



ngo group for the crc

## STATE PARTY EXAMINATION OF NEW ZEALAND'S THIRD AND FOURTH PERIODIC REPORTS

56<sup>TH</sup> SESSION OF THE COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD

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*New Zealand ratified the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC) on 1<sup>st</sup> April 1993. On 19 January 2011, the Committee on the Rights of the Child (the Committee) examined the combined third and fourth periodic reports of New Zealand. It was last examined on 18 September 2003. The State party has a general reservation on article 2 and reservations on articles 32 (2) and 37 (c).*

### Opening Comments

The delegation of New Zealand was led by Ms. Suzanne Mackwell, Deputy Chief Executive, New Zealand Ministry of Social Development. She was supported by a small delegation consisting of representatives of the Ministry of Health, the New Zealand Crown Law Office and the Permanent Mission in Geneva<sup>1</sup>.

Ms. Suzanne Mackwell was honoured to address the Committee on the Rights of the Child and welcomed the opportunity that the reporting process provided, to share experiences and to draw upon the expertise of the Committee, the observations and recommendations of which would be publicised through a variety of channels in New Zealand. She stated that the CRC was an essential human rights instrument, playing an important part in the protection and promotion of the rights of children and that the child was valued and cherished as a member of New Zealand society. Ms. Mackwell recognised that some issues were still to be confronted. The combined report set out the progress made in the implementation of the CRC between 2003 and 2008 and included the views of children, non-governmental organisations and individual experts. Furthermore, a draft of the report had been opened for public consultation during a four-week period. The Head of Delegation expressed the belief that the

<sup>1</sup>More information about delegation members can be found on the OHCHR website, under CRC sessions, <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/bodies/crc/crcs56.htm>

wellbeing of the family directly impacted the wellbeing of the child; therefore a sound foundation for families was created in order to build opportunities for themselves and their children, by encouraging job retention and economic growth. Nevertheless, some families and communities needed more assistance and the government recognised that need.

The investments focused on children were maintained at a high level since 2003, despite the recession and the change in government. The government expenditure across education, health and welfare was approximately 22 per cent of New Zealand's GDP in 2003. Ms. Mackwell also said that an additional billion New Zealand dollars had been invested since 2009, a significant proportion of which had been focused on children under 12 years. Among the areas of progress, she identified education, health, care and protection and family support.

Despite the fact that New Zealand's top students were performing well above the OECD average, Ms. Mackwell acknowledged that approximately 20 per cent of students perform poorly. As such, new national assessment standards had to identify the needs and to provide support for primary level students. Twenty hours a week of free early childhood education were provided to all three to five year olds and children attending play centres or *Kohanga Reo* (an early childhood education and care (ECE) centre where all education and instruction is delivered in the Māori language). Considerable increase in investment was noted in this area from \$373 million in 2003 to \$1.3 billion in 2010 and 2011.

In the health sector, Ms. Mackwell emphasised that the programmes introduced by the government resulted in access to free health care services for 82.7 per cent of New Zealand children under age six, and to immunisation of 88 per cent of children under two years. To respond to the Committee's recommendations from 2003, the government developed an action plan that improved the performance of the Child, Youth and Family (New Zealand's statutory child protection agency) by diminishing the number of cases still open after 90 days - the number of unallocated cases - reducing the response time.

According to the Head of Delegation, substantial investment in the area of care and protection demonstrated the government's strong commitment to reduce child abuse and protect the most vulnerable children. She also shared the experience in working collaboratively with non-governmental organisations based in communities, as they were closer to families and children and provided an example with the inclusive approach *Whānau Ora* (family wellbeing). A comprehensive income assistance package was developed to support families with children by directly lifting incomes for both beneficiaries and working families, and by improving the returns from paid employment.

Throughout her statement Ms. Mackwell made additional clarifications in relation to the changes made to immigration laws, which allowed children unlawfully in New Zealand to attend compulsory education. Information was also provided on the progress made towards the harmonisation of national law with CRC articles 37(c) and 32(2). Nevertheless, reservations were maintained, and the Optional Protocol on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography (OPSC) was not ratified, despite the progress highlighted in the State Report and reiterated by Ms. Mackwell. She concluded by assuring the Committee that hard work was being done to target assistance where it would make the greatest difference and that would allow children to reach their full potential. Saying, "Our children are our future", she welcomed the suggestions from the Committee.

