Child Rights References in the Universal Periodic Review

Summary:
A compilation of extracts featuring child-rights issues from the reports submitted to the first Universal Periodic Review. There are extracts from the 'National Report', the 'Compilation of UN Information' and the 'Summary of Stakeholder's Information'. Also included is the 'Final Report' and 'Conclusions and Recommendations' from the Review.

Bhutan - 6th Session – 2009

4th December, 2.30pm to 5.30pm

National Report


51. Bhutan’s commitment to ensure the security and welfare of children was evident from being one of the first countries to ratify the Convention on the Rights of Child in 1990.

52. In accordance with the CRC, a uniformed definition of the child has been incorporated in all legislation and policies, and child-specific sections are included in the Constitution, the Penal Code and CCPC to safeguard the welfare and interests of children.

53. The Constitution guarantees the right to free education up to class 10 (11 years) for all children of school going age. Access to technical, professional and higher education for all is based on merit. Bhutan has also made impressive progress towards realizing the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) related to achieving universal primary education and ensuring gender equality in education. These have been possible through the policy of establishing community primary schools and providing free text books, stationery, boarding facilities and school feeding programs, especially in rural and remote areas. Currently, the Net Primary Enrolment Ratio (NER) is 92 percent, an increase of 19 percent since 2005. Bhutan has also achieved gender parity in education with gender parity index at 1.01 for primary and 1.02 for basic level in 2009.

54. The Penal Code and CCPC have explicit provisions for child-friendly procedures on cases involving children that require protection of privacy and adult accompaniment during trials. The provisions also outline sentencing of children and allows for the court to release a child on probation or for the child to return home while the presence is not required in the court. A number of police officers have been trained on women and child-friendly procedures and they provide counselling to children who are in conflict with the law. Child offenders are kept in separate detention centres with rehabilitation facilities.

55. The issue of child labour is dealt with by the Labour and Employment Act and corporal punishment is banned in all schools.

63. Although CRC has not been integrated into the formal school curriculum, child rights and protection issues have been included in various activities targeting children including the scouts program, in youth leadership trainings, in school life skills program and in other extra-curricular activities.

94. Modern education was first introduced in the country in the early 1960s with the launch of the 1st FYP. Until then, only monastic education was available in the country. The government has consistently accorded high priority to education and in the 10th FYP, it has allocated Nu.9.5 billion to this sector. From just 11 schools with 400 students in 1960, the education system has now grown to over 564 schools and institutes with 175,061 students taught by 7662 teachers and lecturers in 2008.

95. There has been substantial progress in enhancing primary school enrolment and Bhutan is on track to achieving universal primary education. The Gross Primary Enrolment Ratio (GER) is currently 114 percent and NER is 92 percent with a target to achieve near 100 percent by the end of the 10th FYP. There is near gender equity at the primary and basic education level and the gap is narrowing at
higher educational levels. Curriculum is being continually reviewed and revised to ensure relevance to the world of work and the emerging needs of the country.

96. Since 1973, Bhutan has made extra efforts to provide education to children with disabilities and learning difficulties by establishing institutes for such children in strategic locations around the country to enable easy access. During the 10th FYP, more such institutes and centres will be established.

97. Notwithstanding achievements, the education sector is faced with major constraints and challenges. These include, inter alia, teacher shortage; enormous pressure on limited facilities at secondary level; ensuring quality education while enhancing enrolment; and adopting an inclusive approach to education for children with physical disabilities and learning difficulties. The government is making every effort to address these challenges.

109. The government provides free education to all children from pre-primary to Class 10. Besides tuition, even stationery, textbooks, sports items, boarding facilities and meals are provided free based on needs. To ensure access to schools within one hour walking distance, the government has established community primary schools in remote areas with the help of communities using locally available materials. Government support is provided in terms of building materials not available locally. Where it is not feasible to build community primary schools due to lack of a critical mass of students, the government has introduced extended classrooms, which are a branch of a school located closer to communities. Given the mountainous terrain and dispersed settlements, providing schools within walking distance is not always possible. Therefore, provision of free hostel facilities and school feeding programs continues to be a key incentive to encourage enrolment and retention, especially of girls in remote and difficult locations.

