



# UNITED NATIONS

## Press Release

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### **THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD EXAMINES THE REPORT OF MOZAMBIQUE**

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Committee on the Rights of the Child

16 September 2009

The Committee on the Rights of the Child today reviewed the second periodic report of Mozambique on how that country is implementing the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Introducing the report, Maria Benvinda Levi, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Mozambique, said that according to the latest census conducted in 2007, they had some 10 million children in the country, of which 5 million were girls. Most of those children – about 7 million – lived in the rural areas. During the reporting period, the Mozambique Government had taken important legislative, administrative and other measures to improve the living conditions of children in the country. In that context, Mozambique had created the National Council on Children and a Children's Parliament, which was a forum in which children could reflect on their rights. Other measures included the creation of the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Action Plan for Children and the Plan for Orphan and Vulnerable Children.

Several laws had also been enacted, such as a Law on the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights and a Law on the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking. Ms. Levi also highlighted reforms in existing laws, such as the family law, which now also aimed at eliminating stereotypes. With regard to health care an expanded programme of vaccination had helped reduce child mortality in the country. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had, however, impacted on those efforts. Despite all the efforts they had undertaken, Ms. Levi said that they recognized that an awful lot remained to be done. Among challenges to be faced were the elimination of obstacles that had prevented Mozambique from complying with its obligations under international conventions, as well as the monitoring and implementation of those.

In preliminary concluding observations, Committee Expert Marta Mauras Perez, who served as Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique, said that the Committee had been able to see the many efforts undertaken by the State party. However, more could be done. Questions remained on the National Children's Council and its independence. She noted pending issues, such as the legal definition of the child and the issue of violence against children. While that was a recognized problem, a deep cultural change was needed to eradicate violence in schools, violence against children and violence against women.

Other Experts raised a series of questions pertaining to, among other things, how often the Convention was invoked in Courts and what happened when there was a conflict between national laws and the provisions of the Convention; the Children's Parliament and what happened to its decisions; the status of children born out of wedlock; the status of the National Human Rights Commission; birth registration; the reduction of budget allocation targeted to HIV/AIDS programmes; traditional harmful practices; child labour; the use of force by law enforcement officials against children in conflict with the law; and refugee children.

The Committee will release its formal, written concluding observations and recommendations on the second periodic report of Mozambique towards the end of its three-week session, which will conclude on 2 October 2009.

The delegation of Mozambique also included representatives from the

Permanent Mission of Mozambique to the United Nations Office at Geneva, the Ministry of Women and Social Action, the Ministry of Interior, and the Ministry of Planification and Development.

As a State party to the Convention, Mozambique is obliged to present periodic reports to the Committee on its efforts to comply with the provisions of the Treaty. The delegation was on hand throughout the day to present the report and to answer questions raised by Committee Experts.

When the Committee reconvenes on Thursday, 17 September, at 10 a.m., it will consider the fourth periodic report of Bolivia (CRC/C/BOL/4).

### **Report of Mozambique**

Efforts to ensure that Mozambican children can enjoy their fundamental rights have continuously been challenged by the effects of colonization, armed conflict, underdevelopment and absolute poverty in Mozambique, notes the second periodic report of Mozambique (CRC/C/MOZ/2), which covers the period from 2000 to 2006. The overall objective of the Government is to reduce the incidence of poverty from 70 per cent in 2000, to 50 per cent in 2010. Despite efforts, the levels of chronic malnutrition remain high (41 per cent in 2003). Nutritional deficiencies such as the lack of iron and folic acid, iodine and vitamin A, have also been reported. Activities such as marketing iodized salt and health units distributing ferrous salt and vitamin A have been initiated.

