

**Sexual Exploitation of Children in Panama**  
**Submission**  
for the Universal Periodic Review of the Human Rights situation in Panama

Submitted by

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*ECPAT International is a global network of civil society organisations working for the eradication of all forms of sexual exploitation of children. For the past 29 years, ECPAT has acted as the international watchdog, monitoring States' response to sexual exploitation of children, and advocating for robust international measures to protect children from sexual exploitation. ECPAT International currently has 111 network members operating in 97 countries.*

## **Justification for submission**

1. The purpose of the present submission is two-fold: (1) to serve as an update on the progress that has been made by the Government of Panama (GoP) to end the sexual exploitation of children (SEC) in the country, and (2) to assess the level of implementation of the UPR recommendations relating to SEC made in 2015.<sup>1</sup>
2. During Panama's previous UPR in 2015, the report of the Working Group contained 23 recommendations related to children's rights<sup>2</sup> of which 6 are directly related to SEC.<sup>3</sup> One of these recommendations addressed SEC in general,<sup>4</sup> two specifically expressed the need to combat child marriage<sup>5</sup> and three addressed issues relating to child trafficking.<sup>6</sup>

## **Methodology and Scope**

3. The content of this report is based on desk research by ECPAT International.
4. The scope of this report is limited to SEC and its different manifestations, including exploitation of children in prostitution,<sup>7</sup> online child sexual exploitation (OCSE), child sexual abuse materials (CSAM),<sup>8</sup> child trafficking for sexual purposes, sexual exploitation of children in the context of travel and tourism (SECTT)<sup>9</sup> and child, early and forced marriage (CEFM).

## **Current status and developments of sexual exploitation of children in Panama**

5. The Republic of Panama (hereinafter 'Panama') is a country in Central America, bordered by Costa Rica to the west and Colombia to the southeast. According to the latest available UNICEF estimates, in 2016 Panama had a population of 4,034,000 people, out of which approximately 32.8% (1,324,000) were children.<sup>10</sup>
6. Poverty specially affects children and, as of 2018, 32.8% of the children population in Panama live in poverty.<sup>11</sup> Inequality may affect children vulnerable to discrimination such as the Afro-Panamanian and indigenous children and children with disabilities, due to disparities in access to health care, education and other basic services.<sup>12</sup>
7. High investment, improvements in productivity, a vibrant financial services sector and a flourishing service sector, bolstered by the recent expansion of the Panama Canal and the Colón free trade zone, have all contributed to the growth of the Panamanian economy.<sup>13</sup> The rapid economic expansion and the consolidation of Panama as a business paradise, recreation centre and popular tourist destination, coupled with high levels of income inequality and a large proportion of children living in poverty could lead to child sexual exploitation.<sup>14</sup>
8. In Panama, social tolerance towards sexual relations between adult men and adolescents, a culture of silence surrounding sexual abuse within the family, discriminatory gender stereotypes and the reticence of politicians and some sectors of society to include sexual education in school curricula due to religious restrictions, are all factors that can hamper the protection of children's rights<sup>15</sup> and may contribute to SEC in the country.

9. Data regarding **exploitation of children in prostitution** is scarce, but the relevant data has to be considered with the limitation of the 'clandestine' nature of the act. The existence of this phenomenon is indicated by the figures from prosecution authorities<sup>16</sup> and accounts from sex workers, who indicated, in the framework of a 2019 survey, that it is relatively common to start working in the prostitution sector from a young age.<sup>17</sup>
10. Research indicates that Panama is a destination country for trafficking victims due to its outstanding economic development, a minimum salary that is overall higher in comparison to other countries in the region, together with an increasing demand of non-qualified labour in the service sector which makes it attractive for migrants.<sup>18</sup> Data on the **trafficking of children for sexual purposes** is scarce and mostly is included in regional overviews and not disaggregated by age.
11. Research indicates a link between **SECTT** and trafficking for sexual exploitation in the region related to growth in tourism.<sup>19</sup> A recent perception study conducted by UNICEF Panama and Panamanian NGO Casa Esperanza concluded that although the tourism industry in the selected locations is not identified as directly promoting SEC, respondents perceived foreign and domestic tourists as the primary offenders and identified nightclubs and public spaces such as beaches and parks as the main places where sexual exploitation takes place.<sup>20</sup>
12. In Latin America, Internet access and use has sharply increased in recent years.<sup>21</sup> Furthermore, Latin Americans are strongly engaged with social networking.<sup>22</sup> Panama aligns with these trends. According to recent statements from UNICEF Panama, victim identification in **CSAM** cases is a challenge for the Office of the Prosecutor, and therefore there is a big gap between the number of reports and the number of identified victims for these crimes.<sup>23</sup>
13. Regarding **child marriage**, according to the latest available evidence from 2013, 6.2% of women between 15 and 49 in Panama were married before the age of 15 and 25.6% of women between 20 and 49 were married before 18.<sup>24</sup> Although data on the exact number of unions each year is not available, these numbers indicate that the practice still occurs in the country. Unregistered unions form a great source of concern.<sup>25</sup>

