material poverty – or conditions directly and uniquely attributable to such a situation – are never the sole justification for decisions relating to the removal of a child from parental care, the referral of a child to alternative care or reintegration;
- (e) Set up a sustainable, professional and efficient foster care service and address social norms that favour institutional care over foster care;
- (f) Provide specific support to enable children leaving institutional care to move towards independent living.

Adoption

31. The Committee recalls its previous recommendations¹³ and recommends that the State party pass, without delay, amendments to the Adoption Law and the Family Code to simplify procedures and guarantee the primacy of the best interests of the child.

G. Children with disabilities (art. 23)

32. Noting the positive developments that have taken place in the legal and regulatory framework in advancing the rights of children with disabilities, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 9 (2006) on the rights of children with disabilities and recommends that the State party:

- (a) Implement the human rights-based approach to disability and increase political attention to and investments for children with disabilities;

¹¹ General Assembly resolution 64/142, annex.

¹² [CRC/C/ALB/CO/2-4](#), para. 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, para. 57.

(b) Promptly evaluate and scale up the social disability assessment pilot scheme and increase financing and capacities for the early identification of developmental difficulties;

(c) Increase budgets to cover not only cash allowances but also inclusive, community-based and school-based services with a focus on preventing institutionalization;

(d) Establish a policy for the provision of assistive devices and technology to facilitate access by and the inclusion of children with disabilities;

(e) Ensure the accessibility of schools, health-care centres and public spaces, buildings, services and information to children with disabilities;

(f) Strengthen the capacity of professionals to work with and support the families of children with disabilities.

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

Health and health services

33. Noting the National Health Strategy (2021–2030) and the new dental health and vision screening programmes in schools, the Committee recalls its general comment No. 15 (2013) on the right of the child to the enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health and targets 2.2, 3.1, 3.2 and 3.8 of the Sustainable Development Goals and recommends that the State party:

(a) Increase allocations of financial and human resources in the health-care sector, specifically in primary health care, to ensure equal access to quality health-care services for all children, including those living in marginalized communities or in rural or remote areas and children from Roma and Egyptian minority groups;

(b) Expand health insurance coverage to include children aged 15 to 18 years;

(c) Accelerate the implementation of preventive interventions, including the introduction of neonatal screening and home visits, and scale up the monitoring of infant and child development;

(d) Invest in working with parents and caregivers to improve child feeding practices, including breastfeeding;

(e) Ensure that school dental and vision screenings are fully funded and implemented so that they reach rural and remote areas;

(f) Continue strengthening immunization efforts to address disparities in coverage, prioritize hard-to-reach population groups, including Roma, maintain public trust in immunization and address growing vaccine hesitancy.

Adolescent health

34. Recalling its general comments No. 4 (2003) on adolescent health and development in the context of the Convention and No. 20 (2016) on the implementation of the rights of the child during adolescence and targets 3.4, 3.5, 3.7 and 5.6 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Develop adolescent health intervention approaches that address both risks and protective factors and make use of multiple delivery platforms, including schools, homes, primary care clinics, childcare settings and communities;

(b) Adopt a comprehensive sexual and reproductive health policy for adolescents and ensure that comprehensive and inclusive sexual and reproductive health education is part of the mandatory school curriculum;

(c) Establish quality and discreet adolescent health-care services across the country, encompassing both sexual and reproductive health and mental health, with a

special focus on preventing early pregnancy, sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS;

(d) Implement the Action Plan for the Development of Mental Health Services in Albania (2023–2026), identify children and adolescents as the priority target groups and strengthen access to mental health programmes and mental health-care professionals, in particular at the local level;

(e) Adopt regulatory frameworks to protect children from the harmful impact of food marketing, including labelling requirements that identify food and beverages with excess saturated fat, trans-fat, free sugars and/or salt;

(f) Urgently invest in prevention and substance abuse recovery programmes for adolescents, integrating mental health care.

Social security and standard of living

35. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to increase cash transfers for families and children, including the increase in financial aid, the adoption of a baby bonus policy and the tripling of assistance for children without parental care. It is, however, concerned about:

(a) Underfunded health-care, education, protection and welfare services;

(b) The fact that one third of the child population lives in poverty, with girls, young children (aged under 5) and teenagers most affected;

(c) The fact that almost half of the population is affected by multidimensional poverty and that almost 82 per cent of persons from Roma and Egyptian minority groups and a similar percentage of persons in rural areas are living in poverty or extreme poverty;

(d) The insufficient number of staff working in the child protection system and in the provision of government services, including in the health-care, education and welfare sectors.

36. **Recalling targets 1.1–1.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) Review the social protection model and consider harmonizing information management systems in the areas of health care, education and social protection (social care and support and cash allowances);

(b) Increase budget allocations for children in the health-care and social sectors and ensure access to quality, community-based social services, in particular for the most vulnerable;

(c) Take measures to mitigate the risks to the child social protection system and services caused by insufficient human resources, in particular in the municipalities.