Ms. Maria Herczog, the Country Rapporteur, addressed words of welcome to the New Zealand delegation in the Māori language. On behalf of the Committee, she welcomed the submission of the Common Core Document and the legislative amendments, and particularly the adoption of the Children, Young Persons, and Their Families (Youth Courts Jurisdiction

and Others) Amendment Act of 2010; the adoption of the Care of Children Act and its Amendment in 2004 and in 2008; the Status of Children's Amendment Act of 2007; and the Amendment of the Children's Commission Act from 2003. The Committee also appreciated the ratification in 2007 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman and Degrading Treatments or Punishment, and the considerations for ratification of the OPSC and the withdrawal of the reservations to the CRC.

Ms. Herczog drew attention to some issues from the 2003 Concluding Observations of the Committee that were still relevant and had to be repeated, especially in relation to discrimination, abuse and neglect of children, and some other areas. Despite the good general situation of the majority of children in New Zealand enjoying a safe and joyful life, there were some challenges and even some serious concerns associated with the inequality of access to services for children, particularly the most vulnerable, which needed to be addressed. Ms. Herczog noted the limited coordination for the implementation of the child rights-related policies; the lack of a comprehensive child rights' system; the lack of a specific body responsible for the issues related to children; and the lack of a national action plan. She cited the Written Replies, which said the CRC was implemented through comprehensive action.

The Forum of Social Sector Chief Executives (hereafter The Forum) had been established for coordination and joint work on children's issues. Its meetings were monthly and the Country Rapporteur was looking forward to receiving more information about its work. Concerning the awareness about children's rights, the dissemination of principles and the implementation of the CRC, Ms. Herczog was of the impression that it was not a priority for New Zealand. The right of the child to be heard and the participation of children in decision-making had to be strengthened in many areas, as seen through the Save the Children report, 'Hear Our Voices, We Entreat', which published children's opinions on the need for training and skills, considering that the knowledge of the rights enshrined in the CRC had to be complemented with awareness on "how to practice" and "how to do". The children had also drawn the Committee's attention to the needs of indigenous groups, refugees, migrant children, children with disabilities and LGBT persons, to be protected against discrimination. Finally, the reports had called for appropriate consideration of the best interests of the child in the formation of all policies and their subsequent implementation strategies.

The increase in expenditures on child-related programmes since 2004 was acknowledged as important, because it was improving the situation of many children. However, child poverty was still an issue, particularly manifested in inequalities in access to resources and services for some children. Ms. Herczog suggested that a stronger, more long-term commitment to rectifying these issues could be achieved with more effectiveness and efficiency in the allocation of resources. Concerning the use of parental force for the purpose of correction, Ms. Herczog said she had followed with great interest the public debate and the political manoeuvres concerning its total ban, but regretted that no explicit prohibition of all forms of corporal punishment in the home was adopted. Recent information made available to the Committee showed the efforts made by the government, civil society organisations, the Commissioner for Human Rights and children to influence the public opinion in this respect. It was also noted that there had been efforts made to provide alternative disciplinary techniques to parents and caregivers.

## **General Measures of Implementation**

### ***Reservations***

The Committee reiterated the recommendations from 2003. Concerning the general reservation to article 2 of the CRC; the Committee noted the progress and presumed that the issue of health care was the last obstacle to the withdrawal of this reservation. It was asked whether the government was ready to make that step forward. The delegation stated that substantial progress was made in relation to the changes in the legislation necessary for the withdrawal of the general reservation. The area was under review since the last examination in 2003. Nevertheless, there were practices relative to the immigration status, such as access to the education system that had to be formalised in the immigration legislation. The delegation said that health services, emergency and acute care were generally publicly funded. However, social assistance, public health services and housing services were unavailable for migrant families because of restricted resources; therefore the reservation had to be maintained.

The Committee asked about the reservation to article 32(2) and the ratification of the ILO Convention 138 regarding the minimum age for admission to employment. Despite the delegation's explanation that the legislation of New Zealand protected children from hazardous work, the Committee was concerned that children under age 13 were admitted to the labour market. The delegation reiterated the explanation from the State Party report. It said that it was a generally accepted practice in New Zealand that children worked in the out-of-school hours, for example in family businesses. Therefore, the legislative regime was very detailed and contained many restrictions. The delegation stated that the government of New Zealand had an open dialogue with the ILO in order to explore the possibilities to conform to the ILO Convention 138 without the adoption of a minimum age.

