ICELAND
2000

National Report on Follow-up to
The World Summit for Children
A. Introduction and Background


No separate reports have been compiled concerning implementation of the World Declaration and Plan of Action adopted at the World Summit for Children; instead, emphasis has been placed on the reports on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Iceland’s First Report on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was prepared in 1994 (CRC/C/11/Add.6). Iceland’s additional observations were submitted to the Committee before final consideration of the First Report (CRC/C.11/WP.8). The Committee on the Rights of the Child under Article 43 of the Convention considered Iceland’s original report during meetings held 16 and 17 January 1996, and approved its final observations at its 287th meeting held 26 January 1996 (CRC/C/Add.50).

Among the positive factors noted by the Committee on the Rights of the Child was that Iceland was considering the declarations made upon the ratification of the Convention with a view to their eventual withdrawal. The Committee noted with appreciation the strengthening of the protection of human rights in general and of children’s rights in particular in the Icelandic Constitution and also Iceland’s ratification of important international instruments, such as the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction and the European Convention on the Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning Custody of Children. The Committee welcomed the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman for Children and its role of disseminating among the public information on the rights of the child and of encouraging compliance with the international instruments ratified by Iceland concerning those rights. The Committee acknowledged the efforts undertaken by the authorities to find creative ways to ensure effective dissemination of the Convention, and the commitment of the authorities to strengthen their relationships and cooperation with non-governmental organisations active in protection and promotion of children’s rights.

Among principal subjects of concern the Committee emphasised that the essential aspect of the Convention, the recognition of the child as the subject of his or her own rights, was not yet fully reflected in Icelandic law. The Committee stressed the importance of co-ordination of sectoral policies of the different governmental agencies and departments dealing with child issues, and pointed out that the disparities of budget allocations in the field of child protection and welfare between different administrative regions might lead to discrimination between children living
in different areas. The Committee noted that the inclusion of human rights in general, and of children's rights in particular, as a subject in schools and universities was still pending and that there was a lack of comprehensive and systematic training programmes for professionals working for and with children.

The Committee made several suggestions and recommendations, such as recommending that steps be taken to have all the substantive provisions of the Convention reflected in national laws or regulations to ensure the full protection of the rights enshrined in the Convention. The Committee recommended that Iceland establish a mechanism to enhance the co-ordination of governmental policies as well as those of central and local authorities in the field of children's rights. The Committee encouraged Iceland to pursue and further develop its policy aimed at dissemination of information and at increasing awareness of the Convention, and called upon the authorities to integrate the Convention into the training curricula of professional groups dealing with children. The Committee recommended that the budgetary allocations be ensured to the maximum extent of available resources and that Iceland consider strengthening international co-operation and assistance with a view to enhancing the promotion and protection of the rights of the child. The Committee suggested that appropriate measures be taken to counter the inequalities between man and women with regard to remuneration. The Committee then recommended a further review of the procedures with regard to custody and the separation of children from their parents.

Iceland’s Second Report on the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child was prepared at the beginning of 2000. The Report contains a separate Chapter concerning the final observations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child, describing the amendments made to Icelandic law and practices, for purposes including meeting the Committee’s observations. The matters worthy of note in this context will be described in substance in the following.

The table below presents a survey of Iceland’s population, number of children, family status, etc, which is properly set forth at the beginning of this Report:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Iceland’s Population 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total population</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children under the age of 18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Girls</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Boys</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total number of children born alive in 1999</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Nuclear Families in Iceland 1) 1999</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Nuclear families total</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marriages with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation without children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father with children</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother with children</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
A nuclear family consists of married spouses and children living with them 16 years of age and younger, cohabiting persons and children living with them 16 years of age and younger, or single men and women living with children at the age of 16 years and younger. Pairs in registered partnership as permitted by Act No. 87/1996, which provides for two persons of the same sex the possibility of entering into registered partnership with almost the same legal effects as marriage, are counted among married spouses.

The following table sets forth Iceland’s expenses for education, health care and social services as a percentage of national product and in millions ISK:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Expenses %</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>6.81</td>
<td>6.60</td>
<td>6.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security and welfare</td>
<td>8.63</td>
<td>8.17</td>
<td>7.99</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Health care</td>
<td>33,139</td>
<td>34,972</td>
<td>40,511</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>25,887</td>
<td>28,365</td>
<td>33,427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social security and welfare</td>
<td>41,968</td>
<td>43,310</td>
<td>46,853</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

B. Process Established for the End-decade Review

In preparing this Report, consideration has been given the reports mentioned above prepared under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice on implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Ministry maintained consultation with other Government Ministries concerned with matters relating to children, public institutions, and non-governmental organisations. In particular, the Ministry for Health was asked to compile the health information attached hereto in Appendix 1.

C. Action at the National and International Levels

a) Action at the National Level

As noted, ratification of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child was emphasised following the World Summit for Children. No particular National Plan of Action was prepared, but the Ministry of Justice conducted a thorough examination of the substance of the Convention in order to ascertain any needs for amending Icelandic law to conform to the obligations undertaken. The Convention entered into effect for Iceland in November 1992, which entailed the adoption of a policy to place heavy emphasis on every aspect of children’s rights. The extensive publicising of the substance of the Convention can be said to have involved a challenge to all public authorities and private parties to implement that policy. In addition, definite efforts have been carried out to amend laws and practices to conform still further to the Convention.

In the decade from 1990 to 2000 very much work has been performed as regards laying down policies in matters concerning children in Iceland. Acts of law relating to all the most important fields concerning children have been revised in this period, and administrative authorities have also taken important measures in formulating an overall policy concerning the child and the family institution.
There follows a survey of the chief acts of law and policy measures:

- **The Children’s Act, No. 20/1992.** The Act included improvements to the legal status of children, re-emphasised the fundamental principle of protecting and respecting children’s rights, and gave particular consideration to fulfilment of Iceland’s obligations under the Convention. A comprehensive revision of the Act is now in progress.

- **The Child Protection Act, No. 58/1992.** The Act emphasises defining child protection with a view to the needs of all children up to the age of 18 years, and that the interests of the child are given precedence. The Act endeavours to set the duties of child protection authorities forth in a clear manner, improve procedures and to strengthen child protection generally. Important amendments were introduced by Act No. 22/1995 establishing the Governmental Agency for child protection, an institution charged with co-ordinating and strengthening child protection in Iceland and supervising the activities of the child protection committees working under the auspices of individual local authorities. Amendments were also made by Act No. 160/1998, securing further the legal status of children. Submission to Parliament of a new child protection bill is planned in 2001, proposing among other things the adoption of provisions obligating national and local authorities to prepare regular implementation plans concerning child protection.

- **Act No. 83/1994 on the Ombudsman for Children.** The role of this official is to guard the interests and rights of children. This Act is described further in the following.

- **Act No. 62/1994 on the European Human Rights Convention.** The chief considerations leading to the incorporation of the Council of Europe Convention of 4 November 1950 on the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, with its protocols, into Icelandic law, were to affirm the rule of law and provide for individuals an additional guarantee for its observance.

- **Act No. 97/1995 amending the Constitution of the Republic of Iceland, No. 33/1944.** On the occasion of Iceland’s 50th anniversary as a republic in 1994, a decision was made to revise the human rights chapter of the Icelandic Constitution. The objectives of the revision were to strengthen, co-ordinate and correlate the human rights provisions so as to render them more efficient as a safeguard of the public in its relations with the State, and to modernise the provisions in question and make them conform better to international human rights instruments. The Constitution therefore now contains considerably clearer and more detailed human rights provisions than before. The provision of its Article 76 paragraph 3 is particularly worthy of note, as it provides that for children, the law shall guarantee the protection and care that their welfare demands. This involves a policy declaration, the models for which include Article 3 of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. The provision is chiefly intended to obligate the legislator to issue laws providing the guaranty mentioned. In addition, the provision may provide a support for decisions involving derogation from other human rights provisions if necessary in order to protect children.

