

COMMITTEE ON THE RIGHTS OF THE CHILD
Forty-six session

**CONSIDERATION OF INITIAL REPORT ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF
THE OPTIONAL PROTOCOL TO THE CONVENTION ON THE RIGHTS
OF THE CHILD ON THE INVOLVEMENT OF CHILDREN IN ARMED
CONFLICT**

Opening address
by

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Mr. (Madam) Chair,
Distinguished members of the Committee,

More than one and a half years ago, I had an honour to be here with the Lithuanian delegation where we debated Periodic Report on the implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

Today we present the first Lithuanian report concerning the implementation of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict which was ratified by our country in 2002.

Mr.(Madam) Chair,

In accordance with the Constitution of the Republic of Lithuania, citizens of our country are obliged to perform mandatory military service from 19 to 26 years of age.

Bearing in mind the structure of education system in our country, according to which children finishes secondary school at the age of 19, only citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who are not younger than 18 may perform military service voluntarily. Thus, young people are provided with the opportunity to acquire secondary education. Children who attained the age of 18, have gained secondary education and want to acquire a military profession may enrol in the Military Academy of Lithuania.

Concerning criminalization of the acts which are stipulated in the Article 4 of this Protocol, Article 105 of the new Criminal Code provides for criminal liability not only for taking of the persons under the age of 18 years to groups that are distinct from the armed forces of a State, but also for recruitment of them or use in hostilities. The currently established punishment is imprisonment for a term from three to twelve years.

Distinguished Members of the Committee,

Lithuania is one of the Eastern European countries – the region where no active military conflicts were present for a quite long time.

In 2004, Lithuania became a full-fledged member of the European Union and NATO. Due to our geopolitical situation (our country has an eastern external EU border) and its history (until 1991 the Republic of Lithuania was incorporated in the Soviet Union), we are the bridge between East and West. And this is reflected in the data on asylum seekers who cross the border of our country. The data of 2003–2006 on unaccompanied children-asylum seekers, provided by Migration Department, shows that the numbers of such children is not big: in 2003 it was 24, whereas in 2006 – only 3. Mainly, they are teenagers (14–18 years old). According to the country of origin, the biggest number of children who are considered as an unaccompanied minors are coming from Chechnya, a part of the Russian Federation where armed conflicts have been taken place some time ago.

Pursuant to the norms of the international humanitarian law, Lithuanian legislation lays down provisions for the children who are asylum seekers or are considered to be unaccompanied children. All these children are situated at the Refugees Reception Centre in Rukla. Accommodation, food, medical treatment, education services and psychological assistance are provided for them free of charge.

I understand that not only the implementation of the provisions of this document but, in general, respect and support for every child who was born or came to our country, is one of the principal norms of human rights and guarantee of security and stability of the state. This is a long-term process which depends on both internal and external factors.

Therefore I would like to stress self determination of the Lithuanian Government to continue the work in the field of the rights of the child in order to fully implement provisions not only of this Protocol, but of the CRC in general.

Distinguished members for the Committee,

thank you for the opportunity to address you all.

Now our delegation is ready to answer the questions raised by the distinguished Members of the Committee.