The Committee asked about the measures undertaken concerning the reservation to article 37(c) and whether young people and adults were detained and transported separately. It was suggested that bringing the age of criminal responsibility to 18 would be a possible solution to this issue. The delegation answered that the criminal justice system of New Zealand held persons over 18 separately from persons under 17, except in the case of young women, because of their small number.

### ***Jurisdiction***

The Committee repeatedly asked whether the CRC was applied to the children in Tokelau and whether New Zealand was assuming responsibility for the protection of the 600 children living in Tokelau. The delegation reiterated that Tokelau was a non-self-governing territory, despite the two recent referenda. Therefore, Tokelau was under the jurisdiction of New Zealand and accepted the ratification of the CRC and the government of New Zealand was discussing with - and supporting - Tokelau to ensure the application of the CRC.

### ***Legislation***

The Committee congratulated the legislative achievements of New Zealand in complying with the CRC. Nevertheless, the harmonisation efforts were not mainstreamed. The Committee asked about the Children's Commission study and related follow-up. The delegation responded that the legislation was under review in order to verify inconsistencies with the CRC. Concerning the new legislation, the consideration of the impact on children and the compliance with the CRC, were integral parts of the legislative formation process.

The Committee asked about the legislative achievements in view of the ratification of the OPSC. The delegation said that the government engaged in a number of legislative amendments including amendments to the Films, Videos and Publications Classification Amendment Act 2005; Crimes Amendment Act 2005; and Evidence Act 2006 and that the

remaining issues were before the House of Representatives. The current legislation on adoption was an obstacle to the ratification of the OPSC.

### ***Coordination and national plan of action***

The Committee asked if there was a visible structure form, comprehensive policy framework of implementation of the CRC or a National Plan of Action (NPA). The delegation explained that there was no NPA since 2008 and that they were waiting for the opportunity to talk with the Committee and hear its recommendations.

The Committee asked about the Social Sector Forum (hereafter the Forum). The delegation explained that the Forum was created to ensure coordination across the ministries involved in policy formation and related programmes on children's rights. It was mandated by the Cabinet of Social Policy Committee to provide the Cabinet with ongoing advice on complex issues related to children. It was relatively new, established about five years ago, and was chaired by the Chief Executive of the Ministry of Social Development. Other members of the Forum included the Chief Executives of the Ministries of Health, Education and Justice. The delegation detailed that the Forum met monthly, and addressed cross-sectoral issues in cooperation with the social sector and often with children. Examples of projects were given, such as those related to community response models, vulnerable families, crime and the inclusion of the CRC in a policy framework. The delegation referred to the cross-department approach, *Whanau Ora*, in the response to crime, which involved a number of different ministerial policies.

The Committee admitted that the two-part answer gave a clear picture about the strategic long-term plan; however, these seemed to be policy meetings and consequently, the Forum did not seem to act as a coordination body in and of itself. The delegation reiterated that the leading responsibility for the promotion and the implementation of the CRC was with the Ministry of Social Development, which worked in close relation to the Child Commissioner's Office. Previously it was the responsibility of the Ministry of Youth Affairs, but was moved to the Ministry of Youth Development shortly after New Zealand's second periodic report was examined in 2003. The delegation also explained that the budgeting and the programmes of the different ministries were always made together, to facilitate coordination. The delegation was open to recommendations from the Committee.

### ***Ministry of children***

The Committee was concerned that despite the large amount of legislation that had been passed, the children seemed invisible and wanted to know why, and whether the establishment of a Ministry of the Child or a Court for Children were conceivable. The delegation said that under the current fiscal constraint it was not likely.

The Committee was understanding of the fact that the financial restrictions were not allowing the creation of a Ministry of the Child. It suggested the creation of an inter-sectoral unit or a sub-section for children within the Forum's framework that would facilitate a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the CRC.

### ***Research and evaluation***

The Committee asked about the indicators that were used by the government to evaluate the progress made in relation to inequalities between indigenous children and others, after the signing of the Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People. The delegation explained that only the major programmes in New Zealand, such as "Working for Families" and "Family Start", were evaluated, because the evaluation of all programmes was unaffordable. It said that the Forum facilitated monitoring of inter-sectoral programmes such as those on

immunisation and securing appropriate housing. Additionally, the government was cooperating with communities and the private sector, establishing innovative partnerships.

