**Central African Republic: Children’s Rights in the concluding observations on the combined initial to fifth periodic reports**

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Issues raised:

**Ratification:**

Committee welcomes the ratification of the following international treaties since the accession of the State party to the Convention in 1991:

The Convention on the Rights of the Child, in 1992; and

The Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Sale of Children, Child Prostitution and Child Pornography, in 2012. (para.6)

**Access to social services:**

Ensure that everyone, particularly women and girls have access to essential food and basic services, such as education and health services. (para.12).

**Gender discrimination:**

Comply with its obligations under the Convention as well as under international humanitarian, refugee and criminal law so as to ensure protection for women and girls from all forms of discrimination, including violence; (para. 14).

**Trafficking and sexual exploitation:**

The Committee is concerned about forced recruitment of women and girls, sexual slavery and forced marriages perpetrated by armed groups; The absence of a screening process to remove suspected perpetrators of serious human rights violations, including against women and girls, from the national security and defence forces; (para.15).

The Committee recommends that following the preliminary assessment of the situation by the investigation team of the International Criminal Court, continue to urge this Court to open an investigation of crimes committed by all parties against women and girls, in light of the incapacity of the national courts to carry out the necessary proceedings;

Make every effort to protect women and girls victims of sexual and other violence who seek access to justice from reprisals and prevent their exclusion from their families and communities by raising awareness among the population; (para 16).

Consider as a priority and take all measures to ensure the security of civilian populations, in particular women and girls, in their places of residence; proceed to evacuation only as a measure of last resort, in full consultation with the populations concerned and in accordance with international standards; (para 18).

The Committee is concerned about the absence of a study on the extent and causes of trafficking in women and girls in the State party. It is also concerned about the absence of data on the prevalence of prostitution in the State party (para. 29).

The Committee recommends that the State party:

Carry out a study on the prevalence of trafficking of women and girls and prostitution in the State party to inform the development of a strategy to combat trafficking in women and girls and their forced prostitution, and to address their root causes, including poverty, in order to eliminate the vulnerability of women and girls to sexual exploitation and trafficking, and ensure the rehabilitation and social reintegration of victims; and

Also to seek the cooperation of States in the region to prevent and combat trafficking in women and girls and their exploitation in prostitution;

As well to consider ratifying the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocols supplementing the Convention, in particular the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children (Palermo Protocol) (para. 30).

Harmful practices:

The Committee welcomes the measures taken prior to the conflict to combat harmful practices, such as the establishment of a National Committee to combat traditional practices harmful to the health of women and girls and violence against them by Decree No. 010 (para.25).

The Committee recommends that the State party to strengthen its activities of awareness raising, targeting women and girls as well as men and boys in collaboration with civil society, about the adverse effects and consequences of harmful practices; (para.26).

The Committee is concerned about:

The high prevalence of child and/or forced marriages; the existence in the 1997 Family Code of legal provisions allowing child marriage when an authorization is granted by the Public Prosecutor, without setting conditions for this, and of legal provisions allowing child marriage when an authorization is granted by the persons exercising parental authority, which provides room for forced child marriages; (para.45).

Repeal the legal provisions of the 1997 Family Code enabling child marriage when an authorization is granted by the persons exercising parental authority; amend the legislation to ensure that the Public Prosecutor can authorize child marriage under exceptional circumstances only; (para.46).

**Indigenous people:**

The Committee is concerned about the persistence of the practice of enslaving indigenous people, including women and girls, and the delay in adopting the draft law to promote and protect indigenous people against slavery (para.43).

The Committee recommends that the State party adopt without delay the draft law promoting and protecting indigenous people against slavery and ensure its effective implementation (para.44).

**Nationality:**

The Committee is concerned about the lack of birth registration throughout the State party due to the ongoing conflict. It is further concerned at the situation of refugee women in neighbouring countries and their children.

The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that all children, including girls, born on the territory of the State party are registered at birth, paying particular attention to the registration of internally displaced girls and boys;

Ensure, through its consulates and in cooperation with the UN Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees, that Central African refugee children born in foreign countries are registered at birth; and that women and their children will be provided with valid travel documents; (para.33).

**Education:**

The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption of the National Action Plan for Education for All (2003-2015). However, it is concerned about the pre-conflict stagnation, for more than ten years, of the capacity of the education system. It is concerned that, due to the conflict, the majority of schools closed as they were systematically looted and destroyed or occupied. While noting some recent progress in reopening schools in some areas and the State party’s efforts to encourage teachers to return to schools, the Committee is concerned that the lack of salaries and the prevalent insecurity prevents many teachers and students, particularly women and girls, from returning to school. (para.35).

The Committee recommends that the State party, with support from the international community:

Continue to coordinate all activities with stakeholders from the international humanitarian and development communities to secure funding for the restoration of the schools that were occupied and damaged during the conflict and ensure a comprehensive approach integrating a gender perspective in the provision of teaching materials and facilities such as sanitary conveniences;

Ensure the safe return of teachers and students, including women and girls, to school; and

Develop plans to restore and strengthen access to education, including for internally displaced children, giving particular attention to girls’ needs, in all regions of the State party (para.36).

**Health:**

The Committee is also concerned about the current lack of health-care and psychological services for women and girls who are victims of rape, including emergency contraception, safe abortion services and counselling. (para.30)