124. The first WCPU was established in the capital in May 2007 with a 20-member staff. Since its establishment, the Unit has seen an increasing number of cases. There are plans to establish four more WCPS by 2013 at the other major towns. The WCPU has been effective in providing quick and sensitive response to children and women’s rights violations, especially in dealing with domestic violence and abuse cases.

125. The WCPU is strengthening its efforts to make police procedures more child-friendly, and is focusing on being prompt and sensitive in responding to investigations and receipt of complaints. To this effect, three mobile police vans have been deployed in the capital city. Similar programmes will be established in other towns in future. With the absence of professional social workers, the police officers at the WCPU provide advice and counselling to children in conflict with the law. They focus on mediation in cases involving family issues or children. Together, the WCPU and the NCWC also conduct ‘family conferencing’ or ‘group conferencing’ where they bring together the victim, the perpetrator and the family of the minor and mediate the case in the best interests of children and women.

Compilation of UN information

1. In 2008, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC) recommended the ratification of or accession to all core international human rights instruments. In 2009, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) made a similar recommendation and also commended Bhutan for its recent ratification of the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child.


4. recommended that Bhutan consider membership in the ILO and the ratification of ILO Conventions 138 and 182.

6. CRC welcomed the inclusion of child rights specific provisions and fundamental rights in the Constitution. However, it expressed concern that article 7.22 of the Constitution may be used to unduly restrict these fundamental rights by the adoption of new legislation. It recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan ensure that the draft Child Care and Protection Act is harmonized with the Convention and also encouraged its speedy adoption.

10. CRC, while noting that provisions of the Convention were being integrated into the National Plan of Action for Gender, regretted the absence of a national plan of action for children. The Committee recommended that Bhutan develop a national plan of action for children in consultation with civil society and all sectors involved in the promotion and protection of children’s rights and ensure adequate allocation of human and financial resources both at the national and local levels for the Plan’s implementation.

15. CRC noted that Bhutan was undertaking efforts to improve the situation of vulnerable children, particularly those living in rural-remote areas, and children with disabilities, but remained concerned about gender discrimination, the lack of services for children with disabilities, the gap of resources between rural and urban areas and the disparities in the enjoyment of rights experienced by children of Nepalese ethnic origin, particularly in relation to their right to a nationality, to education and to health services.

17. CRC expressed concern about the restrictive conditions to acquire Bhutanese citizenship and noted that the Constitution requires both parents to be of Bhutanese nationality in order for the child to acquire their nationality and that children, as a consequence of the restrictive citizenship requirements, risk being or are stateless. It urged Bhutan to take the necessary measures to ensure that no child is or risks being stateless, in accordance of article 7 of the Convention.

20. CRC remained concerned about the lack of the definition and prohibition of acts of torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading
22. CRC, while welcoming the measures undertaken to combat domestic violence, noted that cases of abuse and violence remained underreported and that physical and psychological recovery measures for victims were lacking. It urged Bhutan to reinforce mechanisms for monitoring the number of cases and the extent of violence, sexual abuse, neglect, maltreatment or exploitation, including within the family, in schools and in institutional or other care; and ensure that professionals working with children receive training on their obligation to report; and strengthen support for victims by ensuring their access to services for recovery, counselling and redress.42

24. CRC noted with appreciation that Bhutan had strengthened national legislation and that a national plan of action was being drafted to combat commercial sexual exploitation of children. However, it noted with concern that the extent and prevalence of sexual exploitation of children remained undocumented and there was no formal age of sexual consent. It recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan undertake a comprehensive study to document the number of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and to identify the root causes; adopt and ensure the implementation of the national plan of action; ensure adequate resources in order to investigate cases of sexual abuse and exploitation and prosecute and impose adequate sentences for such crimes and consider incorporating a formal age of sexual consent in the legislation.44

25. A 2006 UNICEF report noted that Bhutan has banned corporal punishment in schools, which has reduced the incidence of such punishment but not yet eliminated it.45 The report also indicated that children in monasteries are also subject to corporal punishment which is considered integral to the overall discipline of monastic life.46 CRC recommended that Bhutan adopt legislation as soon as possible, explicitly prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home; and take all measures to ensure the enforcement of the law, conduct capacity building of professionals working with children and carry out awareness raising and public education campaigns against corporal punishment and promote non-violent and participatory methods of child rearing and education.47