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

37. Concerned about the negative effects of air pollution, poor waste management and greenhouse gas emissions, as well as about the State party's high natural disaster risk scores for earthquakes (9.3 out of 10), tsunamis (7.8) and droughts (6.6), and recalling its general comment No. 26 (2023) on children's rights and the environment, with a special focus on climate change, and targets 3.9 and 13.1–13.3 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Conduct an assessment of the effects on children's health of polluted air and of water and soil pollution caused by poor waste management practices as a basis for designing a well-resourced strategy to remedy the situation, regulate the maximum permissible concentrations of air and water pollutants and improve waste management;

(b) Take measures to mitigate the impact of potential climate-related or human-caused disasters on children and strengthen the resilience of families and

communities and their capacity to avoid, survive and recover from the consequences of such disasters;

(c) **Ensure that health-care professionals receive training in the diagnosis and treatment of the health impacts of environmental harm;**

(d) **Continue to increase children's awareness of and preparedness for climate change and natural disasters by incorporating them into the school curriculum and teacher training programmes.**

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

Education, including vocational training and guidance

38. The Committee notes the improvements in the regulatory framework for and quality of education and the efforts made to include children from Roma and Egyptian minority groups in education and to increase the quality of early childhood education. It is concerned, however, about:

(a) The quality, relevance and delivery of education on an equitable basis for all children in the State party, with poorer educational performance disproportionately affecting groups of children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations, including children with disabilities;

(b) High dropout rates in schools due to family obligations, poverty and social and cultural barriers in certain minority groups, which affect girls from Roma and Egyptian minority groups in particular;

(c) The continuing impact of pandemic-related school closures, namely lower school enrolment, attendance and retention and disrupted learning;

(d) The prevalence of corporal punishment and violence in schools;

(e) Disparities in access to and the quality and cost of early childhood education and insufficient budgetary support for the long-term development and expansion of early childhood education;

(f) Insufficient leisure, sporting and artistic activities and green spaces;

(g) The increased reliance on private education.

39. **Recalling targets 4.1–4.7 and 4.a of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:**

(a) **Increase the quality of education by, inter alia, reforming school curricula, including with regard to environmental education, ensuring the availability of qualified teachers, providing high-quality pre-service and in-service training and ensuring that schools are fully and safely accessible to all and are equipped with adequate infrastructure and educational technologies;**

(b) **Ensure inclusive education in early childhood education settings and mainstream schools for all children with disabilities by adapting curricula and training and assigning specialized teachers and professionals to integrated classes, so that children with disabilities and learning difficulties receive individualized support and due attention, providing transportation and ensuring reasonable accommodation in schools;**

(c) **Take targeted measures to address school dropout rates and their causes, paying particular attention to girls, children with disabilities, children from Roma and Egyptian minority groups and children in disadvantaged situations, including by ensuring that all children, including pregnant teenagers and adolescent mothers, remain in and finish school;**

(d) **Develop and promote quality vocational training to enhance the skills of children and young people, in particular those who drop out of school;**

(e) Strengthen efforts to address shortcomings in learning outcomes due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic, targeting children with disabilities, from low-income households, in rural areas and from Roma and Egyptian minority groups;

(f) Take measures to combat violence and corporal punishment in schools, including bullying and online violence, and ensure that such measures encompass prevention, early detection mechanisms, the empowerment of children and professionals, intervention protocols, awareness-raising on the harmful effects of such practices and training for teachers on preventing and responding to violence in schools;

(g) Allocate sufficient financial resources for the development and expansion of early childhood education on the basis of a comprehensive and holistic policy of early childhood care and development;

(h) Ensure equal access to preschool education for children living in poverty, children in rural areas, children with disabilities and other groups of children in marginalized and disadvantaged situations;

(i) Ensure that leisure, sporting and artistic activities and green spaces are available and accessible in all municipalities, in particular for girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to minority groups and children belonging to other marginalized groups;

(j) Take measures to strengthen public education through the implementation of reforms and ensure the regulation of private education.

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

Asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children

40. 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 and its general comment No. 6 (2005) on treatment of unaccompanied and separated children outside their country of origin, the Committee recommends that the State party:

(a) Amend the provisions of the Law on Social Care Services that limit service provision to residents and adopt the legislative amendments necessary to address gaps in the provision of alternative care for non-residents, including the establishment of child-friendly and flexible alternative care options for migrant or asylum-seeking children who cannot be reunited with their biological families;

(b) Ensure that pre-screening procedures for unaccompanied or separated children are standardized at all border crossing points, implement a proper methodology for age assessment and child registration and establish a legal status for all unaccompanied or separated children;

(c) Establish separate reception facilities for unaccompanied or separated asylum-seeking and migrant children – or, as an interim measure, designate a section of the National Reception Centre for Asylum-Seekers for that purpose – and develop procedures for the interviewing and treatment of such children;

(d) Develop comprehensive referral and case management frameworks for the provision of services to asylum-seeking, refugee and migrant children, including in the fields of physical and mental health services, education and the police and justice sectors, for example the provision of free legal aid and a guardian, in particular for unaccompanied and separated children.