Improvements in the education sector are well known, with the net attendance rate in primary education rising by more than 33 per cent from 2000 to 2006. However, geographical and residential disparities continue, particularly in the rural areas. Significant increases were noted in school enrolment, both for girls and boys. In primary level, education, gender disparities are gradually declining, with the girl to boy ratio increasing from 0.71 per cent in 1997 to 0.83 per cent in 2003. The discrepancies are more evident in the northern and central provinces than in the south, where the number of girls and boys enrolled in first level primary education is more or less the same. Existing disparities are more evident however in rural than in urban areas. To reverse the situation, campaigns have been waged in recent years to raise awareness among both parents and girls of the importance of girls' education. Various means are used in these campaigns, including messages from influential community members and leaders. With regard to the health sector, between 1997 and 2003, the under-five mortality rate declined by about 19 per cent. However, despite this reduction, the current mortality rates remain very high and suggest that about one in every five children die before their fifth birthday. Geographical and residential disparities remain significant, with the under-five mortality rate varying from 89 per 1,000 live births in Maputo City to 241 in Cabo Delgado (2003).

### **Presentation of Report**

MARIA BENVINDA LEVI, Minister of Justice of the Republic of Mozambique, said that according to the latest census conducted in 2007, 53 per cent of the population of Mozambique were women. They had some 10 million children in the country, of which 5 million were girls. Most of those children – about 7 million – lived in the rural areas.

Ms. Levi said that the Constitution guaranteed the enjoyment of human rights and protected them unequivocally. During the reporting period, the Mozambique Government had taken important legislative, administrative and other measures to improve the living conditions of children in the country.

In that context, Mozambique had created the National Council on Children and a Children's Parliament, which was a forum in which children could reflect on their rights, Ms. Levi said. Other measures included the creation of the National Commission for Human Rights, the National Action Plan for Children and the Plan for Orphan and Vulnerable Children.

When ratifying the Convention and its Optional Protocols, as well as the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of Children and the International Labour Organization Convention on the Elimination of Child labour, among

others, Mozambique had clearly demonstrated its commitment to protect children, Ms. Levi underscored.

Several laws had also been enacted, such as a Law on the Promotion and Protection of Children's Rights and a Law on the Prevention and Combating of Human Trafficking. Ms. Levi also highlighted reforms in existing laws, such as the family law, which now also aimed at eliminating stereotypes.

Ms. Levi also mentioned the law against domestic violence, which also provided for legal protection being offered to the victims. Mozambique was currently also undertaking a revision of its Criminal Code as well.

Turning to the training of the judiciary, Ms. Levi noted that magistrates and other judicial officers' courses included modules on the Republic's Constitution, as well as other national and international human rights instruments.

The Government had also created care services for victims of domestic violence. There were 204 such offices for the care of women and children victims of domestic violence in the police stations in all regions of the country, said Ms. Levi.

With regard to health care, Ms. Levi said that an expanded programme of vaccination had helped reduce child mortality in the country. The HIV/AIDS pandemic had, however, impacted on those efforts. Many children had been directly affected by the pandemic or had lost their parents in it.

The Government had also made efforts to combat the stigmatization of HIV/AIDS-infected children, and was conducting a global campaign to combat HIV/AIDS transmission, mainly to prevent HIV/AIDS transmission between mother and child, between adolescents, and protecting and supporting children that had been infected, said Ms. Levi.

With regard to access to education, that was a very strategic issue in their combat against poverty, Ms. Levi said, to insure that children were included in the socio-economic life of the country. The strategic plan for the development of education had focused on several main areas, including expanding access to education and improving the quality of education. Schoolbooks were also provided free to children in Mozambique.

Despite all the efforts they had undertaken, Ms. Levi said that they recognized that an awful lot remained to be done. Among challenges to be faced were the elimination of obstacles that had prevented Mozambique from complying with its obligations under international conventions, as well as the monitoring and implementation of those.

Ms. Levi reiterated that Mozambique would continue its dialogue with the Committee, and would be happy to receive any suggestions as to how to fulfil the dream of every child to live in a world of peace.