26. The 2006 Country Common Assessment (CCA) report noted that in respect to children in conflict with the law, police data showed a significant rise in convictions of young people – from negligible rates in the early 1990s to around 60 cases per year by 2003. The minimum age of criminal responsibility is ten years, though the National Commission for Women and Children has started advocating with the Royal Court of Justice to increase this to 13 years.48 CRC recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan ensure that a system of juvenile justice in accordance with the Convention is fully integrated into legislation and practice; raise the minimum age of criminal responsibility; ensure that deprivation of liberty is used only as a measure of last resort and for the shortest period of time, that it is expressly authorised by a court and that juveniles are separated from adults during such deprivation; provide children, both victims and accused, with adequate legal assistance; ensure the free assistance of an interpreter; and conduct training programmes on relevant international standards for all professionals involved with the juvenile justice system.49

27. CRC recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan strengthen and further develop institutional structures that are accessible and free in order to implement effective birth registration; ensure that the lack of registration does not impose an impediment to school attendance; and that it seek technical assistance from UNICEF for the implementation of those recommendations.50

29. CRC noted the absence of alternative care other than monasteries and that most separated children remain in the extended family without sufficient support from the State.52 It recommended that the Bhutan strengthen its efforts to provide protection for children in case of separation from their family; and encouraged Bhutan to ensure that an appropriate assessment, monitoring and follow-up mechanism is put in place, including for children in monasteries and to continue trainings on child rights in monasteries, recommending that technical assistance be sought from relevant international organizations and agencies.53

30. CEDAW recommended that Bhutan bring its provisions regarding custody of children on dissolution of marriage in line with article 16, paragraph 1 (d) of the Convention, which highlights the need to take into account the best interests of the child.54 CRC recommended that Bhutan evaluate its adoption practices and enact legislation in accordance with the best interests of the child and article 21 of the Convention.55

33. CRC welcomed the inclusion of civil society representatives in the NCWC. However it expressed concern that the Civil Society Act of 2007 may result in restrictions on civil society organizations. It recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan promote, without undue restrictions, the establishment of civil society organizations and seek UNDP and UNICEF assistance for capacity building of civil society NGOs on children’s rights.58

36. CRC welcomed that Bhutan had established the minimum age for admission to employment at 18 in the Labour and Employment Code of 2007. However it was concerned about the high incidence of child labour, insufficient awareness among the public of the negative effects of child labour and the lack of available data on the number of children affected.64 It recommended that Bhutan, inter alia, undertake a national study to ascertain the root causes and extent of child labour and design and conduct campaigns to raise awareness of the negative effects of exploitative child labour; and seek technical assistance from ILO and UNICEF to combat the economic exploitation of children.65

37. CEDAW was concerned in particular at the situation of girl child domestic workers, mainly from rural and remote areas, who work long hours, do not have access to education and may be subject to violence. It urged Bhutan to strengthen its efforts to eradicate domestic child labour abuse and ensure that children have access to education, health care and social protection as well as enjoying the protection of the minimum labour standards elaborated by the ILO.66

40. A 2006 UNICEF report noted that Bhutan still has disturbingly high levels of protein-energy malnutrition and that many parts of the country suffer from food insecurity, mainly during the May to July period before the harvest.73

41. A 2006 UNICEF report noted that it is a priority to increase the numbers of female health workers and that one way of boosting the
number of female nurses would be to make it easier for them to return to work after having raised a family; at present it is not possible to return to public service once you have resigned.74 A 2008 United Nations Statistics Division source indicated that the proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel increased from 23.7 per cent in 2000 to 56.1 per cent in 2003.75

42. CRC recommended that Bhutan continue to make efforts to give free access to health services and ensure equitable access for the entire population; develop a strategy to combat malnourishment and food insecurity; and build national capacities to train health workers and medical practitioners.76