## **Legislative framework**

### *Child rights framework and SEC*

14. The main law that deals with SEC-offences is the Criminal Code,<sup>26</sup> as amended in 2004 by the law on the prevention and elimination and categorization of crimes against sexual freedom and integrity (Law 16 of 2004).<sup>27</sup>

### *Exploitation of children in prostitution*

15. The age of sexual consent is 14.<sup>28</sup> The Criminal Code also criminalises the use of an advantageous situation to achieve sexual intercourse with a child between 14 and 18, even if

consensual.<sup>29</sup> One concerning aspect of the legislation is that in cases of sexual intercourse with a child aged between 14 and 18, when one of the individuals is in a position of advantage, penalties can be three times lower compared to those provided for children under 14 years of age.

16. Although the Criminal Code does not provide a definition of exploitation of children in prostitution, the provisions of the Criminal Code (Art. 180, 182 and 186) are in line with the OPSC and minimum international standards.

#### Online child sexual exploitation (OCSE) and child sexual abuse materials (CSAM)

17. The Criminal Code criminalises conduct related to the production, distribution, dissemination, offering, trading and possession of CSAM/CSEM, including simulated or virtual material, in line with the OPSC.<sup>30</sup>
18. Article 187 could be interpreted as including other OCSE-related conduct such as online advertisement of exploitation of children in prostitution, online live-streaming of child sexual abuse, online sexual solicitation or grooming and the exposure of children to pornographic material. Nevertheless, there is no definition in the Criminal Code of ‘pornographic material’, ‘pornography’ or ‘obscene exhibitionism acts’.

#### Sale and Trafficking of children for sexual purposes

19. The Law on Human Trafficking criminalises all types of trafficking including those aimed at sexual exploitation.<sup>31</sup> This law added a separate chapter to the Criminal Code on human trafficking crimes, not specifically focused on trafficking of children but containing more severe punishments for cases involving child victims.
20. Although the definition of trafficking is mostly in line with the Palermo Protocol, there is disparity in the penalties when it comes to similar conduct of trafficking of children for sexual purposes.

#### Sexual exploitation of Children in travel and tourism (SECTT)

21. Article 190 of the Criminal Code criminalises conducts related to SECTT.<sup>32</sup> Additional regulations on the topic are contained in the Law no.16 of 2004.<sup>33,34</sup>

#### Child, early and forced marriage

22. In 2015, Panama amended the Family Code and raised the minimum legal age to marriage to 18 years for both boys and girls.<sup>35</sup> However, if a marriage is celebrated and one of the parties is under 18, the union is considered valid anyways and it is only the marital contract regarding property transfers and inheritance that is declared invalid.<sup>36</sup>

## Extra-territorial jurisdiction and extradition

23. Regarding specific extraterritorial provisions on SEC-related crimes, Article 14 of Law 16 of 2004, which added a number of new offences to the Criminal Code,<sup>37</sup> states that Panamanian courts will have jurisdiction over these crimes when committed abroad if the product of the crime or any of its constitutive elements are committed or produces effects in Panamanian territory.<sup>38</sup>
24. The Criminal Procedure Law, which establishes the rules for extradition in those cases not regulated by a bilateral or multilateral treaty,<sup>39</sup> specifies the double criminality requirement in passive extradition cases, which means that the offender can be extradited only if the crime he/she committed was prohibited in both his/her country of origin and in the country where the crime was committed.<sup>40</sup>