- **Act No. 160/1995 on Recognition and Enforcement of Foreign Decisions on the Custody of Children.** This was enacted to enable Iceland to ratify the European Convention of 20 May 1980 on Recognition and Enforcement of Decisions Concerning the Custody of Children, prepared under the auspices of the Council

- **Education.** Since 1994, new acts of law have entered into effect relating to all four stages of the school system. These are the Nursery School Act, No. 78/1994, the Primary School Act, No. 66/1995, the Secondary School Act, No. 80/1996, and the Universities Act, No. 136/1997. New general curricula have been issued for all four educational stages. These were prepared on the basis of a new education policy, which among other things is intended to meet the requirements made by the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

- **The Majority Act, No. 71/1997.** This raised the age at which people become legally competent to manage their personal affairs, from 16 years to 18 years. In making this change, references were made to the recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child made following Iceland’s first Report on the implementation of the Convention. It was deemed proper to follow the definition presented in the Convention, and thus to define as children any individuals not having attained the age of 18 years. The raising of this age limit was also justified by reference to changed conditions in society, adolescent persons’ needs for education, and a need to increase the responsibilities of both parents and child protection authorities in meeting the needs of children.


- **Various legislation.** Various laws have been enacted that are designed to promote the rule of law generally. This includes the Act on the Ombudsman of Parliament, No. 85/1997, amending the act on the Ombudsman of Parliament from 1988; the Administrative Procedures Act, No. 37/1993; the Information Act, No. 50/1996, and the Act on Personal Protection and Processing of Personal Data, which replaced Act No. 121/1989 on Registration and Processing of Personal Data.

- **An Official Family Policy.** A particular national committee was appointed in connection with the United Nations General Assembly Resolution on the Year of the Family 1994. The committee set itself the goal of directing society’s attention to the family in order to strengthen and promote the family institution. An extensive survey was conducted of the situation of parents and children in Iceland, published in 1995. This was followed, in 1997, by a parliamentary resolution on the formation of an official family policy and measures in order to reinforce the status of the family institution. The aim of this policy is to strengthen the family in modern society, chiefly on the following premises:
  - that the family’s welfare is based on equality between men and women and a sharing of the responsibilities within it;
  - that the family is a forum for emotional ties, and
  - that family life offers individuals, in particular children, a possibility for full development of their abilities and personalities.

The general objectives of public authorities in carrying out family policy shall include:
- creation of the conditions necessary to achieve a balance between family life and work, emphasising the equal responsibilities of both parents;
- that the institutions of society co-operate with the family, take account of parent’s responsibilities for their children, and provide increased information and counsel to families;
o ensuring the fundamental economic security of the family and its right to secure housing;
  o protecting marriage as a major cornerstone of the family institution, including by ensuring, when issuing provisions on taxation, that married persons are not placed at a disadvantage in comparison with others;
  o making known and defining by law the rights and duties of cohabiting persons;
  o the health service taking account of the needs of the family as a coherent unit;
  o taking into account the needs of the family in environmental planning and planning of services, outdoor life and traffic safety;
  o providing necessary support, in the light of the applicable situation, to the families of disabled persons, patients and other groups;
  o providing necessary support to immigrant families in order to enable them to establish themselves firmly in Icelandic society;
  o counteracting discrimination against persons belonging to separable groups by virtue of their race, religion or culture, and against families of homosexual persons:
  o strengthening preventive measures, protection and support against use of alcohol and illicit drugs, and against violence within as well as outside the family;
  o furthering understanding of the family, its nature, role, formation and dissolution.

As envisaged in the parliamentary resolution on formation of official family policy, a Family Council was instituted at the beginning of 1998 in order to reinforce and protect the family institution. The roles of the Family Council include making proposals and laying down implementation plans in matters relating to the family, maintain an overall view of the measures taken and tasks performed by the individual Government Ministries, and to promote measures and research into the situation and conditions of Icelandic families.

- The policy declaration of the Icelandic Government. According to the policy declaration of the Government now in office, dated 28 May 1999, its aims include:
  o Ensuring for all equal opportunities for education, without regard for place of residence or economic status;
  o ensuring for all Icelanders ready access to high quality health service, and taking measures to improve services to sick children and adolescents;
  o revising the social security system, emphasising in particular the status of disabled persons and old people with low incomes;
  o strengthening the family as a cornerstone of society and its unity and welfare by, among other measures, ensuring in every respect equal opportunities for men and women. Also, providing increased support to sports and youth organisations, and attending as possible to any other needs of healthy family life.
  o Preparing a particular effort in the struggle against drug abuse in co-operation with parents and schools, non-governmental organisations in the fields of prevention and treatment, local authorities, sports clubs and youth organisations.
Generally, a considerable amount of information is collected each year on the status of children in Iceland. A relatively easy access to published material in this category can be obtained through the Internet. The Statistical Bureau of Iceland collects statistical information, processes it and issues reports on it annually. This includes various information on population, births, health, education, industries, economy, and public finances. Among the functions of the separate office of the Director General of Public Health is to publish health reports in co-operation with the Ministry for Health. The functions of the Governmental Agency for child protection include the initiation of research and development efforts in the field of child protection. The Governmental Agency for child protection shall also compile information on the activities of Icelandic child protection committees, and publish this in the form of reports at least every two years. The functions of the Study Evaluation Institute include research in the field of evaluation of the results of study, and research involving comparison with the results of study in other countries. Many other parties, public and private, are concerned with research on matters relating to children and collection and dissemination of information on such matters.

**a) Action at the International Level**

Iceland is increasing its development assistance, following a decision taken by the Government to triple the financial contributions to bilateral development assistance in the five-year period from 1999 to 2003. In Iceland’s bilateral development assistance a considerable emphasis has been placed on projects intended to improve the status of women and thus contribute to increased equality of men and women. Iceland’s state contributions to development are mainly channelled through the Icelandic International Development Agency, whose activities have increased in the past few years. The objectives of Iceland’s co-operation with developing countries is to support the efforts of their governments to improve their economies, and thus to contribute to social advancement and political independence among them as envisaged in the United Nations Charter. Health care and education are being given increased attention, in co-operation with parties such as the Icelandic Red Cross and other domestic associations. In a draft for a new Icelandic health care plan to the year 2010 it is proposed that an amount corresponding to 1% of health care allocations will be contributed to assist other countries in building up and developing their health care services.

The following is a survey of Iceland’s direct contributions to development aid in 1995-1999, in millions ISK, including information on total development aid contributions, i.e. direct contributions and equity and capital contributions:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Icel. International Development Agency</td>
<td>153.8</td>
<td>158.6</td>
<td>172.0</td>
<td>177.0</td>
<td>242.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN University Geothermal Training Programme</td>
<td>32.0</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>33.8</td>
<td>30.8</td>
<td>44.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UN University Fisheries Training Programme</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>3.3</td>
<td>3.5</td>
<td>21.5</td>
<td>23.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>12.6</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>7.5</td>
<td>7.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
<td>20.6</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>13.6</td>
<td>18.3</td>
<td>18.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UNICEF</td>
<td>19.4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.5</td>
<td>9.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aid to Palestine</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>30.0</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In the past decade Iceland has continuously increased its contribution to peacekeeping and reconstruction abroad, in particular in Europe. According to the Budget Act for 2000, approximately 150 million ISK were devoted to peacekeeping, representing an increase of 20% as compared to 1999.

