

action plans which would include specific benchmarks to be achieved to give effect to minimum essential levels of enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights; called on states to promote the effective and wide participation of representatives of civil society in decision-making processes related to these rights; called on states parties to the ICESCR to submit their reports in a regular and timely manner and promote a national effort to ensure the participation of civil society in the preparation of their periodic reports and implementation of the Committee's recommendations; established a three-year mandate for a Special Rapporteur, with a focus on the right to education; requested the High Commissioner to urge all states parties to the ICESCR to submit their comments on the draft text for an optional protocol; and, expressed support for the efforts of the High Commissioner to implement the programme of action designed to increase the ability of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to assist governments in their reporting obligations and to increase its capacity to process and follow up on the examination of those reports.

The mandate of the Special Rapporteur on the right to education was defined in eight components:

1. to report on the status throughout the world of the progressive realization of the right to education, including access to primary education, and the difficulties encountered in the implementation of the right;
2. as appropriate, to promote assistance to governments in working out and adopting urgent plans of action, wherever they do not exist, to secure the progressive implementation, within a reasonable number of years, of the principle of compulsory free primary education for all;
3. to take account of gender considerations, in particular the situation and needs of girls, and promote the elimination of all forms of discrimination in education;
4. to make the reports available to the Commission on the Status of Women whenever they concern the situation of women in the field of education;
5. to develop a regular dialogue and discuss possible areas of collaboration with relevant UN bodies, agencies and international organizations in the field of education, including international financial institutions;
6. to identify possible types and sources of financing for advisory services and technical cooperation related to access to primary education;
7. to ensure coordination, to the extent possible, with the Sub-Commission's expert who is preparing a working paper on the right to education; and
8. to submit to the 1999 session of the Commission a report on activities related to the above mandate.

Resolution on human rights and extreme poverty

The resolution (1998/25) was adopted by roll call vote with 51 in favour, 1 opposed. The Commission, *inter alia*: expressed deep concern that extreme poverty continues to spread throughout the world, and its extent and manifestations are particularly severe in developing countries; stressed that in the Declaration and Programme of Action of the World Summit for Social Development governments committed themselves to the goal of eradicating poverty throughout the world; welcomed the launch of a plan of action by the Microcredit Summit (February 1997) to give people living in poverty, particularly women, access to credit for the promotion of self-employment by the year 2005; reaffirmed that extreme poverty and exclusion from society are a violation of human dignity requiring urgent national and international action for their elimination; reaffirmed that it is essential for states to foster participation by the poorest in the decision-making process in their communities; reaffirmed that it is essential for people living in poverty and vulnerable groups to be empowered to organize themselves and participate in all aspects of political, economic and social life; recalled that a better understanding is needed of what is endured by people living in poverty, including women and children, in order to ensure their protection against discrimination; called on states, intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations to continue to take into account the links between extreme poverty and human rights as well as the efforts to empower people living in poverty to participate in decision-making processes on policies affecting them; invited the human rights treaty bodies to monitor the application of human rights instruments and, when considering the reports of states parties, to take into account the question of extreme poverty and human rights; and, appointed an Independent Expert for two years to address the question of human rights and extreme poverty.

There are six components to the mandate of the Independent Expert:

1. evaluate the relationship between the promotion and protection of human rights and extreme poverty, including national and international measures to promote the full enjoyment of human rights by persons living in extreme poverty;
2. take into account, in particular, the obstacles encountered and progress made by women living in extreme poverty in terms of their enjoyment of fundamental rights;
3. make recommendations and, as appropriate, proposals related to technical assistance;
4. report on activities to the 1999 and 2000 sessions of the Commission and make those reports available to the Commission on Social Development and the Commission on the Status of Women;