### **Recommendations to the GoP**

- Amend article 176 of the Criminal Code so that penalties for sexual intercourse with a minor between 14 and 18 when the adult is in a position of responsibility towards the child are equated to those prescribed for sexual intercourse with children under 14;
- Amend article 182 of the Criminal Code increasing the penalties when the crime of obtaining a profit from a person submitted to sexual servitude is committed against a child;
- Amend articles 184, 185 and 187 of the Criminal Code to specifically criminalise conducts related to online child sexual exploitation such as grooming, live streaming of sexual abuse and online sexual extortion using the right terminology. Alternatively, approve the bill on cybercrime, addressing the afore-mentioned issue and providing a definition for “pornography”, “pornographic material” and “obscene exhibitionism acts” that includes all possible representations (photographs, video, drawings, audio, live performances, etc.);
- Amend the Criminal Code so that conducts similar to trafficking of children for sexual purposes, such as exploiting children in prostitution and the sale of children for sexual purposes carry more severe penalties, similar to those provided for the crime of trafficking of children for sexual purposes;
- Criminalise informal unions in which one of the parties is a child.

## **Implementation**

### National Action Plans and overall Strategies

25. In 2008, the National Commission for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation Crimes (CONAPREDES) adopted the “National Plan for the Prevention and Elimination of Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Boys, Girls and Adolescents 2008-2010”,<sup>41</sup> which has reportedly been extended indefinitely while a new plan is being drafted for the period 2019-2025.<sup>42</sup>
26. The National Commission against Trafficking of Persons has recently approved a new National Plan on Human Trafficking for the period 2019-2022.<sup>43</sup>

27. In 2018, the National Inter-Sectoral Committee for the Prevention of Violence against Children (CONIPREVINNA), together with UNICEF, presented a multi-sectorial national strategy and an action plan for the prevention of violence against children and adolescents.<sup>44</sup>

#### Coordination and Evaluation

28. The main body which specifically coordinates policies and measures against the sexual exploitation of children is CONAPREDES.<sup>45</sup>

29. Concerning trafficking, the Ministry of Public Safety coordinates the National Commission against Trafficking of Persons, the main technical administrative body dealing with the coordination of trafficking policies at the national level.<sup>46</sup>

30. The National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family (SENNIAF), under the auspices of the Ministry of Social Development (MIDES), is the main child protection body in Panama and coordinates public policies in relation to child rights.<sup>47</sup>

31. CONIPREVINNA was created in 2014 within SENNIAF as a national coordination mechanism for the implementation of strategies, plans and actions for the prevention of violence against children.<sup>48</sup>

32. In April 2019, MIDES created the Children and Adolescents National Council, as a coordinating, proponent and advisory body of public policies dealing with children and adolescents and for the promotion and protection of children's rights.<sup>49</sup>

33. Despite the existence of a main body specifically dealing with SEC issues and a national plan on the topic, other bodies such as the National Commission on Human Trafficking, the National Secretariat for Children, Adolescents and Family, the National Inter-Sectoral Committee for the Prevention of Violence against Children, and the Children and Adolescents National Council also exist.

34. Despite the existence of a plethora of legal provisions and institutions, challenges remain regarding the coordination of child protection strategies.

#### **Recommendations to the GoP**

- Draft a new National Action Plan on SEC for 2019-2025.

#### **Prevention, awareness and education**

35. Different national bodies in Panama conduct prevention activities on SEC. The National Plan on SEC establishes as one of its prevention objectives to "reduce to zero the tolerance of SEC at the political and social level".<sup>50</sup> For the implementation of this objective, CONAPREDES, often in collaboration with SENNIAF, local NGOs, schools and other organizations, has conducted a number of prevention and awareness raising workshops, reaching a total of 7,412

persons directly sensitized and 3,375 indirectly sensitized in 2018.<sup>51</sup> Of the activities and projects conducted by CONAPREDES, 64% were prevention activities.<sup>52</sup>

## **Protection**

### National compliant mechanism

36. The Criminal Code establishes a legal obligation for everybody to report any situation or information that may amount to a SEC case, which makes the compliant mechanism accessible to everybody.<sup>53</sup> The Public Prosecutor's Office can initiate proceedings *ex officio*.<sup>54</sup>
37. Additionally, Panama has a number of 24-hour hotlines managed by government agencies where complaints can be made. However, none of these government agencies have reported the number of complaints received through the hotlines for cases of SEC.