### D. Specific Actions for Child Survival, Protection and Development

a) to disseminate and promote the earliest possible ratification of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, and thereafter to promote its implementation and monitoring;

i) Ratification of, and dissemination of information on, the Convention

We refer to the information presented above concerning Iceland’s ratification. Each Ministry of the Government monitors and follows up the implementation of the Convention in the fields within its competence. The Ministry of Justice collects coordinated information on its implementation from other Ministries and institutions. The Convention was published by the Ministry of Justice after its ratification, and is available at the Ministry free of charge. The Ministry of Justice has also published a booklet on the Convention, which has been distributed to the members of various professions serving children. The Ministry for Health sent the booklet to all hospitals and health care centres in Iceland, and has in particular endeavoured to publicise the provisions of the Convention that relate to health service. The Governmental Agency for child protection has publicised the Convention and explained its provisions in courses held for all child protection committees, child welfare workers and cooperating parties.

In 1994, the National Centre for Education Materials published three booklets entitled *My Rights*, describing the substance of the Convention in different ways, intended to appeal to different age groups. These booklets are regularly distributed to all primary schools in Iceland. The Ministry for Education has also introduced the Convention to all the chief executives within the school system.

In Iceland there is a wide variety of active associations and societies concerned with children and their interests in one way or another. The *Barnaheill* association (Save the Children) can be mentioned. Its objective is to represent children in society, using the Convention as a guiding light in all its activities. The association has taken various initiatives to publicise the Convention, including by publishing a synopsis of its substantial provisions. A Human Rights Office was established in Reykjavík in the spring of 1994 by various associations concerned with human rights. A host of other non-governmental organisations in Iceland resort to the Convention in pursuing their aims, and publicise the Convention in the course of their activities.

ii) The Ombudsman for children
The office of the Ombudsman for Children was established by Act No. 83/1994. The purpose of its enactment was to improve the situation of children, and establishing a particular office to guard their interests and rights. The Ombudsman for Children performs an important role as regards publicity for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and by controlling its implementation. The Ombudsman for Children shall in particular:

- initiate policy-making discussions in society concerning the affairs of children;
- make proposals for amendments,
- promote ratification and adherence to international instruments relating to the rights and welfare of children;
- react by appropriate means if he considers that administrative authorities, individuals, societies or associations have infringed upon the rights, needs or interests of children:
- promote public awareness of laws and rules relating to children, and promote research in that field.

b) to combat childhood diseases through low-cost remedies and by strengthening primary health care and basic health services; to prioritise the prevention and treatment of AIDS; to provide universal access to safe drinking water and sanitary excreta disposal; and to control water-borne diseases;

i) Health care generally

According to the Health Care Act, No. 97/1990, all Icelanders shall have access to the best health care that can be provided at any particular time for the protection of mental, physical and social health. Persons residing in Iceland enjoy general medical insurance under the Social Security Act, patients pay only a small share of medical and medicinal expenses, and hospital services are provided free of charge. Iceland is divided into health care areas, each served by one or more health care centres. A health care centre provides general medical service and health protection, for example obstetric and paediatric examinations and counsel, renders health services to schools, takes epidemiological measures and measures relating to venereal diseases, provides psychiatric care, maintains defences against alcohol, tobacco and illicit drugs, and provides social counselling.

In 1997, an Act on the Rights of Patients, No. 74/1997, was issued. This legislation marks a turning point and addresses many important issues. Discussions on the rights of patients have been prominent within the World Health Organisation, and Iceland was among the first countries to secure those rights by law. The purpose of the Act is to ensure for patients certain rights in conformity with general human rights and the fundamental dignity of the human being, and thus to strengthen their position with respect to the health service. The Act includes a provision establishing the duty to take any action available in order to ensure that a sick child matures and enjoys the amenities of life in spite of sickness and treatment, as its health may allow.

An agreement for greatly increased co-operation between the Ministry for Health and the Ministry of Social Affairs in matters concerning children suffering from psychiatric disturbances, behavioural problems and drug use was signed in April 2000. This assumes allocation of increased funds to psychiatric services for children. In November 2000 the Ministers for Health and Social Affairs announced the Government’s policy in matters concerning children suffering from long-term diseases, envisaging co-ordinated and comprehensive measures in the fields of health,
social security, education, social affairs and finances in order to secure still better the
rights of children suffering from long-term diseases, and their parents.

In November 2000 the Minister for Health submitted to Parliament a proposal for
a resolution establishing a Health Plan to be effective until 2010, involving a revision
of the Health Plan in effect since 1991. To a great extent the plan is based on the
World Health Organisation’s policy for health in the 21st century and the European
plan “Health 21”. Long-term objectives, intended to improve the nation’s health, are
emphasised. The priorities of the plan until the year 2010 cover in particular defences
against alcohol, tobacco and illicit substances, and increased services to children and
young people. In addition to this, various specific objectives are defined in the
proposed Health Plan, such as relating to:

- Iceland always being in the group of five nations enjoying the world’s best health
care system in accordance with the quality determinations of the United Nations;
- a reduction of the difference in life expectancy of various social groups by at least
25%;
- ensuring the equal rights of those who are at a disadvantage on account of young
age, disability or old age, by comparison with others;
- reduction of infant mortality to below three deaths per 1000 births;
- reduction in frequency of childbirth among girls at the age of 19 and younger by
50%;
- increasing health education and health promotion among primary school children.

ii) Paediatric care

The health and development of infants in Iceland is regularly monitored, and
infants undergo organised immunisation measures from the age of three months. The
following table presents an overview of immunisations and medical control relating to
children to the age of six years:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age of child</th>
<th>Control and counsel</th>
<th>Immunisation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1-2 weeks</td>
<td>-Breast feeding</td>
<td>Pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, haemophilus influenzae b, polio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Infant care and nursing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Family education</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3-4 weeks</td>
<td>-Accident prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Sleep practices and disturbances</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Nutrition</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 weeks</td>
<td>-Nutrition of mother and child</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9 weeks</td>
<td>-Infant development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>-Introduction to immunisation</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 months</td>
<td>-Breast feeding and development encouragement</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 months</td>
<td>-Dietary matters</td>
<td>Pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, haemophilus influenzae b, polio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6 months</td>
<td>-Development assessment; diet; food allergies; accident prevention</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8 months</td>
<td>-Diet; teething; dental care; fluoride</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10 months</td>
<td>-Development assessment</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12 months</td>
<td>-Dental care</td>
<td>Pertussis, diphtheria, tetanus, haemophilus influenzae b, polio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 months</td>
<td>-Development assessment; hygiene practices; accident prevention; Rubella, mborill, parotis epidemica</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to the above, each child is weighed and its length or tallness measured in each visit, and head measurements are taken to the age of 18 months. Primary school children undergo medical examinations at least once a year. At the age of 9 years they are vaccinated against rubella, morbilli, and parotitis epidemica, and at the age of 14 years against polio, tetanus and diphtheria. Vaccination in Iceland has given very good results, which can be thanked the general involvement of practically all children.

**iii) Infectious diseases - HIV/AIDS.**

A new Infectious Diseases Act, No. 19/1997, entered into effect 1 January 1998, replacing an act since 1958. The Infectious Diseases Act is to provide for a better overall view of infectious diseases in Iceland and more prompt reactions to them. The State Epidemiologist is responsible for maintaining a registry of infectious diseases and monitoring the spread of infectious diseases by collecting detailed information on diagnoses from laboratories, hospitals and doctors. A doctor who in the course of his practice discovers that a person has caught a particular infectious disease, such as HIV, shall immediately notify this to the State Epidemiologist. From the commencement of registration until 30 June 2000, the State Epidemiologist had been notified of a total of 136 HIV cases. In the past few years an average of one individual has been diagnosed as an HIV patient every one or two months. The final stage of the disease, AIDS, is seldom diagnosed. The number of fatalities due to AIDS has receded, obviously due to the treatment offered. Thus, only 50 AIDS cases have been reported to the Director General of Public Health, 10 from the beginning of 1995 to 30 June 2000. Only three persons in the age group 0-19 have been diagnosed as HIV patients until 30 June 2000.