### **Questions by Experts**

AGNES AKOSUA AIDOO, the Committee Expert serving as Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique, noted that the report had been long overdue from 2001. Mozambique had shown great resilience in its development efforts, especially as they affected children, since its protracted war of liberation had achieved independence in 1975 and despite its 16 years of civil war that had ended in 1992. Although Mozambique was a generally poor country – it was among the 20 poorest in the world – it was one of Africa's most successful examples of post-conflict reconstruction and economic recovery; its recent economic growth rate of 7 to 9 per cent was well above the continent's average.

Mozambique was on track to achieve Millennium Development Goals one (on extreme poverty), four (on child mortality) and even number five (on maternal mortality), noted Ms. Aidoo. Mozambique had also to be commended for its political will in adopting many national laws and acceding to or ratifying international laws that protected children.

When the Heads of States of the African Union had held a peer review of Mozambique earlier this year, Ms. Aidoo noted that they had commended the remarkable progress made in improving the lives of its people and developing its economy, but they had also called for more determined efforts to overcome certain challenges, including corruption, increasing inequalities, high poverty levels, high HIV/AIDS prevalence rates and a heavy dependence on development partners.

Ms. Aidoo then highlighted four major challenges that directly threatened the realization of children's rights and to which Mozambique needed to give priority attention. The first challenge was geographical disparities; there were very serious inequalities among the provinces, especially between the provinces in the south and those in the central and northern parts of the country, and between the urban and rural areas in terms of budgetary allocations and provisions of social services that contributed to children's well-being. There was a need to prioritize disadvantaged provinces and allocate budget resources more equitably between sectors that improved children's welfare.

The second challenge was HIV/AIDS. Mozambique's report, as well as the non-governmental organization's shadow report, stressed that this was perhaps the single biggest threat to Mozambique's development and advancement of the rights of the children living in the country, Ms. Aidoo said.

A third challenge was poverty. This was an underlying challenge which Mozambique had tried to tackle through its poverty reduction strategies. But while generally poverty had reduced from 96 per cent in 1997 to 54 per cent in 2003, the poverty level remained high and the rate of 58 per cent of children living below the national poverty line was very worrying.

The fourth challenge was the natural disasters and recurring floods and droughts which affected poor areas and undermined already fragile situations of food security, nutrition, infrastructure and sustainable development, Ms. Aidoo observed.

Turning to issues which need further clarification, Ms. Aidoo asked how often the Convention was invoked in the courts and what happened when there was a conflict between national laws and the provisions of the Convention?

On the new National Council on Child Rights, Ms. Aidoo wondered whether it was now operational. It was a matter of concern that the Council would receive its budget allocation from the Ministry of Women and Social Affairs, which had only received 0.9 per cent of the total national budget in 2009.

On the definition of the child, could the delegation clarify who was considered a child in Mozambique, as the Children's Act and the Constitution mentioned persons below 18 years of age and the Civil Code set the age of majority at 21? Ms. Aidoo also wondered whether there were any plans for affirmative actions to target vulnerable children in disadvantaged areas in all the social sectors.

MARTA MAURAS PEREZ, the Committee Expert serving as co-Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique, noted that Mozambique had been able to reduce the amount of international aid it was dependent on, but it was still dependent on it. She asked how it intended to ensure the best allocation of international funding into the social sector. On budget allocations, were there any plans to reallocate the budget to include also the poorest provinces of the country, which needed the most help?

Ms. Mauras Perez said that the Committee was also very interested in the Child Parliament and wanted to know how it worked. How were elections to this body being carried out? Was it a fair and transparent process? Could this Parliament receive requests from children and convey them to the relevant authorities?

Ms. Mauras Perez further asked the delegation whether efforts were being undertaken to ensure that private foreign investment was mindful of child and women rights and was being done in a socially and environmentally responsible way.

