

Country session: Singapore
Date of session: 16-17 May 2019

Background information

OHCHR press release: (Pending)

Webcast: [Part 1](#) and [Part 2](#)

[Audio file](#)

Reporting

1. Reporting methodology

Regular reporting procedure

Simplified reporting procedure

Concluding Observations with urgent measures

State report:

Common core document	
Initial submission	-
Updated document	-
Annexes	-

CRC	
No. of report	4 th and 5 th
Due date	3 November 2017
Submission	3 November 2017

Written replies	
Submission	15 February 2019
Due date	15 February 2019

Public reports from children's rights defenders

Alternative reports	
NGOs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coalition Alternative Report • Community Action Network • Disabled Peoples Association • Family Justice Reform • Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children • Humanitarian Organisation for Migration Economics (HOME) • International Baby Food Action Network • Juvenile Justice Advocates International • National Secular Society • Yayasan Mendaki
NHRIs	-

Additional comments:

State delegation

The State delegation was quite large and consisted of both high-level representatives and technical staff. The delegation was headed by H.E. Associate Professor Muhammad Faishal Bin Ibrahim Khan Surattee, Senior Parliamentary Secretary, Ministry of Social and Family Development and Ministry of Education; and was composed of representatives of the Ministry of Social and Family Development; the Ministry of Education; the Ministry of Home Affairs; the Ministry of Health; the Ministry of Defence; a representative from the Attorney-General's Chambers and representatives of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Singapore to the United Nations Office and Other International Organisations at Geneva.

Committee's Task Force members

Name & Last Name	Country
Clarence Nelson	Samoa
Renata Winter	Austria
José Abgel Rodriguez	Venezuela
Mikko Otami	Japan
Marshall Harris	Barbados

Dialogue description

i. Character of the dialogue

The atmosphere of the dialogue was cooperative and an in-depth discussion took place. The large delegation covered most of the questions asked by the Committee.

ii. General assessment made by the Committee

The Committee welcomed the big number of programmes established for children, functional organisations and financial assistance accompanying them as well as good laws. However, the Committee recommended that more address should be given to all issues where children and their families would not be asked to perform only but to consider their emotional and psychological needs.

iii. Main issues discussed:

- **General measures of implementation:** With regards to the high number of declarations and reservations, the Committee asked if these were still necessary. The State party affirmed that they will not wave them. The delegation responded that it had considered the recommendations of the Committee during the dialogue and although they retained the reservations, these are not static, and the government will continue to look at them. The Committee requested clarifications on how family allocations are granted, being their understanding that allocations are only granted to families with two children and if they have more, they lose the allocation. The delegation explained that there exists no discrimination with regards to the number of children and that the more children a family has, the more financial support it gets.
- **Freedom of association and expression:** The Committee raised concerns about information of children being afraid to express themselves in particular because of possible defamation lawsuits filed against them. In addition, children seem to need a special permission from the police to publicly assemble. The Committee then asked the delegation about the consequences of such limitations on the development of free thinking and active participation of children in the future. The delegation highlighted that although it recognizes the

importance of children's freedom of expression, a permit to do a public assembly is required for everyone, including children, to ensure public order.

- **Definition of the child:** The Committee commended the significant but small progress on the raise of the minimum age of criminal responsibility from 7 to 10 years. The Committee asks member States to the CRC to raise the minimum age to 14 years of age.
- **Violence against children:** The Committee questioned the fact that the rate of sexual exploitation cases is very low and asked the reasons that might be behind this. The delegation responded that there is no trend of sexual exploitation cases and that those cases are generally under control and perpetrators seriously punished. The Committee asked explanations on the fact that children aged between 16 and 18 years are still treated as adults in the criminal justice system and may be sentenced to life imprisonment. Moreover, the Committee regretted that corporal punishment is still a reality in Singapore as it is still used in pre-school settings and asked further clarifications. The delegation replied that corporal punishment is not seen as a degradation and is still legal in all settings although only used as a last resort with strict procedures, except in early childhood development centres. The delegation however promised to continue the dialogue with the Committee on this and appreciated its recommendations.
- **Non-discrimination:** The Committee asked questions about equal treatment in law and policies regarding children of unmarried parents and their access to inheritance rights, children with single mothers and their acquisition of nationality, children of LGBTQ parents and their suffering from stigmatization and discrimination, non-citizen children living in Singapore and stateless children. The delegation acknowledged that children born out of wedlock can inherit a part or whole of their mother's estate if the later dies with no legitimate children, the child cannot inherit any part of their father's estate; this being a way of promoting marriage. As to the question on stigmatization of children of LGBT parents in schools and their safety, the delegation replied that the government takes bullying very seriously and the Harassment Act takes it as an offense. The delegation also explained that non-citizen children have access to all public services.
- **Family environment and alternative care:** The Committee found problematic a phenomenon unique to Singapore called "parental stress" or "caregiver fatigue" whereby families can get permits through Court proceedings to get relieved of their responsibilities if there is a problem so that the child is therefore sent to an institution; the Committee asked how the government is planning to prevent a misuse of this channel. The delegation explained that such an order, a "Beyond Parental Control" (BPC) is obtained when the parent cannot take care of their child; the Court ought to see if issuing that order is in the best interest of the child. The government is planning to change the system and require both the parent and the child to go through a programme in which they may reconcile before going through a legal proceeding. The Committee also showed concern on the fact that children in need of care and children in conflict with the law are placed in the same institution.
- **Adoption:** The Committee pointed out that international adoption is endangered by trafficking and that OPSC provides for protection in such situations, hence recommending the State party to consider ratifying OPSC, as well as the 1993 Hague Convention. The delegation responded that Singapore is reviewing its Adoption Laws and practices to better safeguard the welfare of the children adopted. The review will take into account the obligations and practices of the Hague Convention. As to the accession to the Convention, Singapore will do so when time is convenient, reassured the delegation.
- **Education:** The Committee pointed out issues around early school dropout, leisure and culture; it also requested clarity about the fact that if 80% of students with special education needs are in mainstream schools, what was the fate of the remaining 20%. The committee further asked about sex education, if teenagers have access to neutral counselling, including those coming from the LGTBQ community