The health authorities have been engaged in education on HIV infections and AIDS, protection and measures available, and attempts have been made to facilitate and increase access to antibody testing and counsel. Education on sexuality and infectious diseases is also among the mandatory subjects of the school system. An association of persons concerned about AIDS has been active since 1988. The purpose of the association is to increase knowledge about and understanding of AIDS and provide support to patients and their families. It operates an information centre for the public and a sanctuary for infected persons, sick persons and family members. In addition to free contributions, the association receives support from the State, the City of Reykjavik, the Icelandic Red Cross, and the Association of the Disabled.

c) to overcome malnutrition, including by ensuring household food security and by developing strategies that include employment and income-generating opportunities; dissemination of knowledge; and support to increased food production and distribution;
According to the provisions of the Act on Municipal Social Services, No. 40/1991, each municipality is responsible, within its own boundaries, for organised social services designed to ensure financial and social security and promote the welfare of the inhabitants on the basis of mutual aid. This is to be achieved by improving the living conditions of the disadvantaged, ensure for children conditions of upbringing that promote their development, and render assistance and carry out measures to forestall social problems. Within the municipalities there are social committees in charge of social services and assistance, which shall be designed both to alleviate problems and prevent individuals and families from entering a situation where they can not manage their affairs. This may involve provision of counsel, financial assistance, housing assistance, or labour reference. Determined efforts have been made to reduce the number of Icelandic municipalities in order to make them more capable of rendering the necessary services to their inhabitants. Between 1994 and 2000, the number of Icelandic municipalities has been reduced from 196 to a total of 124.

According to the Child Protection Act, No. 58/1992, the municipalities also carry special responsibilities in ensuring acceptable conditions of upbringing for children. Child protection committees are active under the auspices of the country’s municipalities, and heavy emphasis has been placed on joint appointment of child protection committees by the smaller municipalities in order to strengthen the necessary services. Everyone is required by law to notify the child protection committee of any suspicion that a child’s situation is unacceptable, in which case the committee shall take appropriate measures. In the year 2000 there is a total of 56 child protection committees active in Iceland, having in main the following roles:

- to make proposals and recommendations concerning matters conducive to good conditions of upbringing, and draw attention to any social factors that may constitute a hindrance to this;
- to supervise the conditions offered children, keep track of their behaviour and the conditions of their upbringing in the purpose of discovering as early as possible the plight of those who may suffer unacceptable conditions, ill treatment, or social problems;
- to take the measures which are in each case deemed best suited and most feasible to ensure a child’s interests and welfare.

The Ministry of Social Affairs is in charge of matters concerning child protection, and is responsible for laying down policies in this field. In 1995 the Governmental Agency for child protection was established to take charge of day-to-day management of child welfare and co-ordination and promotion of child protection activities. The purpose of the Governmental Agency for child protection is to increase State services in this field and to strengthen the links with the State and State assistance to child protection committees.

In Iceland, various acts have been enacted concerning aspects of labour law. These provide for the fundamentals concerning the rights and duties of wage earners. They generally provide for minimum rights, declaring invalid any terms inferior to those provided for in law. Enacted law on labour matters generally is subject to the Ministry of Social Affairs, while implementation in particular fields is in charge of the subsidiary offices the Occupational Safety and Health Administration and the Directorate of Labour. The Directorate, governed by Act No. 13/1997 on Labour
Market Measures, is in charge of labour reference services in Iceland. Throughout the country there are labour reference offices whose functions include providing assistance to applicants for employment, providing information and counsel on jobs, careers and vocational training, assisting employers in finding suitable employees, and compiling and disseminating information on employment situations, unemployment and employment outlook. A separate Act, No. 12/1997, applies to unemployment insurance, according to which wage earners and self-employed persons who become unemployed are entitled to compensation from the Unemployment Insurance Fund subject to certain conditions.

d) to enhance the status of girls and women and ensure their full access to health, nutrition, education, training, credit, extension, family planning, pre-natal, delivery, referral and other basic serves;

i) Generally on equality
According to Article 65 of the Icelandic Constitution, No. 33/1944, as amended by Act No. 97/1995, everyone shall be equal before the law and enjoy human rights irrespective of sex, religion, opinion, ethnic origin, race, colour, property, family origin or other status. It is provided in particular that men and women shall enjoy equal rights in every respect.

On 28 May 1998 Parliament approved a four-year action plan to achieve equality between men and women. The guiding principle is that equality is to be integral to all aspects of policy-making, decisions and measures at State level, and it is particularly noted that formal or legal equality is inadequate if this does not lead to real equality in the life and activities of the members of both sexes. It is emphasised that equality is a matter for both men and women and that co-operation by men and women is a prerequisite for real success. The plan enumerates a multitude of individual responsibilities for the various government Ministries, among other things emphasising determined efforts in schools to secure equal rights of boys and girls, educating the students as regards the position of the sexes and preventing them from becoming confined to a traditional distribution of roles. The aim is to increase tuition in schools on equality and emphasise the strengths of both sexes, their duties and rights.

Act No. 96/2000 on Equal Status and Equal Rights of Men and Women replaced an older Act regulating the same matters since 1991. In enacting the Act particular attention was given to the obligations undertaken by Iceland on the basis of the EEA Agreement and the relevant directives of the European Union. Account was also taken of international agreements, the United Nations implementation plan approved in Beijing 1995, and the Nordic Co-operation Plan in matters of equality 1995-2000. The objective of the Act is to institute and maintain equal rights of, and equal opportunities for, men and women, thus making the position of the sexes equal in all fields. It is however stated that particular account taken of women as regards pregnancy and childbirth is not to be regarded as discrimination. The same also applies to special and temporary measures designed to improve the status of women or men in order to promote their equal rights. The basic viewpoint of the Act is that all persons shall have equal opportunities to enjoy their own abilities and develop their possibilities irrespective of sex.
In 1985 Iceland ratified the United Nations Convention of 1979 on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women. It may also be mentioned that in 2000 Iceland ratified ILO Convention No. 156 concerning Equal Opportunities and Equal Rights for Men and Women Workers: Workers with Family Responsibilities, of 1981.

**ii) Childbirth, etc**

In 1995 the Minister for Health and Social Security appointed a committee charged with examining the health status of Icelandic women, in particular with regard to the objectives of the World Health Organisation relating to determined efforts to reduce the frequency of health problems characteristic for women. In April 2000 the Ministry issued a report on the health status of women, indicating that the health status of women is in some respects inferior to that of men. The plan is to appoint a group charged with examining the possibilities for implementing the recommendations contained in the report in the coming five years.

Women generally have fewer children than before, and give birth later in their lives. The average number of children per woman is 2, and the average age of a mother is 29 years. In spite of this trend, births by girls under 20 years of age are more frequent in Iceland than in the other Nordic countries, as is the frequency of abortion. In 1975 an Act was issued on Counsel and Education Relating to Sexual Behaviour and Pregnancy, and publication and guidance efforts of various nature have increased continuously. The aim is to increase guidance still further. The Office of the Director General of Public Health has appointed a group of professionals to make within a brief span of time recommendations on measures to be taken in this context.

Natal and post-natal services to women have undergone very significant changes in recent years. Determined efforts have been made to increase continuity in the services provided and increase the options available to women, in order to improve the services rendered them and their families. The health of pregnant women is regularly monitored free of charge. A co-ordinated registry of mothers is maintained for all Iceland, which enables women to move between individual regions and undergo pre-natal inspections where it best suits them. A new Act, No. 95/2000, on Births and Parents’ Vacations, contains particular provisions to the effect that the safety and health of pregnant women, women who have recently given birth, and nursing mothers, shall be secured.