Other Experts then raised a series of questions pertaining to, among other things, whether children's right to express their views was included in Mozambique's legislative texts; and Internet use, and concerns about the apparently very easy access to pornography in the State Party. On access to information, it seemed that not many books were accessible to children and the delegation was asked to explain. Other questions also pertained to the direct applicability of the Convention; international cooperation and how much was allocated to programmes linked to children's rights; children born out of wedlock; children in prisons; the National Human Rights Commission, the way it functioned and whether it was linked to the Executive or not.

Several questions were put on the issue of birth registration, including whether the Government had considered mobile birth registration services; whether birth certificates were still free beyond the limit of 120 days; whether there were any difficulties in registering children born out of wedlock; and whether birth registration was a prerequisite for access to education.

### **Response by the Delegation**

Responding to these questions and others, the delegation said, with regard to regional imbalances, that the concept of national unity was close to their hearts. There were several ethnic groups and religions in the country, but they wanted to be a single, unified country. There were some imbalances between regions of the country. One of the purposes of the Government's so-called Five Year Programme was to combat absolute poverty. They had to achieve that goal first in order to achieve other, higher goals.

Turning to the National Children's Council, the delegation said that this institution had been created this year; it was still in the setting-up stage and had not yet started its work. The Council would have its own, independent budget and that would not be taken from the Women's Ministry.

Concerning budget allocations for children, the delegation noted that it was not only the Women's Ministry that dealt with children issues. Other ministries also had specific funds for children, such as the Education Ministry and the Health Ministry.

On the legal age of childhood, the delegation said that 18 was the legal age for marriage, and it was also the voting age. It was true that the Criminal Code mentioned 21 as the age at which adulthood was reached. However, the Code was being revised to bring it in line with the rest of the system.

Regarding birth registration, the delegation said that giving a name to a child in Mozambique was a lengthy process, which involved the whole family, and that it often did not occur before the first moon after the birth. For that reason, the Government allowed birth registration to take place until 120 days after birth. The problem was that many forgot to register their child given such a long timeframe. A birth certificate was not a prerequisite for registering in school. On the contrary, the process of registering in schools allowed the identification of unregistered children.

The delegation confirmed that children born out of wedlock had the same legal rights as legitimate children, even for inheritance issues.

Mozambique was currently aiming towards a national centralized birth registry, with the help of the United Nations Children's Fund. With the current system, people were very often registered more than once, the delegation noted.

On anti-personnel mines, the delegation noted that Mozambique had gone through two wars: the liberation war and the civil war. After the conflict they had gone through a mine clearing programme, but that was a very tough process and could not be achieved in a short time. Despite efforts to raise children's awareness to the dangers mines posed, there were still mines in the country and unfortunately there had been child victims.

Turning to an emerging source of concern, road and motor accidents, the delegation noted that over the last few years there had been an exponential

increase of vehicles on the roads. That posed real dangers. Children were also victims in such accidents, because they were not informed about traffic rules.

Concerning the status of international treaties in Mozambique, the delegation said that the Convention had the same value as the Constitutional law of the Republic. International treaties were also published in the form of a decree after their ratification. After the ratification of an international instrument, it had first to go through a verification process, to make sure that it did not clash with the Constitution and that it could become part of their law. That was why there was a certain timeframe between the signature and the ratification of a treaty.

Reference to international law in courts had not occurred as much as the delegation would have liked it. In Mozambique people did not invoke international laws and did not lodge claims under them.

### **Further Questions by Experts**

In a second round of questions, MARTA MAURAS PEREZ, the Committee Expert serving as co-Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique, said that the Committee was very concerned by the reduced budgetary allocation for HIV/AIDS programmes during 2008 and 2009, given the persisting vulnerabilities in the country, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS and the need for a multisectoral approach that went beyond the health and education sectors. The Committee felt that the use of funding targeted to HIV/AIDS programmes could be an entry point for allocation of resources to wider health sector system strengthening.

The Committee was further concerned that reduced resources would impact on the need for continued and accelerated expansion of access to, and the quality of, paediatric treatment, voluntary counselling and testing as part of ante-natal care programmes and drugs for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, said Ms. Mauras Perez.