43. CRC noted the introduction in 2002 of the Adolescent Reproductive Health Education and Life Skills Programme, but remained concerned that further measures are required in order to address adolescent sexual and reproductive health issues. CRC recommended that Bhutan take all necessary measures, including by providing information and education with respect to adolescent reproductive health and by making a comprehensive range of contraceptives widely available.77 CEDAW recommended the wide promotion of family planning and reproductive health education, including in remote areas, and targeted at girls and boys, with special attention being paid to the prevention of early pregnancies and the control of sexually transmitted diseases.78

44. CRC, while welcoming Bhutan’s policy on providing free antiretroviral therapy and noting the relatively low HIV/AIDs prevalence rate, was concerned that reported cases of HIV are increasing.79 A 2008 UNICEF/UNAIDS/WHO/UNFPA report noted that national strategic plans on HIV and AIDS have been adjusted to focus on prevention for adolescents who are most at risk.80 CEDAW urged Bhutan to undertake comprehensive research to determine the factors leading to the feminization of HIV/AIDS, with a view to developing appropriate strategies to reduce women’s vulnerability to the disease.81

46. A 2006 UNICEF report noted that one of Bhutan’s major achievements has been to extend water supply and sanitation coverage across the country. Coverage varied somewhat, however, between districts.83 CRC, while welcoming the improved access to safe drinking water and basic sanitation, was concerned about the lack of data on the percentage of the population which had access to such basic provisions.84

48. CRC welcomed that the Constitution guarantees free education to all children of school age up to class ten, but was concerned that informal fees were still being charged and that education was not made compulsory. It was concerned that a remarkable number of children are not enrolled, that repetition and drop-out rates are high and that gender parity still has to be achieved. It recommended, inter alia, that Bhutan ensure that primary education is compulsory and free of all costs and accessible in an equitable manner for all children; strengthen efforts to achieve enrolment of all children; and provide more early education facilities and vocational training centres accessible in all regions of the country.85 CEDAW recommended that Bhutan adopt and implement targeted measures to ensure equal access for girls and women to all levels of education, specifically by examining the possibility of providing incentives to girls and their families to encourage them to remain in schools; take measures, including the development of non-formal education, to address girls’ and women’s illiteracy, including through the continuation and increase of programmes for adult education and take the necessary steps to encourage pregnant girls and married girls to continue their education.86

49. CRC, while noting as positive the planned re-opening of schools in south Bhutan and the abolition of the “no objection certificate” announced by Bhutan during the dialogue, was still concerned about the prevailing discrimination in the field of education against children of Nepalese ethnic origin. It noted with concern that these children have reduced access to education due to the lack of educational institutions at all levels and that they are denied education in their own language. It was also concerned about the lack of data on children of Nepalese ethnic origin attending school. CRC recommended that Bhutan, inter alia, provide education for all children within its jurisdiction, including for children of Nepalese ethnic origin, non-Bhutanese and stateless children.87

50. CRC, while noting the measures undertaken to enhance access to specialized services and education for children with disabilities, recommended that Bhutan, inter alia, adopt an inclusive education strategy and elaborate a plan of action in order to increase the school attendance of children with special needs and focus on day care services for these children in order to prevent their institutionalization; and support activities of and cooperate with NGOs in developing community based day care services for children with special needs.88

52. CRC expressed concern over the ability of children belonging to minority groups, in particular of Nepalese ethnic origin, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language and recommended that such rights be recognized.89

54. CRC noted with concern that no durable solution for Bhutanese refugees living in camps in Eastern Nepal had yet been found and was concerned about the number of refugee children who have been separated from their family in Bhutan and over the lack of measures to achieve family reunification.90 It recommended that Bhutan enhance efforts to find a prompt solution for either the return or resettlement of people living in refugee camps, with particular attention to children and women and reunification with their families; and ensure the transparency of the procedure for the determination of the nationality of refugees, based on the right to a nationality and the right to leave and return to one’s country, with due consideration of the best interests of the child.91 It also recommended that Bhutan seek assistance from UNHCR and the International Committee of the Red Cross with regard to refugee children, return, resettlement and family reunification.92

59. CRC recommended that Bhutan seek technical assistance, including from UNICEF, to, inter alia, combat violence against children,103 and for establishing a juvenile justice system104 in accordance with the provisions of the CRC and international standards. Stakeholder Compilation