*e) to ensure support for parents and other care-givers in nurturing and caring for children; to prevent separation of children from their families and, where such separation takes place, to ensure appropriate alternative family care or institutional placement;*

According to the Children’s Act, No. 20/1992, the main rule is that a child’s parents have its custody. They shall discharge their duties as custodians and parents in the manner serving best the interests and needs of the child. Parents are responsible for supporting their children, i.e. for providing them with the necessities of life. Married or cohabiting parents have joint custody of their children, but if the parents are neither married to one another or cohabiting at the time of a child’s birth, only the mother has custody. In such a situation, as well as on separation or divorce, the parents can agree among themselves on joint custody. A child and a parent not having custody enjoy a mutual right of access.
Support of various kinds is provided to parents and families with children, for example under the Social Security Act, the Social Assistance Act and the Income Tax Act. It must be mentioned in particular that determined efforts have been made to increase the right of parents to birth vacation and parental vacation. A new Act on Childbirth Vacations and Parental Vacations, No. 95/2000, has been issued. This is to enter into effect 1 January 2000, and involves significant amendments. The objective of the Act is to ensure for a child the association with its father as well as mother, and make it possible for women as well as men to co-ordinate family life and employment. A separate Act, No. 27/2000, has been issued to prohibit terminations of employment on account of employees’ family responsibilities.

According to the Child Protection Act, No. 58/1992, the role of the family in relation to the upbringing of children shall be strengthened. Child protection committees are obligated to assist parents in discharging their parental responsibilities, while they shall take appropriate measures if necessary. General resources for the support of families shall, as a rule, be tried before resorting to coercive measures, such as depriving a parent of custody. A parent can only be deprived of a child’s custody subject to certain conditions, such as if the upbringing, day-to-day care or the parent’s interrelation with the child is seriously deficient or if the child suffers serious violence or mistreatment. Changes are now planned as regards the authority empowered to decide on deprivation of custody, for reasons that include bringing this into conformity with the final observations of the Committee for the Rights of the Child made following Iceland’s First Report. If placement of a child outside the home becomes necessary, proper care shall be secured for it without delay, for example in a foster home or treatment home.

f) to ensure priority for early childhood development; universal access to basic education; reduction of adult illiteracy; vocational training and preparation for work; and increased acquisition of knowledge, skills and values through all available channels;

i) Education generally

Schoolwork has changed considerably in Iceland during the past ten years. As noted previously, new acts of law on all four stages of the school system have entered into effect since 1994. The Ministry of Education is in charge of all education, lays down the policies to be followed within schools, issues general curricula and carries out control and supervision. New general curricula have been issued for all school stages. These were prepared on the basis of a new education policy, among the purposes of which is to meet the requirements for the education of children made by the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Equality among students is given heavy emphasis in all school work, and particular efforts are made to serve the needs of disabled students or those who are disadvantaged because of personal factors affecting their possibilities for study or by reason of emotional or social difficulties, and those whose native language is not Icelandic.

The OECD recently published *Education at a Glance 1998*, containing various information on education in the school year 1997-1998. This publication states that the educational level of Icelanders, counted in years, is high by comparison to other OECD countries. A five year old Icelander may expect to study for 17.7 years, placing Iceland sixth among 33 comparison countries. In the school year discussed in
In this publication the proportional amounts spent by Iceland for education were very close to the average among the OECD countries.

The following table shows Iceland’s public spending for education as a proportion of national product and in millions ISK, showing the increase in recent years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education expenditure, % of GNP</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>2.71</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>3.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
<td>1.46</td>
<td>1.32</td>
<td>1.42</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.65</td>
<td>0.72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>5.32</td>
<td>5.35</td>
<td>5.70</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Education expenditure, millions ISK</th>
<th>1996</th>
<th>1997</th>
<th>1998</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools</td>
<td>13,159</td>
<td>14,977</td>
<td>17,631</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secondary schools</td>
<td>7,081</td>
<td>7,015</td>
<td>8,352</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Universities</td>
<td>3,148</td>
<td>3,459</td>
<td>4,250</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**ii) Nursery schools**

Nursery schools are mainly run by the Icelandic municipalities. This is the case with a total of 230 of the 252 nursery schools active in Iceland in 1999. Nursery schools attend to the upbringing of children upon a request of their parents until the age of obligatory school attendance. Their staffs include persons specially trained in the upbringing of children. Nursery schools are open to children from when the childbirth vacation of their parents ends until the age of 6 years has been attained. Efforts are being made to increase the number of nursery schools and their professional staff in order to meet the increasing needs of parents for this service. A general curriculum for nursery schools, having a legal status similar to administrative provisions such as regulations, entered into effect in Iceland for the first time in 1999. The general curriculum presents a professionally prepared policy as regards the upbringing and educational role of nursery schools and the ways to achieve the goals set, placing the personal development and needs of the child in the centre. The following is an overview of the number of children attending Icelandic nursery schools on a daily basis in 1999:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information on nursery schools 1999</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Children in Iceland aged 0 – 5 years</td>
<td>25,788</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Children attending nursery schools aged 0 – 5 years</td>
<td>14,761</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- boys</td>
<td>7,611</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- girls</td>
<td>7,150</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In 1999, 24.1% of all children aged 0-2 years, and a total of 89.2% of children aged 3-5 years, attended nursery schools. The time of stay each day differs from four hours to more than eight hours.
iii) Primary schools

In Iceland, children at the age from 6 to 16 years are obliged to attend primary school (10 years). Obligatory school attendance in Iceland is free of charge, which means that tuition and study material is provided to the pupils without payment. Primary school administration underwent a significant change with the entry into effect of the new Primary School Act, No. 66/1995. Responsibility for primary schools was transferred from the State to the municipalities, with the result that local authorities now are in charge of the schools, including construction, administration and maintenance of the buildings themselves. The role of primary school is, in cooperation with the homes, to prepare the pupils for life and work in a democratic society. Primary school is to cultivate broadmindedness and further the pupils’ understanding of the conditions under which people live and their environment, and of the individual’s duties to society. There follows an overview of the number of pupils in Icelandic primary schools in 1999:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Information on primary schools 1999</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Pupils total</td>
<td>43,030</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- boys</td>
<td>22,105</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- girls</td>
<td>20,925</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Primary schools total</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The new Primary School Act provides that the school day at each primary school shall be of a single, continuous session, i.e. all the pupils in the same school are to attend school in the morning and stay at the school at the same time. This objective is expected to be attained in 2004. In 1999 this objective had been reached for 83% of all Icelandic primary schools. The plan is also to institute a continuous working day for all primary school children. As aimed for, the working week of all pupils of 10 years and older is to be at least 35-37 hours. With this, total time for tuition in the country’s primary schools will have been increased by 15% by comparison to the school year 1994-1995.

iv) Secondary schools

Secondary schools take over from primary schools in the Icelandic school system. Secondary schools are generally State schools. Secondary school studies last for four years, from the end of obligatory school attendance to the age of twenty. In 1999 nearly 20,000 students attended Icelandic secondary schools. Secondary school students are charged a registration fee and a payment for participation in student associations, amounting to some five to ten thousand ISK annually. The students must finance the purchase of study material on their own. Approximately 40 secondary schools are now active in Iceland. These are grammar schools, comprehensive schools, commercial schools, vocational schools, and multifarious special schools, such as an agricultural school, fishery school, engineer school, gardening school and nursery school.