On cultural practices, with regard to reproductive health, what were the plans to target adolescent girls with prevention, education and awareness-raising programmes on healthy behaviour, Ms. Mauras Perez asked?

Also, did Mozambique plan to adopt clear regulations covering children who were allowed to work? Ms. Mauras Perez requested information on measures to strengthen the labour inspectorate to effectively monitor, investigate and sanction cases of child exploitation.

AGNES AKOSUA AIDOO, the Committee Expert serving as Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique noted that, regarding traditional harmful practices, during the last review the Committee had addressed the issue of cases in which children were given for some time to work for other families to settle disputes or a debt. Information showed that that practice persisted, and she wondered what was being done to address the issue.

Other Experts then raised a series of questions. An Expert asked what measures had been undertaken to change the attitude of adults and other children towards disabled children?

On the issue of refugees, while welcoming the creation of a national refugee initiative, an Expert expressed concern over reports of ethnic violence and tension in refugee camps, corporal punishment inflicted by teachers because children belonged to specific ethnic groups and the economic exploitation of refugee children, among others.

Regarding children in armed conflict, an Expert welcomed Mozambique's accession to the Optional Protocol on Children in Armed Conflict in 2004 but wondered about the fact that the minimum age for recruitment – 18 years – could be altered in times of war.

On the excessive use of force against children in conflict with the law, it was asked what prevention mechanisms there were and what lines of access there were for children to report such incidents? Other questions concerned

budgetary allocations for the care of children victims of domestic violence; what public perception was about crimes of violence against children; and how prosecutors were trained to ensure that effective sentences were handed down in cases of violence against children.

An Expert commented on the fact that schooling was still not compulsory in Mozambique. There was also a high level of school dropout in the very first years of school. However, while it was important for Mozambique to find a way to get children to stay longer in school, the Expert was also concerned that the current number of teachers was already too low to handle the children currently enrolled. That number would have to be doubled in order to reach an adequate quality of teaching. In addition, according to certain information, some 10,000 teachers might die in the coming years because of HIV/AIDS. That would be a catastrophe and would mean that the whole system would collapse if all children were to decide to attend school for the seven basic school years.

Other questions on education centred on teacher training; salaries for teachers; whether there were any vocational training institutions; and the level of youth unemployment. An Expert said that sexual abuse and harassment was so high in schools that parents were reluctant to send their children to schools. There had been reports that girl students were forced to have sex with their male teachers to pass their examinations. The Committee had also received information that very often those girls were later killed by their victimizers.

Turning to juvenile justice questions, an Expert noted that a person was criminally responsible in Mozambique starting at the age of 16. A child between 16 and 18 could therefore be imprisoned for periods of up to 6 years. That was quite long. Information was requested on whether imprisoned children could have contact with their parents and what the conditions and rules regarding pre-trial detention for minors were.

An Expert noted that there was a specialized juvenile court in Mozambique and wondered if the Government was setting up further such Courts in other parts in the country for adolescents between 16 and 18 years of age. Further, what happened to children under 16 years of age who committed crimes? Who was handing down the sentences? And what measures were in place to protect child witnesses and child victims, asked an Expert.

### **Response by the Delegation**

Responding to those and other questions, the delegation said that Mozambique had been the first country that had approved a law on trafficking in human beings and that it also provided for internal trafficking and not only transnational trafficking.

On the bilateral agreement between South Africa and Mozambique on HIV/AIDS, the delegation indicated as HIV/AIDS was a transnational disease, and as Mozambique had major exchanges with South Africa and a big migratory flow, they had concluded the agreement with South Africa. HIV/AIDS was not the only disease covered by that agreement. The agreement basically covered information sharing on how many of both nationals were affected by the disease in both countries.