### **Budget**

The Committee suggested that a comprehensive legal framework in line with the CRC would facilitate the creation of a comprehensive strategy for a national plan of action and a corresponding strategic budget. New Zealand seemed to have the necessary political, professional and financial possibilities to achieve this. The delegation was open to ideas from the Committee as there was currently no budget for children but rather money allocated within other budgets. The delegation underlined that despite the low economic growth, the government maintained the assistance to low socio-economic groups through the Working for Families package. A large percentage of the population that received assistance were Māori and Pacific people and none of their assistance was cut during the recession.

### **Definition of the Child**

The Committee noted inconsistencies with the definition of the child in the internal legislation of New Zealand concerning age limits. It was concerned that the Concluding Observations issued in 2003 were not reviewed in order to ensure the conformity of domestic laws with the principles and provisions of the CRC but rather acted contrary to these recommendations. To this end, the minimum age of criminal responsibility was not raised but rather lowered; the Child, Young Persons and their Families Act of 1989 was not extended to all persons under 18; and a minimum age of employment was not set. The Committee observed different definitions of the child in different legislative acts.

### **General Principles**

#### ***Non-discrimination***

The Committee was concerned about the discrimination against particular groups of young people such as indigenous, young persons with mental illnesses and LGBT, and asked whether there were explicit provisions prohibiting discrimination. The delegation answered that the New Zealand Human Rights Act prevented every human being in New Zealand from discrimination on different bases – sexuality, race, etc. The Human Rights Commissioner had the authority to monitor access to education. The delegation stated that there was no active discrimination of Māori or other minority groups in New Zealand, but rather a lack of access appropriate services.

#### ***Best interest of the child***

The Committee asked whether the best interest of the child was truly applied in legal proceedings through representation, in the application of the Care of Children Act 2004 and Domestic Violence Act 1995. The delegation replied that the child could choose his or her own legal representative or be appointed one *ex officio*. There were special Youth Advocates, as part of the free legal aid service, that were publicly funded according to the Child, Young Persons and Their Families Act. In criminal proceedings, it was mandatory for the child to be represented by a Youth Advocate if the child did not have the means to have a private lawyer. In other proceedings, the Court could decide whether the child needed separate representation.

#### ***Right to life, survival and development***

The Committee noted a clear trend towards inequalities that ranked New Zealand poorly compared to other OECD countries regarding the wellbeing indicators, as well as emotional health and safety. The Committee asked whether possibilities were discussed for a more

integrated approach to promoting the holistic development of the child, which target risk factors, as well as resilience, social cohesion and the development of social capital.

### ***Respect for the views of the child***

The Committee asked about the importance of children's views in decision-making processes, particularly in light of evidence showing a social tendency towards traditional paternalistic attitudes towards children, which led to children being considered not mature enough to participate. The delegation replied that children were consulted and involved in the decision-making process, particularly between ages 12 to 14. The Ministry of Social Development, as the responsible body, was actively seeking young peoples' views in social networks such as Facebook and Twitter. The delegation illustrated these practices through the experience in a recent review of the transport system, where the consultation with young people was very successful. Encouraged by the Youth Ministry, a Youth parliament was organized in Wellington, so that children could learn about the political and parliamentary system. Moreover, youth participated in local and territorial councils.

The Committee was concerned about respect for the views of the child in legal and administrative proceedings and particularly once the decision had been taken in civil or administrative courts. The delegation explained that the child's views were asked in Court. New Zealand had a high degree of engagement with the international human rights mechanisms and the CRC and, during the last five years, a large number of decisions from the High Court cited the CRC. The delegation also cited the "Hear Our Voices, We Entreat" report prepared by Save the Children, as an example of child participation in relation to the implementation of the CRC, which had been realised with substantial government funding.

## **Civil Rights and Freedoms**

### ***Access to appropriate information***

The Committee asked about the measures taken by the government, in partnership with civil society and the media, to provide children with appropriate information and knowledge about their rights. It further asked whether there was a Mass Media Code used in child-related issues and how the mass media provided appropriate information to children between 14 and 18, as the media considered children to be up to age 14.

### ***Protection from cruel and degrading treatment***

The Committee was concerned about the use of tazers by the police of New Zealand. In response, the delegation assured the Committee that there had been no cases of tazers being used on young people so far; however the use of tazers was not explicitly forbidden, for example it may be necessary in the case of an armed young person. The delegation referred to the Committee against Torture's recommendations from the previous year for more details.