### Child-sensitive justice

38. The Public Prosecutor's Office is the responsible body for victim protection and to ensure the victim's rights are respected during criminal proceedings.<sup>55</sup> Furthermore, the Public Prosecutors Office, with the assistance of UNODC, elaborated a Protocol for Victim and Witness Assistance in Sexual Crimes Proceedings, to be employed by the UPAVITs in their operations.<sup>56</sup> This protocol contains a number of provisions to protect the rights of child victims during the proceedings and ensure child-sensitive procedures.
39. There are a number of other provisions in the Panamanian domestic legislation that aim to protect the rights of child victims during criminal proceedings such as Article 333,<sup>57</sup> Article 738,<sup>58</sup> Article 818<sup>59</sup> and article 739.<sup>60</sup>

### Access to recovery and reintegration

40. SENNIAF is the national body dealing with attention to SEC victims. In 2018, SENNIAF provided attention services for 219 cases of child victims of violence and abuse, although it is unspecified how many of these were SEC cases.<sup>61</sup>
41. SENNIAF is in charge of supervising and monitoring the shelters for children (*casas hogar*) in the country, which are run by different NGOs.<sup>62</sup>

### Access to compensation

42. The Panamanian Criminal Code establishes that the civil liability deriving from criminal responsibility obliges the perpetrator to compensate the victim of the crime for all damages incurred.<sup>63</sup> There is no provision establishing the right of compensation to victims of other SEC manifestations apart from the ones provides in article 20 of law of 16 Of 2004.<sup>64</sup>

## **Recommendations to the GoP**

- Create specialised police and prosecution units for the investigation of crimes related to online child sexual exploitation and allocate budget to equip them with technology and specialized staff;



- Establish a shelter that provides specialised attention to child victims of sexual exploitation;
- Develop compensation mechanisms for victims of all forms of sexual exploitation of children, not just trafficking victims.

### **International Cooperation**

43. Since its adoption of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development in 2015,<sup>65</sup> Panama has established a coordinating body – the Inter-Institutional and Civil Society Committee for the Support and Follow-up of the SDGs– and a strategic framework to fulfil its commitments towards achieving the SDGs – Panama 2030.<sup>66</sup>

44. At the regional level, Panama is a member of the Inter-American Children’s Institute (IIN-OEA),<sup>67</sup> a Specialized Organization of the OAS, working on childhood and adolescence issues.

### **Recommendations to the GoP**

- Emphasise the need of including issues related to the sexual exploitation of children in Child Protection goals contained in the “Panama 2030” plan;
- Strengthen existing international police and judicial cooperation through multilateral, regional and bilateral arrangements.

### **Voices of the Child**

45. Although youth participation in decision-making processes is recognised in the youth (aged 15 to 29) policy framework, Panama still lacks an integral framework on child protection that aligns the current legislation and policies to the mandate and principles of the CRC, included the rights of all children to be heard and participate in decision-making processes.

46. Since 2017, SENNIAF has created three Consulting Councils of Children and Adolescents, in the districts of Colón, San Carlos and Panamá.<sup>68</sup> Whilst, in 2019 the Children and Adolescents National Council was created at the national level to give voice to the children in the country,<sup>69</sup> but no instances of specific participation mechanisms for child victims and survivors of SEC are available.

### **Recommendations to the GoP**

- Promote the inclusion of child protection and sexual exploitation of children as priority areas for dialogue, advocacy and programming in the Consulting Councils for Children at the local level and the Children and Adolescents National Council;
- Ensure that child victims have a meaningful role providing inputs for the revision of the next Strategic Plan for the Youth, which ends in 2019.