The new Secondary School Act, No. 80/1996, lays down a clearer policy as regards secondary school work, its aims, organisation and methods. All students who have completed primary school or received a similar basic education are entitled to commence secondary school studies. Generally about 85 – 90% of those who finish primary school each year commence studies in secondary schools, but some of them
subsequently discontinue their studies. Annual secondary school attendance shall be at least nine months. The role of secondary schools is to encourage the overall personal development of the students in order to make them as well suited as possible for active participation in a democratic society. Secondary school prepares the students for employment in business and industry and for further studies, and shall seek to encourage responsibility, broad-mindedness, initiative, self-reliance and tolerance, train the students in self-discipline, independent work procedures and critical thinking, and enable them to enjoy cultural values and encourage them in a continual quest for knowledge. Among the objectives of the new Secondary School Act is to bring about a change in the supply of education and to emphasise the need to offer the study possibilities suitable for all students. The Act involves a new policy relating to vocational education at the secondary school stage. It is expected that business and industry will play an active role as regards proposals and policy formation, as a forum is created for co-operation between the business and teaching communities for supply of vocational training.

A new Act, No. 136/1997, has been issued on universities, which normally are State institutions. There are approximately 10 schools in Iceland at the university level, and in 1999 nearly 10,000 students attended university courses. The University of Iceland is the largest institution of this kind. Organised basic paths to first graduation are approximately 60 in number, the students number approx. 7000, and more than 800 students graduate each year.

v) Leisure, culture and access to information

According to the Primary School Act, pupils in all primary schools shall be offered the possibility of participating in leisure activities and social activities under the auspices of the school. This can either form a part of daily work in school, or take place outside normal school hours. One of the aims of social activities shall be to render the pupils better able to take part in social activities in society at large. Each municipality is obliged to ensure that children can enjoy sound conditions of upbringing suited to promote their development. Organised leisure activities are available in many places under the auspices of the municipalities. Many of them provide sports areas and social centres for children. There are very many sports associations in Iceland offering organised sports for children and adolescents, and the chief purpose of state and municipal involvement in sports is to promote that sports activities are available for all Icelanders under conditions as favourable as possible.

A new study subject, information technology, has been adopted according to the main curricula of the primary and secondary schools. It is emphasised that both boys and girls must acquire a solid knowledge of computers and modern information technology. Emphasis is also placed on information reading skills generally, i.e. the knowledge and ability necessary to obtain, classify, process and impart information in a critical and constructive manner. Information technology is made an independent study and is also integrated with other studies in order to emphasise that information reading skills also is a means to acquire knowledge and abilities in different fields on one’s own. It may be noted that the estimated number of Internet users in Iceland is approximately 50% of the population, which ratio is among the highest in the world.
g) to ensure special attention to children living under especially difficult circumstances; including by ending their exploitation through labour; and by combating drug, tobacco and alcohol abuse among young people;

i) Child welfare generally

As noted previously, a Child Protection Act, No. 58/1992, as later amended, is in effect in Iceland. The purpose of the Act is to ensure for children acceptable conditions of upbringing, to which end the decision expected to serve best the interest of the child shall generally be taken when considering a matter relating to a child’s welfare. This shall be done by supporting the family in its role of upbringing, and take measures for the protection of individual children when appropriate. If a child welfare committee reasonably suspects that the physical or mental welfare or development of a child may be in danger by reason of a parent’s negligence, incompetence or misconduct, or that a child endangers its health or development by its conduct, the committee has the duty of examining the matter at once and take the appropriate measures. Such measures may, for example, involve guidance and counsel to parents; the appointment of a supervisor or personal councillor for a child or a family; support or treatment for a child; treatment for a parent, or the placement of a child outside the home. Child protection committees shall have available means for receiving children by reason of the conditions in their homes. The Ministry for Social Affairs shall also ensure that specialised treatment facilities or institutions are available for receiving children who endanger their health or development by their own conduct, such as substance abuse, crime, or serious behavioural deficiencies. In 1999 child protection committees involved themselves with a total of 2,958 children under the provisions of the Child Protection Act. The establishment of the Governmental Agency for child protection marked an important step in strengthening child protection in Iceland and co-ordinating the work of the child protection committees. The chief roles of the Governmental Agency for child protection is to provide counsel to the child protection committees and supervise their activities, in addition to being in charge of the relevant homes and institutions run by the State.

ii) Use of tobacco, alcohol and illicit drugs

In recent years great advances have been made in the struggle against use of alcohol and illicit drugs by children, as very many public institutions have joined forces with the non-governmental organisations concerned.

Local authorities are obliged to organise preventive work among young people, and the State is responsible for maintaining treatment homes for children afflicted by drugs or alcohol. Significant changes were made to the system of state-operated institutions and treatment homes in 1995, in the purpose of increasing the number of treatment alternatives and improve utilisation of the available facilities. The number of places available for treatment and diagnosis has increased continuously in recent years, from a total of 41 in 1996 to a total of 70 in 2000.

The private organisation SÁÁ (Icelandic abbreviation for Association of Persons Concerned About the Alcohol and Illicit Drugs Problem) has for many years offered treatment for persons dependent on alcohol or substance abuse at the Vogur Hospital, and provided rehabilitation wards. A prevention department was established in 1995, where emphasis is placed on co-operation with municipalities in preventive work for the benefit of young persons. In 1998 a co-operation agreement was
concluded between the Ministry for Health and SÁÁ’s prevention department concerning prevention. The aim of this project is to unify municipalities, State institutions, private organisations, schools, students, parents and other interested parties in determined prevention work within each municipality by professional counsel, assistance and support. In 2000 SÁÁ opened a special treatment ward for young people.

In December 1996 the Government resolved to take various measures in the field of alcohol and tobacco prevention. The Government decided to take the initiative to bring together Ministries and institutions, police and customs, in co-operation with municipalities, associations and others, for co-ordination of reactions, measures and general action with a view to eliminating illicit drug use by children and reducing greatly their use of alcohol and tobacco. A part of this plan was to enter into co-operation with the City of Reykjavík and ECAD (European Cities Against Drugs) concerning the programme Drug-Free Iceland. A co-operation agreement was signed in February 1997, to be effective until 2002. The chief purpose of this co-operation is to unify the nation’s efforts against illicit drugs, strengthen prevention, and organise programmes and actions conducive to attain this goal.

Considerable changes were made to the Tobacco Prevention Act, No. 70/1984, by Act No. 101/1996. The purpose of these was to strengthen tobacco prevention in Iceland. The age limit for purchase of tobacco was raised from 16 years to 18 years. In the autumn of 2000 a bill was submitted proposing yet further changes, the purposes of which included reduction of smoking among children and adolescent persons. The bill recognises the right of people to a smoke-free atmosphere and mentions the right of children in this context in particular. The bill also re-emphasises the general prohibition of current law against smoking where services are provided to the public. Any use of tobacco is prohibited in primary schools and nursery schools, and in premises and among gatherings chiefly intended for young people.

A new Alcoholic Beverages Act, No. 75/1998, has been enacted as a part of changes of wider scope to matters concerning sale of alcoholic beverages and tobacco in Iceland. Act No. 76/1998 also established the Alcohol and Drug Abuse Prevention Council, the purpose of which is to strengthen and promote defences against alcohol and other inebriating substances with particular emphasis on prevention among children and adolescents. The Council is especially to promote co-ordination and co-operation among those active in this work, such as the health care service and health institutions, municipal social authorities, police authorities, the educational system, the criminal justice system, and private associations.

According to the Government’s policy declaration of May 1999, one if its aims during the election term is to prepare a plan for a particular action in the struggle against drugs of abuse in co-operation with parents and schools, non-governmental organisations in the field of prevention and treatment, municipalities, and sports and youth associations. The principal aims to be achieved are increased preventive measures, co-ordination of the work carried out by police and customs, and an increase in the number of treatment alternatives available for young drug abusers.