## **Family Environment and Alternative Care**

### ***Adoption***

The Committee referred to the 2003 Concluding Observations concerning the reform of the legislation on adoption. The 1955 Adoption Act was inconsistent with the principle of the best interests of the child and it did not take into account the cultural factor, the views of the child, nor the child's consent in inter-country adoption. The delegation recognised that legislative reform in this regard was still not carried out, due to the lack of time and other legislative priorities. The Committee asked whether the acknowledgment of traditional adoption in indigenous communities had been considered. The delegation responded that the Māori customary adoption (*whāngai*) was a cultural adoption that put emphasis on the family

continuity and respected the right to succession, even if it was not codified.

### ***Abuse and neglect***

The Committee was concerned about the high incidence of deaths among children in the context of family violence and asked about the measures taken to protect children from neglect and abuse in the family. The delegation stated that this was a top priority for the government as the number of child death cases was unacceptably high. Large campaigns were realised, such as “Never Ever Shake Your Baby”, and additional social workers were engaged in district hospitals. The delegation said that additional social workers, prepared to identify child abuse, were engaged in district level hospitals to work alongside clinicians and pediatricians, but there was a breakdown in the communication between them. However, their role should be seen as complementary, as social workers knew whether the child had been admitted before with similar injuries. The delegation informed the Committee that alternative care projects, like “Home for Life”, were developed, but it was not clear if the efforts were sufficient considering the high number of notifications of child abuse each year, namely over 100,000.

### ***Family support***

The Committee noted that 20 per cent of children in New Zealand were living in poverty and asked about the progress made in this regard. The delegation reiterated its commitment to reducing the incidence of child poverty through a number of initiatives, including “Working for Families”. It explained that “Working for Families” was a comprehensive income assistance package that was directly lifting incomes for both beneficiaries and working families or was improving the returns from paid employment. This package had also provided tax credits to both beneficiary and low-to-middle income working families. The delegation stated that this programme had successfully reduced the percentage of children living in poverty.

## **Basic Health and Welfare**

### ***Health and access to health services***

The delegation explained that access to health care in New Zealand depended on the legal status of the person and might not be available to clandestine children. However, in the past, immunisation was provided irrespective of the status (“don’t ask, don’t tell” principle had been applied) and as a result, full immunisation was provided to 88 per cent of all children in New Zealand (84 per cent, 77 per cent and 93 per cent of respectively Māori, Pacific and Asian children). There was a comprehensive approach to providing health services to all children under five years old, maternity services to mothers who were technically ineligible for services as they were not New Zealand residents, and HIV/AIDS treatment to prevent transmission of the virus to the baby.

### ***Child mortality***

The Committee was concerned about the high and unchanged rates of infant and child mortality over the last decade and asked about the progress in this regard. The delegation said that a reduction in the child mortality was observed and New Zealand was improving its position among the OECD countries. The gap between children with European origin and Māori children was decreasing, but still remained, particularly in relation to the postnatal period, congenital diseases and to Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS). The general causes were lack of education, high smoking rates among mothers of Māori origin and some traditional practices. The government was working very hard, the delegation assured, to reduce the smoking rates and overcome traditional practices, such as sleeping with the baby

in the early months (for bonding and protective purposes) but which increased the likelihood of SIDS.

### ***Infant nutrition***

The Committee raised the question of breastfeeding and how this practice was promoted in New Zealand. The delegation said there was no legislation to actively promote breastfeeding; it was on a voluntary basis and the rates of exclusive breastfeeding, according to the WHO definition, were high. The delegation also said that often the social workers and doctors could not give relevant information on nutrition as they did not speak the language of the family. These were two of the issues, but also better care and safety plan for babies, young and children when they were in the hospital could be developed.

### ***Health education***

The Committee asked if there were plans underway to improve secondary school education on sexual reproductive health and rights. The delegation responded that HIV/AIDS issues were covered in the secondary school sexual education. The Education Review Office was in charge of reviewing educational programmes on sexual health and security.

## **Education, Leisure and Cultural Activities**

### ***Education for children with disabilities***

The Committee questioned the educational opportunities for children with disabilities in New Zealand. The delegation informed the Committee that a large review for specific educational needs for children with disabilities was underway and that the country was currently in a reporting process for the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. The delegation said that the State had special schools for deaf and blind children and added that there were efforts to integrate these children in mainstream schools.