3. GIEACPC noted that a draft Child Care and Protection Act was expected to be adopted by the end of 2008 and that in October 2008 a draft Juvenile Justice Act was under discussion.4
4. Noting the observations by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in its concluding observations on Bhutan in September 2008 (CRC/C/BTN/CO/2), particularly on the right to a nationality, the right to education and the issue of Bhutanese refugee children, BRSG noted developments which indicate that the Royal Government of Bhutan may be attempting to address some of the concerns raised and recommendations made by the CRC.5

8. BRSG noted that under Bhutan’s existing citizenship laws, there is not adequate provision for a child to acquire a nationality at birth in accordance with article 7 of the CRC. For those people who through the F1-F7 categorisation process have been marginalised and rendered de facto stateless in their own country, the provisions of the 1985 Citizenship Act make it difficult to regularise their status.9

14. According to GHRD, those detained during the 1990s were not brought before courts for trial, nor were family members allowed to visit or to know of their location, while children were left to take care of themselves after their parents were arrested.18 GHRD reported that those prisoners are detained in Samtse State Jail and, while access to prisons was severely restricted, the suspicion remained of their being submitted to torture and inhumane treatment there.19 GHRD stated that in other prisons such as in Thimpu, Gylephug and Samdrup Jongkhar State jails, there are multiple cases of convicts whose mental and physical health has deterioriated, as a result of torture and degrading treatment. Furthermore, several convicts were released on the condition that they leave the country under threat of re-arrest.20

15. Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC) noted that corporal punishment is lawful in the home. Children have a limited protection from violence under the Civil and Criminal Procedures Codes and the Penal Code. GIEACPC also noted that the Government made a commitment to prohibition in all settings, including the home, at a meeting of the South Asia Forum in July 2006, following on from the regional consultation in the 2005 of the UN Secretary General’s study on Violence against Children. GIEACPC further noted that the Teacher and Student’s code of conduct (1997) and ministerial directives prohibit use of corporal punishment in schools, albeit there is no explicit prohibition in law; and in the penal system, corporal punishment is unlawful as a sentence for a crime but it is not prohibited as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions. There is no explicit prohibition of corporal punishment in alternative care settings.21 GIEACPC recommended that the Government introduce legislation as a matter of urgency to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including the home.22

25. Noting that the Committee on the Rights of the Child considered as positive the re-opening of schools in southern Bhutan and the abolition of the “no objection certificate” announced by Bhutan, BRSG stated that it is reportedly now easier for Lhotshampa children to get enrolment in schools. However, parents are required to produce their marriage certificate, biometric ID card numbers, and the child’s birth certificate. This clearly excludes children whose parents are not recognised as Bhutanese citizens, and children whose birth has not been registered (a problem highlighted by Lhotshampas, and by the Committee on the Rights of the Child in paragraphs 31 and 32 of its concluding remarks).35

26. BRSG noted that the Royal Government announced in January 2009 that about nine schools in southern Bhutan, closed for more than a decade for security-related issues, are to re-open this year. Since the early 1990s, Lhotshampa children have been systematically excluded from schools in southern Bhutan which served northern Bhutanese settled in the south (many on land owned and previously occupied by Lhotshampas in exile), and children of members of the security forces.36

Final Report

30. Singapore noted that Bhutan is guided by a development philosophy that differs from income bases measurements and is committed to a development path that is clean and green and that countries could draw on such successful approaches. Singapore welcomed the establishment of the first Women and Child Protection Unit to provide effective, prompt and sensitive response to situations of violations of women and children’s rights. Singapore made recommendations.

32. Cambodia appreciated Bhutan’s efforts to conduct a reform policy of many areas in line with a guiding principle of its development, known as GNH. Cambodia complimented the efforts made on poverty reduction and progress towards achieving the Millennium Development Goals. Cambodia commended the steps taken to ratify the two Optional Protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) in July 2009. Cambodia made recommendations.