Recommendations of the Committee

In its Concluding Observations, the Committee drew attention to the need of urgent measures concerning the following six areas:

- **Definition of the child:** The Committee urges the State party to adopt, without delay, the proposed amendment to the Children and Young Persons Act (CYPA) and that it sets a specific timeline for its

implementation; to remove all exceptions that allows for marriage under the age of 18 years, in particular subsection 96 (5) of the Administration of Muslim Law Act.

- **Non-discrimination:** The Committee urges the State party to adopt a proactive and comprehensive strategy containing specific and well-targeted action, to eliminate discrimination against children in marginalized or vulnerable situations, including children without Singaporean citizenship, girls, children with disabilities, children of ethnic minorities, children of unmarried couples, children of same sex couples and lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children. It also urges Singapore to combat discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex children, including by decriminalizing consensual same-sex sexual acts, implementing awareness-raising and educational activities for children, families and the public and providing sensitivity training for the relevant professionals including teachers, social workers, personnel of child care institutions and law enforcement officers.
- **Corporal punishment:** While referring to its GC N.8 and N.13, the Committee urges the State party to adopt, without further delay, legislation explicitly and unconditionally prohibiting all forms of corporal punishment of children in all settings; to further strengthen and expand programmes and policies aimed at combating violence against children and to conduct campaigns aimed at raising awareness on the harmful effects of corporal punishment.
- **Children deprived of a family environment:** The Committee urges the State party to take advantage of the current review of the Beyond Parental Control system, and transform it into a social support system ensuring that children are placed in institutions only as a measure of last resort, for the shortest possible period of time; to provide for alternative measures to institutionalization and to ensure that children placed in institutions under the Beyond Parental Control system are kept separate from children in conflict with the law.
- **Education, including vocational training and guidance:** The Committee recommends the State party to review its current system of education and related examinations, with due regard to article 29 and the Committee's GC No. 1 (2001) on the aims of education; to increase its efforts to address the root causes of the resulting inequality in access to higher education; and to ensure that children can realize their right to adequate leisure, cultural and recreational activities, in compliance with article 31 of the Convention.
- **Administration of juvenile justice:** The Committee urges the State party, while referring to it GC N.10 to consider regularly reviewing the Criminal Law with a view to raising the age of criminal responsibility to an internationally accepted standard and give the child the benefit of the doubt, when age is in dispute; to abolish the sentence of life imprisonment of children under the age of 18 and promptly review the files of all prisoners serving a life sentence for crimes committed when under the age of 18, with a view to ensuring early release; to ensure that children currently sentenced to life imprisonment receive education, treatment and care aimed at their release, reintegration and ability to play a constructive role in society; to prohibit and criminalize the use of corporal punishment for child offenders as a sentence and to ensure that pre-trial detention of children is applied only as a measure of last resort.

Sustainable Development Goals

Throughout its Concluding Observations the Committee referred to the following targets:

- 5.6, on ensuring universal access to sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights
- 8.7, on eradicating forced labour, ending modern slavery and human trafficking and securing the prohibition and elimination of the worst forms of child labour, including recruitment and use of child soldiers.
- 10.3, on ensuring equal opportunity and reducing inequalities of outcome, including by eliminating discriminatory laws, policies and practices and promoting appropriate legislation, policies and action in this regard
- 16.2, on ending abuse, exploitation, trafficking and all forms of violence against and torture of children
- 16.9, on providing legal identity for all, including birth registration



Next State report

CRC	
No. of report	6 th
Due date	3 November 2024

Disclaimer: Child Rights Connect reports are all drafted in English. If the State report and/or the alternative reports were submitted in another UN language (Spanish, French, Arabic, Russian or Chinese) the report will be translated accordingly.