On other health issues, the delegation noted that a month ago there had been a conference on traffic accidents in Mozambique. Practical actions were also being carried out, such as approving regulatory instruments for road transport, such as the Highway Code. New traffic signs had been introduced. Higher fines and penalties had also been introduced for people driving drunk; while using mobile phones; and for speeding. The basic driving rules had been introduced into the school curricula and traffic agents were informing children about traffic rules and informed them about how to cross a road safely. Traffic lights had also been introduced to help people cross the road.

Turning to the centres for domestic violence located in the police stations, the delegation said that these offices were specifically designed for such problems and could deliver specialized services. Some people were sometime fearful of going to the police station. They could go to an

association, which would then inform the police about the case. All victims were entitled to legal aid and those who had no resources were provided with a lawyer for free. The centres could also offer food assistance, temporary shelter, quick health care and psychological assistance. Victims did not have to pay for the medical report.

Regarding prevention against domestic violence, the delegation said that they were also undertaking proactive measures such as awareness-raising campaigns. Community leaders were informed about the issue and children in schools were made aware of their rights.

As was already noted in the report, the Government was undertaking a campaign against child abuse. State institutions were part of that initiative. Part of that campaign was to bring the problem to the attention of teachers. There was a code of conduct for teachers and administrative action could be taken against them if they had committed any wrongdoing, but that did not replace any legal action that could also be taken against them.

On corruption in the police force, such cases happened the delegation said, but it was only when the State received complaints from the population about such cases that it could act against them. Police corruption was considered a serious offence, given the important position of police officers. Administrative sentences had been handed out in past cases and other police officers were undergoing disciplinary trials.

Making additional comments on sexual abuse in schools, the delegation said that this problem was not something they ignored. The phenomenon was well known and measures were taken in places where such acts had happened. It was however difficult to intervene when there was no complaint. Any abuse of a child could be sanctioned by the Criminal Code; but, for cultural reasons, parents often tried to solve those issues behind closed doors to save the honour of the family.

With respect to refugee children, the delegation said that there were centres to care for unaccompanied refugee children while the State services were going through the reunification process and trying to trace family members of the child. Staff working in those centres were trained so that care given to the children was the highest possible. When such a child could not be reunited with its family, alternative care solutions were considered, such as via a foster family or adoption. In cases where they had to search for a foster family, the family was checked to ensure that it could care for the child, as well as if the particular child would be a good fit for that family.

Adoption in Mozambique had to go before a judge, the delegation said. The social-economic situation of the family was checked as well as whether it had the ability to adopt the child. After the adoption and during a transitional period of six months, regular visits and checks were undertaken to ensure that the child was adequately integrated in the family.

As regarded the Hague Convention on International Adoption, Mozambique was currently considering whether or not to ratify that Convention, but no final decision had been taken yet. There was a heated debate in Mozambique on whether international adoption could be used as a means of trafficking children. One of the viewpoints was that it was probably better to keep a child in his home country, while others thought that international adoption could be a very good solution to help children.

Relating to education, the delegation said that there were only three special schools for disabled children in the country. It could also happen that they were attending normal schools in normal classes, where they would be given special and focused attention.

Communities and families were also being trained on the issue of disabilities. Everything was made to ensure that disabled children were fully enjoying their rights. This year, the Government had agreed on a decree on access to public buildings, which stated that all public premises and buildings that were being built from now on had to be made accessible to disabled people. That rule also covered schools.

More broadly on education, the delegation indicated that Mozambique had made progress on access to primary school. There had also been an increase in secondary schools and the number of places in schools. Children from vulnerable families very often were made more vulnerable if they did not go to school and the Government wanted to prevent that.

On the labour law and child labour, the delegation said that children as of 14 years of age could work, but only under very specific conditions. It needed to be work that would not endanger their life and that could allow them to reconcile work with their school duties.

The Government was aware of the high dropout rates in schools and was conducting programmes to address that issue the delegation said. Among the measures were the free distribution of meals and free school materials to keep the children in school.