*iii*) *Criminality among children*
A criminal act committed by a child under 15 years of age comes under the purview of the child welfare authorities, and in such cases only the recourses available under the Child Protection Act can be employed. Children become responsible under criminal law at the age of 15 years, which means that and indictment can then be issued against them on account of a criminal act. The general procedural rules applying in criminal litigation brought against young persons in the age of 15-18 years are the same as in criminal litigation against older persons, and their cases are adjudicated by the general court system as any other criminal cases. Many provisions of the Code of Criminal Procedure, No. 19/1991, and of the General Criminal Code, No. 19/1940, however provide for special procedures to be employed in criminal litigation against young persons, on matters such as receiving statements from children, and particular considerations relating to issue of indictment and determination of penalty. There are no prisons in Iceland especially for young people in the age group 15-18 years. The Prison and Probation Administration and the Governmental Agency for child protection concluded a co-operation agreement in 1998, setting the aim that prisoners under 18 years of age would be detained in treatment homes run under the supervision and control of the Governmental Agency for child protection in accordance with the provisions of the Child Protection Act, No. 58/1992. This agreement is intended to serve the principles of the United Nations Conventions of the Right of the Child.

iv) Sexual violence against children
In the past one and a half decades, public discussion and debate on sexual violence or sexual advances against children, and assistance to children suffering such acts, has increased greatly within as well as outside the family. Concurrently great advances have been made in the investigation of such cases, chiefly in that public authorities evince more care and understanding in their relations with the victims during investigation. The sexual offences chapter, Chapter XXII, of the General Penal Code, No. 19/1940, contains many provisions designed to protect children against sexual violence, and such offences are subject to heavy penalties. The Code was amended by Act No. 126/1996 in the purpose of criminalising possession of material containing child pornography and thus increase the protection of children against sexual offences. Act No. 63/1998 introduced to the General Penal Code a special statute of limitation relating to sexual offences against children. Thus, the period in which criminal liability for certain sexual offences against children lapses only begins to run when the victim has attained the age of 14 years.

In 1997 Parliament was provided with various information on sexual offences against children. Various amendments were subsequently made to rules of procedure relating to sexual offences and services to children. This included an emphasis on cooperation between all concerned parties.

v) Child labour
Act No. 52/1997, amending Act No. 46/1980 on Conditions, Health Practices and Safety in the Workplace, introduced important changes to the rules governing child labour. These were introduced with a view to European Union Council Directive No. 94/33/EU on the protection of young people at work, and by particular reference to Article 32 paragraph 2 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Provisions are made concerning the age limits for work, hard labour is prohibited for children, and rules are introduced concerning working hours and rest periods. At the end of 1999
Iceland ratified ILO Convention No. 138 concerning Minimum Age for Admission to Employment. In May 2000 Iceland ratified ILO Convention No. 182 concerning Prohibition and Immediate Action for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour. Thus, Iceland is among the States having ratified all the fundamental conventions of the ILO.

**h) to ensure special protection of children in armed conflict and to build a foundation for a peaceful world by promoting the values of peace, tolerance, understanding and dialogue;**

Iceland has never had any domestic armed forces. Consequently no compulsory military service has been introduced, and no issues have been raised in that context. Warfare has never taken place on Icelandic ground. Iceland is a party to the Geneva Convention of 1949 relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War. In recent years Iceland has internationally advocated a prohibition of engagement of children under the age of 18 as soldiers, and during the 55th General Assembly in 2000 Iceland signed the Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict.

In Iceland, recent years have seen a continuous increase in emphasis on protection of human rights and human rights education. Important steps were taken by the new human rights chapter of the Icelandic Constitution and by the incorporation of the European Human Rights Convention into national law, as described previously. A particular emphasis is placed on human rights education within the school system.

A new mandatory study subject, life skills, has been introduced in primary school. In the section on life skills in the general curriculum it is noted that Icelandic educational authorities must, according to law and Iceland’s various domestic and international commitments, provide various education to children not coming under the traditional subjects of study. A reference is made in this regard to Article 26 of the United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, and the Act on the Equal Status and Equal Rights of Men and Women. The subject of life skills is intended to serve these requirements and meet the demands for an increased role of schools in the upbringing of children. The subject tackles aspects related to participation in a democratic society and being part of a family. Christianity, ethics and religion are also mandatory subjects in primary schools. The objective of these subjects of study is to promote tolerance and open-mindedness.

Life skills is also a mandatory subject in secondary school. At that school level it involves aspects promoting the students’ abilities to live in a democratic society and their understanding of society. Having studied this subject the student is expected to have obtained an overview of his society enabling him to understand and respect the chief societal institutions concerned with general public welfare and their roles, have acquired an international awareness, and know the chief international human rights agreements and resolutions.

**i) to prevent the degradation of the environment by pursuing the World Summit goals, by inculcating respect for the natural environment, and by changing wasteful consumption patterns;**
Recent years have witnessed great changes to the Icelandic public attitude to matters concerning the environment. This is not only manifested by the increased public discussion on the environment, but also in action and tangible results. As an indication of good public participation, over 80% of single-use packaging for beverages are now being returned for recycling, which is a ratio exceeded in few other countries. Some companies in various places in Iceland now conduct their business to a greater or lesser extent by processing waste classified by individual persons or other companies.

A Ministry for the Environment was established in 1990. This enabled public authorities to form and implement a comprehensive policy in environmental matters. The purpose of having a separate Government Ministry for environmental affairs is to strengthen environmental protection, promote co-operation among Ministries and institutions concerned with environmental affairs, and promote active Icelandic participation in international co-operation in matters concerning environmental protection.

Following the United Nations World Conference on Environment and Development held in Rio de Janeiro in 1992, a report was published with the title "On the Way to Sustainable Development". This must be regarded as the first time a comprehensive policy on environmental affairs was set forth in Iceland. A conference on the environment was held in Iceland in 1996 with the objective of achieving the best possible societal accord on an ambitious environmental implementation plan. This led to the Government’s decision in 1997 on an implementation plan for sustainable development in Icelandic society, which means taking environmental needs and the interests of later generations into account in all decision making and in man’s relations with nature.

In 1997 the Government also laid down an environmental policy to be followed in the activities of the State. The incentive for this was a resolution of the environmental Ministers of the OECD in March 1996. There, the Member States were urged to integrate environmental considerations with the general activities of the State, including decision-making. The objective of an environmental policy in State operation is to bring the activities of the State into harmony with environmental protection and sustainable development so as to diminish pollution and strain on resources and the environment. Protection of the environment is to be kept in view in all aspects of management and decision making.

j) to address poverty and debt; mobilise development finance; halt the net transfer of resources from developing to developed countries; establish an equitable trading system; and ensure children are given priority in economic and social development

The Icelandic national economy is now stronger than ever, and the economic situation is fundamentally good. Economic growth has averaged close to 5% since the middle of the nineties, and the inflation rate has been low. The purchasing power of the homes has increased hand in hand with economic growth and is likely to become approximately 23% greater in 2000 than it was in 1995. Simultaneously jobs have increased by 15,000, and unemployment has gone down from 5% of the labour force to 1.5%. A change in State finances has turned a deficit into a surplus. In the past three years the State Treasury surplus has chiefly been used to reduce debt, with the
result that net debt as a proportion of national product has been reduced in this period from more than 32% to 14%. In this regard, this conspicuous success has placed Iceland in the forefront among comparable States.

This positive development traces its roots to a sound economic environment and a stability, which has caused a new growth in many branches of business and industry. Market improvements, increased competition and clearer rules have brought about a greater productivity and a broader production basis. It should especially be noted that new industries in fields such as high technology biochemistry and software production have achieved immense results within the scope of a few years.

Recent economic research has demonstrated that there are significant relationships between economic success on the one hand and research and development activities on the other. The Government’s policy declaration places much emphasis on the role of research and development in industrial innovation. Industrial policy and educational and cultural policy are continuously becoming more entwined in the information society characteristic for modern Iceland. Thus the Government has emphasised industries based on knowledge and education, such as arts and culture. Between 1995 and 1999 public appropriations to research and development increased by nearly 38% at a fixed price level, and private parties have become much more involved in this field.