33. Nepal asked about efforts to address alleged violations of the rights of the minorities and Bhutan’s plans to implement the recommendations of CRC, particularly the reunion of women and children in refugee camps with their families and relatives in Bhutan. Nepal stated that hundreds of already verified refugees by Nepal-Bhutan Joint Verification team in 2003 continue to languish in refugee camps, despite Bhutan’s commitments to take them back home. It asked if Bhutan has any time frame to return to bilateral dialogue to work for lasting and durable solutions of this humanitarian problem.

37. Cuba noted that Bhutan is a small developing country, victim of an unfair international economic order and that, nonetheless, Bhutan is making positive efforts in advancing the promotion and protection of human rights. Cuba congratulated Bhutan on its primary health care approach and asked for more information about the village health care workers initiative. It also noted that Bhutan guarantees free education to children. Cuba welcomed the priority given to combating poverty. Cuba made a recommendation.

41. Qatar noted Bhutan’s efforts to achieve its Millennium Development Goals and the concept of GNH in Bhutan’s development efforts. It applauded the provision of free primary education, calling for it to be made mandatory. It noted also the development of a national plan to ensure integration of children with special needs into the system. Qatar encouraged ratification of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (CRPD) and called for further technical cooperation with human rights bodies and mechanisms for capacity building in relation to human rights.
44. Serbia noted efforts that Bhutan has taken towards specific measures to fulfil its international obligations relating to children and women’s rights, citing the drafting of legislation on adoption, child care protection and domestic violence. Serbia sought information on measures to combat stereotyping of gender roles in domestic media. Serbia made recommendations.

47. Thailand commended Bhutan’s good work in public health and that campaigns to prevent discrimination against persons with HIV/AIDS are regularly carried out. Thailand welcomed the importance Bhutan places on the promotion and protection of women and children’s rights and hoped that the Domestic Violence bill would be adopted in due course. Thailand recognized that various challenges remained to be tackled by Bhutan as a new democracy. Thailand made recommendations.

49. Turkey welcomed the ratification of the optional protocols to CRC, the establishment of the Parliamentary Committee on Human Rights and adoption of the Royal Bhutan Police and Prison Acts. It cited the increasing number of newspapers, radio and television stations as developments in media freedom. It welcomed efforts on education, climate change and the elimination of poverty. Turkey made recommendations.

50. The Islamic Republic of Iran appreciated Bhutan’s efforts and commitments to further promotion and protection of human rights and to address existing challenges, citing international recognition for Bhutan’s strong commitment to environmental conservation and protection. It also referred to such issues as women and children’s rights and the high rate of poverty and unemployment. It made recommendations.

64. Chile noted the numerous measures and policies adopted by Bhutan in different areas with a view to promoting and protecting human rights. Chile recognized the efforts made by Bhutan in moving to a Constitutional Monarchy and hoped that the country would continue in this direction. Chile also made reference to ratification to the Optional Protocol to CRC. Chile made recommendations.

65. France noted the efforts made by the authorities in seeking to implement CRC and the Protocols. However, the Committee on the Rights of the Child has recently expressed concern as to the high proportion of forced labour of children, and France asked what measures Bhutan is taking in this regard. It expressed particular concern over the situation of refugees in Bhutan. France made recommendations.

66. Spain recognized the recent progress made by Bhutan in human rights, particularly with the abolition of the death penalty in 2004, and congratulated it for the ratification of the Optional Protocol to CRC on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography. It made recommendations.

67. Azerbaijan welcomed measures to combat domestic violence and trafficking, national legislative reforms and the ban on corporal punishment in schools. It aligned itself with a number of treaty body recommendations and urged the international community to provide technical assistance to Bhutan to overcome challenges in promoting and protecting human rights. Azerbaijan made recommendations.

72. Poland, while appreciating progress made in the promotion and protection of human rights, noted that Bhutan still faced challenges. Poland referred to reports indicating that ethnic Nepalese suffer discriminatory legislation and practices of exclusion, including in acquiring citizenship and was alarmed at the effects on children who risk becoming or are stateless. Poland asked about measures intended to resolve these issues. Poland made recommendations.

76. Uzbekistan welcomed the strengthening of national mechanisms to protect human rights, the results of efforts to defend the rights of women, children and the disabled, to guarantee rights to education, health and to inform the population about human rights. It noted Bhutan’s efforts, priorities and actions to fulfil international human rights obligations, despite difficulties, and the need for technical support.