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- <sup>1</sup> Human Rights Council. (2015). [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Panama](#). A/HRC/30/7, 6 May 2015.
- <sup>2</sup> See Human Rights Council. (2015). [UPR of Panama – Second Cycle – Thematic List of Recommendations](#).
- <sup>3</sup> Human Rights Council. (2015). [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Panama](#). A/HRC/30/7, 6 May 2015, Recommendations 91.11,90.74,90.76,90.79,90.73,91.13
- <sup>4</sup> Human Rights Council. (2015). [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Panama](#). A/HRC/30/7, 6 May 2015, Recommendation 90.4
- <sup>5</sup> Human Rights Council. (2015). [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Panama](#). A/HRC/30/7, 6 May 2015, Recommendations 91.11,91.13
- <sup>6</sup> Human Rights Council. (2015). [Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review: Panama](#). A/HRC/30/7, 6 May 2015, Recommendations 90.76,90.79,90.73
- <sup>7</sup> In line with the recently and widely adopted Terminology Guidelines, ECPAT prefers the term “exploitation of children in prostitution” instead of “child prostitution.” ECPAT International (2016). [Terminology Guidelines for the Protection of Children from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse, Adopted by the Interagency Working Group in Luxembourg, 28 January 2016](#), 29. Bangkok: ECPAT.
- <sup>8</sup> In line with the recently and widely adopted Terminology Guidelines, ECPAT prefers the term “child sexual exploitation material” or “child sexual abuse material” instead of “child pornography.” Ibid., 39.
- <sup>9</sup> Ibid., 54.
- <sup>10</sup> UNICEF (2017), [The State of the World’s Children 2017: Children in a Digital World](#), UNICEF Publications, 176.
- <sup>11</sup> MIDES, MEF & INEC (2019), [Índice de Pobreza Multidimensional de Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes](#), 57.
- <sup>12</sup> Committee on the Rights of the Child (2018), [Concluding observations on the combined fifth and sixth periodic reports of Panama](#), para. 15; Human Rights Council (2014), [Report of the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples: The status of indigenous peoples’ rights in Panama](#).
- <sup>13</sup> IMF (2019), [IMF Country Report No. 19/11 – Panama](#), 4; BBC News (2012), [Panama Country Profile](#).
- <sup>14</sup> ECPAT International (2016), [Offenders on the Move: Global Study on Sexual Exploitation of Children in Travel and Tourism](#), 31.
- <sup>15</sup> SENNIAP and UNICEF Panama (2018), [Estrategia Nacional Multisectorial de Prevención de la Violencia Contra Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes 2018-2022 y Plan de Acción 2018-2019 República de Panamá](#), 35.
- <sup>16</sup> Office of the Public Prosecutor (2019), [Número de denuncias registradas a nivel nacional; por mes según delito contra la libertad e integridad sexual \(p\) del 1 de enero al 31 de mayo de 2019](#).
- <sup>17</sup> Escudero, I., Pérez, M. (2019), [Consideraciones de las trabajadoras sexuales que acuden a las clínicas de higiene social de las provincias de Panamá y Herrera, sobre el significado de la prostitución: alternativa económica o forma de violencia](#), 7.
- <sup>18</sup> Villalibre Fernandez, V. (2015), [Pesca humana. Captación de víctimas para la trata de personas en el contexto panameño](#), *Societas*, Vol. 17, no. 2, 137.
- <sup>19</sup> ECPAT International (2016), [Global Study on SECTT](#), 32.
- <sup>20</sup> UNICEF Panama and Casa Esperanza (2019), [Percepción de Explotación Sexual Comercial de Niños, Niñas y Adolescente en Áreas de Incidencia Turística](#), 68-69.
- <sup>21</sup> ECLAC (2017), [State of broadband in Latin America and the Caribbean](#), 7.
- <sup>22</sup> ComScore (2011), [The Rise of Social Networking in Latin America](#).
- <sup>23</sup> Agencia EFE (2019, Jul 13) [Aumentan significativamente las denuncias de abuso sexual a menores en Panamá](#).
- <sup>24</sup> Comptroller General of the Republic of Panama (2014). [Encuesta de Indicadores Múltiples por Conglomerados de Panamá 2013](#), 14, Panamá: Contraloría General
- <sup>25</sup> UNICEF Panama (2018, Apr 9), [América Latina y el Caribe: una década perdida en la reducción del matrimonio infantil](#).
- <sup>26</sup> [Criminal Code](#) (2007). [in Spanish: *Código Penal de Panamá*].
- <sup>27</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#) [in Spanish: *Ley No. 16 de 31 de marzo de 2004*].
- <sup>28</sup> [Criminal Code](#) (2007), art. 175.
- <sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 176.
- <sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 184.
- <sup>31</sup> [Law on Human Trafficking](#) (2011), art. 4.
- <sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 190.
- <sup>33</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), art. 30.
- <sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 31.