The growth in the economy in recent years has resulted in considerable strain on the economic system. Two factors are the most important ones in this context. On the one hand inflation has been at the upper limit of the rate deemed acceptable, and, on the other, the trade deficit has increased much. Among the principal tasks of Icelandic economic management in the next one or two years will be to lay the foundations for a reduction of Iceland’s trade deficit. The policy of the Icelandic Government is to evince great restraint in fiscal and monetary matters in order to reduce strain on the national economy. It is clear, in the light of this policy, that economic growth will not remain as great in the near future as it has been in recent years.

E. Lessons Learnt - Summary of key factors that have inhibited or enabled progress for children

- As noted previously, immense changes have occurred within all fields relating to the status of children in the decade from 1990 to 2000. It is safe to infer that the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child has been instrumental in bringing about the change of attitude that has occurred with the Icelandic nation in this period. Emphasis on the rights of children is now conspicuously apparent in legislation and in the exercise of public functions as well as in the activities of non-governmental organisations and private parties, and is clearly reflected in public discussion.
- The increased emphasis on policy formation in matters concerning the family has had a positive influence for the status of children in society. This is in particular shown by increased support to families with children and support to parents, emphasis in matters concerning equal rights, and labour market measures designed to take family responsibilities into account.
- The status of children within particular fields has been given particular emphasis and attention. This has led to research, proposals and active measures in very
many instances. As examples one may mention children with psychiatric disorders, children suffering from long term diseases, disabled children, and children who have suffered sexual violence. Action of various kinds has been taken in the context of alcohol or substance misuse by children, and reforms in the field of child criminality is in preparation. Increased emphasis has been placed on the status of children contending with specific problems within the school system, and of children having native languages other than Icelandic.

- In spite of the advances made in policy formation and co-operation in matters concerning children, it is still necessary to improve further the co-ordination between the different Government Ministries and other public authorities involved in these matters.
- Non-governmental organisations guarding the interests of children in one way or another have increased in number and become stronger in recent years. They have placed heavy emphasis on the need for increased appropriations from public funds in order to make it possible to carry out further projects for the benefit of children, and provide better services than done until now. This criticism keeps the attention of the public authorities to their tasks and encourages an ongoing revision of whether public expenditure for these matters can be increased still further.

F. Future Action - Recommendations for future national and international action

a) National action

- Carry out further policy work in matters concerning children and increase co-operation among public authorities. Finalise the government’s family policy and encourage the local authorities of all municipalities to formulate policies in matters concerning the family.
- Review and assess on a regular basis whether public financial appropriations to the fields of greatest interest to children can be increased. Seek to improve services and assistance as possible.
- Place emphasis on equal rights; in particular to even out the difference in wages and salaries paid men and women, and differences in family responsibilities.
- Analyse, assess and take further measures relating to children with special needs, for example by carrying out the proposals that have been made on those matters. Carry out the projects planned in the fields of health care, defence against alcohol, tobacco and substance abuse in all areas, and protection of the environment. Monitor carefully the implementation of the new school policy and assess the effects of the transfer of responsibility for primary school from the State to the municipalities. Adhere in other respects to the policy declaration of the Government now in office.
- Collect data on the status of children in an organised manner. Conduct research and assess the results of individual actions taken.
- Aim to increase co-operation with non-governmental organisations, parents and private parties relating to projects designed to increase services to children and improve their status.
- Exercise economic restraint in order to prevent further strain on the economy.

b) International action
• Encourage and remain active in extensive international co-operation, emphasising human rights, the rights of the child, and peacekeeping.
• Keep an eye on the implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Give particular consideration to strengthening the Committee on the Rights of the Child established by the Convention in order to enable it to carry out its control function in a firm and regular manner.
Indicators for Monitoring Progress at End-Decade

WSC goal 1.
- Under-five mortality rate 5,4
- Infant mortality rate 4,1

WSC goal 2.
- Maternal mortality rate 0,0

WSC goal 3.
- Underweight prevalence No information available
- Stunting prevalence No information available
- Wasting prevalence No information available

WSC goal 4.
- Use of safe drinking water 100% piped water

WSC goal 5.
- Use of sanitary means of excreta disposal 100% have toilets connected to sewage system

WSC goal 6.
- Children reaching grade 5 100%
- Net primary school enrolment ratio 100%
- Net primary school attendance 99%
- Proportion entering school 100%
- Learning achievement ~ 80% of students in grade 4 score more than 5 (out of 10 possible) on a standard test in Icelandic and math

WSC goal 7.
- Literacy rate 100%

WSC goal 8.
- Total child disability rate 4,3%

WSC goal 9.
- Under-five mortality rate: M: 6,1 F: 4,6
- Underweight prevalence: No information available
- Antenatal care No information available
- HIV prevalence: M: 0.15% F: 0,05%
- Iron-deficiency anaemia No information available

WSC goal 10.
- Contraceptive prevalence No information available
- Fertility rate for women 15 to 19: No information available
- Total fertility rate: 2.05

**WSC goal 11.**
- Antenatal care: 100%
- Childbirth care: 100%
- Obstetric care: No information available

**WSC goal 12.**
- Birthweight below 2.5 kg: 5.5%

**WSC goal 13.**
- Iron-deficiency anaemia: No information available

**WSC goal 14.**
- Iodized salt consumption: 100%
- Low urinary iodine: 0%
- Goitre in schoolchildren: 0%

**WSC goal 15.**
- Children receiving vitamin A supplements: No information available
- Mothers receiving vitamin A: No information available
- Low vitamin A: No information available
- Children with night blindness: No information available
- Night blindness in pregnant women: No information available

**WSC goal 16.**
- Exclusive breastfeeding rate: ~30%
- Timely complementary feeding rate: No information available
- Continued breastfeeding rate: ~15%
- Number of baby-friendly facilities: No information available

**WSC goal 17.**
Infant growth is monitored on a regular basis and growth monitoring is included in primary school health care

**WSC goal 18.**
See report D.c)

**WSC goal 19.**
- Palio cases: 0

**WSC goal 20.**
- Neonatal tetanus cases: 0
WSC goal 21.
- Under-five deaths from measles 0
- Under-five measles cases No information available

WSC goal 22.
- DPT immunization coverage 99%
- Measles immunization coverage 98%
- Polio immunization coverage 99%
- TB immunization coverage 0% (tuberculosis test done on all children)
- Neonatal tetanus protection 100%

WSC goal 23.
- Under-five deaths from diarrhoea No information available
- Diarrhoea cases No information available
- ORT use No information available
- Home management of diarrhoea No information available

WSC goal 24.
- Under-five deaths from acute respiratory infections (ARI) No information available
- Care seeking for acute respiratory infections No information available

WSC goal 25.
- Dracunculiasis cases No information available

WSC goal 26.
89.2% of all children age 3-5 attend preschool in Iceland

WSC goal 27.
See report D.f)

Additional indicators for monitoring children's rights
- Birth registration 100%
- Children's living arrangements No information available
- Orphans in households No information available
- Child labour ~ 20% of children age 13-14 work for pay during the school year and a higher percentage during school holidays. Other information not available.

Additional indicators for monitoring IMCI initiative and malaria
- Home management of illness No information available
- Care seeking knowledge ~ 100 %
- Bednets Not relevant
- Malaria treatment Not relevant

Additional indicators for monitoring HIV/AIDS
- Knowledge of preventing No information available
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of misconceptions of HIV/AIDS</td>
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<tr>
<td>Knowledge of mother-to-child transmission of HIV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude to people with HIV/AIDS</td>
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<td>Women who know where tested for HIV</td>
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<tr>
<td>Attitude toward condom use</td>
<td>No information available</td>
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<tr>
<td>Adolescent sexual behavior</td>
<td>Median age at birth of first child is 24.6</td>
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