### ***Early childhood education***

The Committee congratulated New Zealand on the impressive reform, which introduced 20 hours of free early childhood education (ECE) per week for three- and four-year-old children, but commented that 20 hours might be insufficient for working parents. The delegation replied that the Ministry of Social Development was financing additional ECE hours and it was open to all parents.

### ***Educational outcomes in minority groups***

Despite the generally good educational achievements in New Zealand, about 20 per cent of young people encountered difficulties at school and disparities existed particularly amongst Māori and Pacific children. Nevertheless, the delegation said that the educational performance of Māori children was improving and that a large number of initiatives were launched, many of which had positive results for Māori children.

### ***Access to education***

The Committee asked whether children in custody had the right to education and if alternative education was available. The delegation explained that alternative education was available for those young people missing some years of secondary school, and especially those working and studying. The Committee also raised the issue of access to education for the children of foreign workers, especially if their parents could not afford to pay for it. The delegation highlighted that the access to education was publicly funded. Therefore, the access for migrant workers' children could not be available for free during the first years in order to prevent families coming to New Zealand for educational reasons.

## **Special Protection Measures**

### ***Child labour***

The Committee commented on the situation of children working in New Zealand for a lower salary than an adult doing the same activity. It asked if these children were properly informed about their rights. The delegation reiterated that the State had an extensive dialogue with the ILO, but the legislative modifications required were not acceptable for New Zealand. It explained that the minimum age for leaving school was 16 years and regulations related to the employment of minors were fixed in the Minimum Wage (New Entrants) Amendment Act 2007. Their wages could be lower for a limited period of time and supplemented by training

### ***Smuggling and trafficking***

The Committee was interested in the anti-trafficking legislation adopted by New Zealand and drew attention to the fact that legislative provisions on trafficking and smuggling were contained in the same law. The delegation said that trafficking and smuggling had different legal definitions, as the former involved a coercion element, while the latter did not. Few cases of trafficking and smuggling were prosecuted, and education was provided in this regard to the general public and particularly to employers and migrants.

### ***Juvenile justice***

The Committee was concerned that young persons in New Zealand were demonised and that instead of complying with the 2003 Concluding Observations, by raising the age of majority from 17 to 18 years, New Zealand lowered the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 14 to 12 years. The Committee regretted that the promoters of the restorative justice ideals returned to a more retributive approach and even military-style correction for juvenile offenders. To this end, in the Fresh Start programme, military-style activity camps were seen as effective means of responding to young people with behavioural disorders, for example.

The Committee asked if the reason for increasing the age of majority was evidence for a failure of the child protection system. The delegation responded that there were only a few cases of young people being brought before the Youth Court. Regarding the legislative amendment for raising the age of majority to 18, this had been before the House of Representatives since the term of the previous government. Invited by the Committee, the delegation admitted the latest decision of the government was not to proceed with this provision, however there was no formal decision up to this moment.

The Committee also asked about the effectiveness of the Family Group Conference (FGC) and whether they were used as often as they were in the past. The delegation was pleased to report that the number of situations where the FGC approach was used continued to increase. The FGC strategy was a way to engage with families that experienced problems; other preventive actions were engaged prior to the FGC. An increase of notifications in emotional abuse was observed, while notifications for sexual abuse were diminishing.

The Committee wondered whether in the Māori traditional communities there was a specific juvenile justice tradition. The delegation said that there was no separate Māori juvenile justice system.

### ***Military involvement***

New Zealand had been one of the very first countries to be examined under the Optional Protocol on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict (OPAC). The Committee found the State Party report was very puzzling in this regard as the age of recruitment was still 17 years. It asked whether the armed forces targeted recruitment of young people, whether

students were encouraged to consider military career path after completion of their secondary education and asked more about the military camps. The delegate explained that there were many initiatives promoting the military recruitment but that no recruitment was conducted in schools among students considering options for the future. The delegation was open to verify and come back with more information. The delegation emphasised that even if military personnel ran the programmes, there were no military activities included and the engagement in armed conflicts was prohibited for children under the age of 17.

### **Concluding Remarks**

Ms. Maria Herczog, the Country Rapporteur, thanked the delegation of New Zealand for the very interesting discussion. She appreciated the openness and honesty of the delegation, which served to clarify many issues and invited the country delegation to send further information on issues that were outstanding in the discussion.

Ms. Suzanne Mackwell, the Head of Delegation, thanked the Committee for the open and rich dialogue that helped them identify issues that needed further work.