Economic exploitation, including child labour

41. Recalling target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals, the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Strengthen the implementation of the legal and policy framework to protect children from economic exploitation, including with regard to institutional collaboration at the national, regional and local levels to prevent such exploitation and provide protection to those in need, and strengthen the State Inspectorate on Labour and Social Services;
- (b) Address child labour in the agricultural, mining, construction and garment and footwear sectors and in the context of domestic labour and begging;
- (c) Prohibit and eliminate hazardous labour practices involving the exposure of child workers to environmental risk factors, promote safer alternatives and ensure monitoring of the children affected.

Trafficking in persons

42. Recalling target 8.7 of the Sustainable Development Goals and its previous recommendations,¹⁴ the Committee recommends that the State party:

- (a) Implement the National Action Plan for the Fight against Human Trafficking 2021–2023 and the Strategy against Organized Crime and Serious Crimes 2021–2025 and its Action Plan and allocate sufficient resources for that purpose;
- (b) Ensure the effective provision of referral and support services for children who are victims of trafficking in persons;
- (c) Investigate all cases of trafficking in children and bring perpetrators to justice;
- (d) Conduct awareness-raising activities to make both parents and children aware of the dangers of trafficking in persons and increase law enforcement cooperation with countries known to be destinations for Albanian children who are trafficked.

Children in armed conflict

43. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective and urgent measures to repatriate all children currently in camps in the Syrian Arab Republic who are nationals of the State party and ensure their reintegration, through adequate funding and mechanisms for the implementation of the inter-institutional action plan, in particular with regard to the provision of specialized support for the children and their mothers returned.

Administration of child justice

44. Noting with appreciation the recent child justice system reforms and 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 provide adequate financial and human resources for the implementation of child justice reforms, including those relating to primary and secondary free legal aid;
- (b) To promote non-judicial measures, such as diversion, mediation and counselling, for children accused of criminal offences and, wherever possible, the use of non-custodial sentences for children, such as probation or community service;

¹⁴ Ibid., para. 83.

(c) To ensure that detention is used as a measure of last resort and for the shortest possible period and is reviewed on a regular basis with a view to its withdrawal;

(d) To ensure that, in the exceptional situations where deprivation of liberty is justified as a measure of last resort, detention conditions are compliant with international standards, including with regard to access to education and health-care services;

(e) To provide systematic training on children's rights and child-friendly proceedings for the judiciary, lawyers, law enforcement officials and other relevant officials working with children in the justice system.

L. Follow-up to the Committee's previous concluding observations and recommendations concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocols to the Convention

Optional Protocol on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography

45. Recalling its 2019 guidelines regarding the implementation of the Optional Protocol¹⁵ and recalling also its concluding observations on the initial report of the State party submitted under article 12 of the Optional Protocol,¹⁶ the Committee urges the State party:

(a) To explicitly criminalize all forms of the sale and sexual exploitation of children as defined in articles 2 and 3 of the Optional Protocol, including all forms of the sale and sexual exploitation of children online, and to recognize the acts of producing, distributing, disseminating, selling or possessing child sexual abuse material as a form of sexual exploitation and abuse;

(b) To strengthen measures to prevent and address the online sale of children for the purpose of sexual exploitation and abuse, including through the training of relevant professionals and by ensuring that Internet service providers are required by law to promptly block and remove online sexual abuse material;

(c) To ensure that children who are victims of offences covered by the Optional Protocol are treated as victims and receive child-friendly, specialized support services and compensation.

Optional Protocol on the involvement of children in armed conflict

46. Recalling its concluding observations on the initial report of the State party submitted under article 8 of the Optional Protocol,¹⁷ the Committee urges the State party to specifically criminalize the recruitment and use in hostilities of children under the age of 18 by non-State actors.

M. Ratification of international human rights instruments

47. The Committee recommends that the State party, in order to further strengthen the fulfilment of children's rights, consider ratifying the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

N. Cooperation with regional bodies

48. 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

¹⁵ [CRC/C/156](#).

¹⁶ [CRC/C/OPSC/ALB/CO/1](#).

¹⁷ [CRC/C/OPAC/ALB/CO/1](#).

instruments, both in the State party and in other States members of the Council of Europe.

IV. Implementation and reporting

A. Follow-up and dissemination

49. 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

50. 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 effectively coordinate and prepare reports to 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 People's Advocate and civil society.

C. Next report

51. 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 guidelines¹⁸ and should not exceed 21,200 words.¹⁹ 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.

¹⁸ [CRC/C/58/Rev.3](#).

¹⁹ General Assembly resolution 68/268, para. 16.