

World Conference on Human Rights and other UN conferences and summits.

In terms of initiatives aimed at mainstreaming issues related to the status of women into UN activities, the report notes that cooperative and coordinated efforts between UN organs and bodies have focussed on: (a) prevention of and response to discrimination and violence against women; (b) creation of new frameworks for developing policy and programmatic initiatives to improve the status of women and support women's participation in political, economic, professional, social and cultural life; and (c) initiatives on the development and empowerment of women, for example in support of increasing rural women's access to and control of productive resources and services as well as their role in decision-making, labour, finance, and education.

With regard to children, the report notes that a number of governments have adopted plans of action aimed at protecting children, particularly those who have a disability, are orphans or are living without adequate housing or supervision. Health issues affecting children, including AIDS and female genital mutilation, have also been addressed by national programmes as well as by UN agencies and programmes.

The report recalls that the World Conference identified a strong programme of advisory services and technical cooperation as a major contribution to building national capacities and improving respect for human rights and notes that since 1993 the number of activities carried out annually under the programme has more than tripled, involving 25 countries as of 20 February 1998. Key elements in the programme include: the promotion of democratic institutions, advice on development and human rights; human rights training and support to parliament, the judiciary, the police, the military and prison officials; assistance in establishing a constitutional framework; legislative reform and the administration of justice; the establishment and strengthening of national human rights institutions; the human rights aspects of free and fair elections; the promotion of human rights education; and support to non-governmental organizations and other civil society institutions.

Parallel to the OHCHR programme of technical assistance and advisory services, a number of UN agencies and programmes are also responding to the growing demand from governments for assistance in human rights-related areas, including: implementation of specific human rights standards (e.g., ILO); drafting and implementing national legislation; assistance in governance, rule of law and the strengthening of civil society; and eliminating developmental obstacles to the full enjoyment of human rights, as, for example, poverty or food shortages.

### **Resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights**

Under agenda item 21, the Commission adopted by consensus a resolution on comprehensive implementation of

and follow-up to the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (1998/78). The Commission, *inter alia*: stated that the promotion of universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms is a main priority of the UN; stated that in the review of the implementation of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action special attention should be paid to assessing the progress towards the goal of universal ratification of international human rights treaties and protocols; recognized that the interdependence of democracy, development and respect for human rights requires a comprehensive and integrated approach to the promotion and protection of human rights; reaffirmed the importance of the promotion of universal respect for and observance and protection of all human rights and fundamental freedoms in accordance with the UN Charter; recognized that the international community should devise ways and means to remove current obstacles and meet the challenges to the full realization of all human rights and to prevent the continuation of human rights violations resulting from those obstacles; underlined the need to give particular attention to human rights for women and girls in the five-year review of the VDPA and to take into account that gender mainstreaming is a key strategy for achieving equality between women and men and the full enjoyment of all human rights by women; and urged all states and the UN system to give widespread publicity to the VDPA, in particular in the context of the public information and human rights education activities for the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration.

### **Report of the High Commissioner for Human Rights**

The High Commissioner's final report on follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights (A/53/372) contains information on, *inter alia*: the universality of human rights; international cooperation and coordination of human rights activities; democracy, development and human rights, and the right to development; racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and other forms of intolerance; equal status and human rights of women; rights of the child; special protection; response to acute human rights violations; advisory services and technical assistance; education and public information; and implementation of human rights. Statistical data are also provided on: increases in ratifications of the human rights treaties since the World Conference on Human Rights; ratification of optional communications procedures; voluntary and trust funds in the field of human rights; technical cooperation programmes and budgets; the number of communications received by the extra-conventional mechanisms established by the Commission on Human Rights; individual communications to conventional procedures (treaty bodies); the growth in extra-conventional mechanisms (special rapporteurs, representatives, independent experts and working groups, 1995-1998); and OHCHR presences in the field, 1991-1998.

Based on information received from governments related to implementation of the VDPA, the report notes a