It was important to understand that Mozambique was coming from a truly disastrous situation in terms of education. The literacy rate had been very low after independence, and was still one of the lowest in the world. However, the situation had improved over the past years. A high number of children went to school now. It was however true that there was still a high number of school dropouts. The Government was focusing on keeping girls in school to protect them from early marriages and because they had the highest pressure to leave schools.

The delegation acknowledged that there were many challenges ahead. The number of teachers would be increased but that would require a lot of effort and would have a lot of budgetary implications. Another measure used to encourage children to stay in schools was the use of role models who could tell to children how much school had given them a chance in their lives.

On the training of teachers, the delegation said that there were teacher-training centres, in which training was given for the different levels of education. Strategies had been put in place to ensure the speed-up of teacher training so as to reduce the teacher/student ratio in classes. Distance-learning programmes were also a solution they were exploring to reduce the number of pupils in the classroom.

The delegation acknowledged that there was only one court for minors in Mozambique. It was a Specialized Juvenile Court located in Maputo. In the other courts, there were judges competent with questions that had to do with minors. Children above 16 years of age were judged in regular courts and the maximum sentence which could be handed out was an eight-year deprivation of liberty.

The deprivation of liberty of children was an exception and the authorities were looking for alternatives before using that solution. Psychologists and social workers could report to the judge on the social and psychological situation of a child in conflict with the law.

On pre-trial detention, the role of the police was to register complaints and identify the responsible minor. The child had to appear before a judge within 24 hours. If that was not possible, the child could be kept in custody at the police station and the responsible officer would have to report on the reason why he had not sent the minor to the judge. That was only possible in the condition that the minor had committed a major crime.

On the Children's Parliament, the delegation said that it was made up of children elected by other children. That work was done in the schools and child centres. Children elected their representatives, after they had debated their problems and priorities. There were child parliaments at the district level, at the provincial level and at the national level. Each of the elected children at the different levels elected children for the level above, up to the National Children's Parliament. The concerns expressed at the Children's Parliament were being dealt with by the Parliament or the respective State sectors. In one example, children had asked for the construction of a bridge over a river they had to cross by foot to get to school, and that request had been heard – the bridge had been built.

## **Preliminary Concluding Observations**

MARTA MAURAS PEREZ, the Committee Expert serving as Rapporteur for the report of Mozambique, in preliminary concluding observations, said that it had been a day of very fruitful exchange. The Committee had been able to see the many efforts undertaken by the State party. The Committee was aware that there was a great deal of potential and that more could be done in Mozambique.

The Committee had been promised information on the reduction of funds for combating HIV/AIDS and was still waiting for it; it would be good if the delegation could provide those answers before the end of the current session of the Committee, so that it could be included in the Committee's concluding observations, said Ms. Mauras Perez.

Questions also remained on the National Children's Council. It seemed to be a mixed public-private body and that it was not the same thing as a department within a ministry. But it was not clear whether it was an independent body. The Committee would prefer to see an independent body, said Ms. Mauras Perez.

Turning to some of the pending issues that had been identified, Ms. Mauras Perez noted the issue of the harmonization of the definition of the age of the child and the fact that the Government was still looking for consensus on this issue. She hoped that that issue would be resolved very quickly. She also hoped that Mozambique would continue looking at a possible ratification of the Hague Convention on Adoption.

The Committee also would have wished to get more information on the issues of health, mainly the very important issues of breastfeeding, nutrition and the breastfeeding code, said Ms. Mauras Perez.

On the issue of violence Ms. Mauras Perez still thought that there were unresolved issues and questions. It was a recognized problem but a deep cultural change was needed to eradicate violence in schools, violence against children and violence against women,

As regarded the code of conduct of teachers, it was a very positive step that it was being revised and Ms. Mauras Perez hoped that the State party would continue along that path.

The issue of the right of the child to be heard was also important and the Committee thought that a good test would be a discussion with adolescents and children in the country on the concluding observations that would be issued by the Committee at the end of the session.

With regard to education, Ms. Mauras Perez said challenges still remained. One of the questions in that regard was what happened to the children who did not finish primary education.

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