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- <sup>35</sup> [Law 30 of 2015](#), art. 2. [in Spanish: *Ley no. 30 de 5 de mayo de 2015 que modifica y deroga disposiciones del Código de la Familia*].
- <sup>36</sup> [Law 30 of 2015](#), art. 3.
- <sup>37</sup> Including corruption of minors, exploitation of children in prostitution, distribution and possession of child pornography and sexual exploitation of children in travel and tourism.
- <sup>38</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), Art. 14.
- <sup>39</sup> [Criminal Procedure Law](#) (2008), art. 516. [in Spanish: *Código Procesal Penal*].
- <sup>40</sup> *Ibid.*, art. 517.
- <sup>41</sup> CONAPREDES (2008), [Plan Nacional para la prevención y la eliminación de la explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes 2008 a 2010](#).
- <sup>42</sup> Government of Panama (2019), [Informe Inicial de la República de Panamá en virtud del artículo 12 del Protocolo Facultativo a la Convención de los Derechos del Niño relativo a la venta de niños, la prostitución infantil y la utilización de niños en la pornografía](#), para. 83.
- <sup>43</sup> National Commission against Trafficking in Persons (2018), [Plan Nacional contra la trata de personas de la República de Panamá 2017-2022](#).
- <sup>44</sup> SENNIAF and UNICEF Panama (2018), [Estrategia Nacional Multisectorial para la Prevención de la Violencia contra Niños, Niñas y Adolescentes 2018- 2022](#).
- <sup>45</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), art. 21.
- <sup>46</sup> [Law on Human Trafficking](#) (2011), art. 12.
- <sup>47</sup> SENNIAF (n. d.), [SENNIAF, La institución](#).
- <sup>48</sup> SENNIAF (n. d.), CONIPREVINNA.
- <sup>49</sup> MIDES (2019), [Decreto Ejecutivo no. 14 de 23 de abril de 2019 Por el cual se crea el Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y la Adolescencia](#).
- <sup>50</sup> CONAPREDES (2008), [Plan Nacional para la prevención y la eliminación de la explotación sexual comercial de niños, niñas y adolescentes 2008 a 2010](#), 27.
- <sup>51</sup> Direct sensitization refers to workshops that collected a list of signatures from participants. Indirect sensitization refers to awareness raising in open access events, fairs and through flyer distribution.
- <sup>52</sup> CONAPREDES (2019), [Informe de Gestion – enero a diciembre 2018](#), 56.
- <sup>53</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), art. 17.
- <sup>54</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), art. 12.
- <sup>55</sup> [Criminal Procedure Law](#) (2008), art. 20.
- <sup>56</sup> Office of the Public Prosecutor and UNODC (2015), [Protocolo de Atención Integral a Víctimas y Testigos de Delitos contra la Libertad e Integridad Sexual, por parte de la Unidad de Protección a Víctimas, Testigos, Peritos y demás Intervinientes en el Proceso Penal – UPAVIT, del Ministerio Público De Panamá](#).
- <sup>57</sup> Article 333 of the Family Code provides that where there are opposing interests between the parents and the child, the judge shall appoint a lawyer to represent the child; [Family Code](#) (1994), art. 333.
- <sup>58</sup> Article 738 establishes that the Ombudsman for Children (*Defensor del Menor*) be part of all proceedings concerning children; *Ibid.*, art. 735.
- <sup>59</sup> Article 818 states that in proceedings concerning minors, the child and their parents or legal representatives are allowed to communicate directly with the Judge or any other public official in the proceedings; *Ibid.*, art. 818.
- <sup>60</sup> Article 739 states that proceedings regarding children shall be confidential and only the parties, proxies, relatives, licensed lawyers and persons that, at the discretion of the judge, demonstrate a legitimate interest in the matter will have access to the proceedings; *Ibid.*, art. 739.
- <sup>61</sup> SENNIAF (2019), [Estadísticas Generales de Atención, diciembre 2018](#), 3.
- <sup>62</sup> MIDES (2009, Apr 21), [Executive Decree 26 of 2009](#), art. 4; UNICEF Panama (Jul 2019), *Personal Communication*.
- <sup>63</sup> [Criminal Code](#) (2007), arts 128 and 129.
- <sup>64</sup> [Law 16 of 2004](#), art. 20.
- <sup>65</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs (2015), [Decreto Ejecutivo No. 393](#).
- <sup>66</sup> CCND (2017), [Panamá 2030](#).
- <sup>67</sup> IIN-OEA (n. d.), [Member States](#).
- <sup>68</sup> SENNIAF (n. d.), [Consejos Consultivos de Niñez y Adolescencia](#).
- <sup>69</sup> MIDES (2019), [Decreto Ejecutivo no. 14 de 23 de abril de 2019 Por el cual se crea el Consejo Nacional de la Niñez y la Adolescencia](#).