79. Slovakia encouraged Bhutan to continue the process of democratic reforms in compliance with international standards. It noted that Bhutan has ratified only two international human rights instruments and made recommendations for further ratification. Citing the concerns of the Committee on the Rights of the Child about disparities in the rights of children of Nepalese origin to citizenship, education, health services, culture, religion and language, it made a related recommendation.

83. In response, the delegation stated that NCWC was established in 2004 with the specific objective of securing the rights of children and women. Bhutan is up to date with its reporting obligations to CRC and CEDAW, and to other international and regional instruments.

84. In order to reinforce the harmonization of CRC, CEDAW and other relevant instruments, the Child Care and Protection Bill and the Adoption Bill have been submitted to the Parliament for enactment. A domestic violence bill is in the final stages and women and children protection units are being established in the Royal Bhutan police.

87. Regarding commercial exploitation of children, Bhutan fully subscribes to the objectives and purposes of CRC and has very strong legal provisions in place to prevent the worst forms of child labour and to regulate the minimum age for admission into employment.

93. Regarding corporal punishment, the Constitution and the Teachers Code of Conduct adequately addresses the issue. The government has submitted a Child Care and Protection Bill for enactment. On monastic institutions, the NCWC and the central monastic body have put certain measures in place viz alternative forms of discipline in the monastic system, establishment of a complaints and response mechanism and identification of a child protection officer.

Conclusion and Recommendations

10. Continue efforts to strengthen steps and provide resources for the National Commission for Women and Children (Bahrain);

11. Improve the work of the National Commission for Women and Children by enhancing its capacity, providing it with additional
human resources and an adequate budget, in cooperation with the international community (Morocco);

13. Favourably consider the possibility of drawing up a national plan of action to protect the rights of children, as recommended by the Committee on the Rights of the Child (Belarus);

14. Envisage the adoption of a national plan for the promotion of the rights of the child and call for international assistance to allow it implement such a plan (Morocco);

30. Continue to strengthen the promotion and protection of the human rights of vulnerable groups within society, particularly women, children, disabled persons and persons with HIV/AIDS (Thailand);

31. Continue taking effective measures to further promote and protect the rights of women and children (Islamic Republic of Iran);

32. Reinforce the human rights protection of vulnerable and disabled children (Chile);

33. Improve the situation of vulnerable children, particularly those living in rural and remote areas, and children with disabilities (Azerbaijan);

34. Establish specialized services to meet the needs of children with disabilities (Spain);

38. Continue, in collaboration with the National Commission for Women and Children and other relevant stakeholders, to pursue public advocacy campaigns and promote greater awareness and understanding of the rights of victims of violence against women (Serbia);

39. Continue to work towards eliminating all violence against women and to increase access to justice for women victims of violence, including in remote and rural areas (Canada); Further address the issue of eliminating violence against women and children (Japan);

61. Establish a monitoring mechanism to effectively ensure the protection of the rights of children in alternative care, including in monasteries (Austria);

62. Provide adequate support to children in the care of their extended families (Austria);

70. Ensure compulsory and free of all costs primary education for all children (Azerbaijan);

71. Continue the policy of free education through cooperation with and assistance from the international community (Indonesia);

77. In line with recommendations of the Committee in the Rights of the Child, enhance efforts to find a prompt solution for either the return or resettlement of people living in refugee camps, with particular attention to children and women and reunification of families (Germany); Focus on refugees from Bhutan in camps in eastern Nepal wishing to return to Bhutan and in particular, at this juncture, on addressing those cases with compelling humanitarian concerns (Netherlands);

92. Call upon relevant United Nations agencies and organizations, in particular UNICEF, to provide technical assistance to build its capacity to promote gender equality, make women more autonomous, protect children in the country and set up effective institutional mechanisms for birth registration (Algeria);

93. Continue advancing its efforts to improve indicators regarding poverty, illiteracy, schooling, mothers' health and access to water with the cooperation of the international community, in particular the developed countries, which must increase their official development aid and other forms of aid to Bhutan (Cuba);