

which an Independent Women's Institute and a National Office for the Defence of Women's Rights were to be established; incorporation of a gender perspective in the Eighth National Plan, and the preparation of a national programme for women with that perspective; promulgation of legislation guaranteeing that pregnant teenagers can complete their education and can not be withdrawn from school because of their pregnancy; and, the cooperation initiated by the National Women's Council with non-governmental organizations and the creation of seven national women's networks.

Principal subjects of concern addressed by the Committee related to: the absence of any policies and programmes at the grass-roots level for promoting women's interests, and the fact that it was difficult to secure passage of legislative proposals for meeting women's needs; minimal real progress and lack of an effective response to problems such as domestic violence, prostitution, early pregnancy, female illiteracy, discrimination in the workplace in terms of how much women were paid, the high percentage of women receiving less than the minimum wage, and the elimination of stereotypes; failure of the government to make the necessary changes to its legal system to address patriarchal patterns of behaviour; failure to set up a national programme for implementing the strategies set out in the Beijing Platform for Action and lack of strategies even in such urgent priority areas as poverty eradication; reduction in health budgets, the rise in the maternal mortality rate, the lack of and limited access to family planning programmes (especially for teenagers), the lack of statistics on AIDS, and women's limited access to public health services; and a law which continues to criminalize abortion even in cases of incest or rape.

The Committee also expressed concern that: employment opportunities for women had been lost as a result of cutbacks in the state employment sector and that, as a consequence, women were being forced into the informal economy and into low-paid service jobs; the government had not given priority to the allocation of financial resources to social programmes; and, a man has the right to confer his nationality on his wife on marriage, but a woman does not have the right to confer her citizenship on her husband;

On the basis of these observations, the Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ implement effective programmes for combatting poverty, bearing in mind the disproportionate impact of poverty on women;
- ▶ adopt proposed amendments to the Penal Code and the Sexual and Domestic Violence Bill, and repeal the article of the Civil Code concerning citizenship;
- ▶ prepare and implement a programme to meet its commitments under the Beijing Platform for Action;
- ▶ undertake policies and programmes to halt the rise in the maternal mortality rate and develop family planning programmes for teenagers both in the urban and rural areas;
- ▶ undertake broad-based programmes, directed at the entire population, through the mass media and other possible channels, to combat gender stereotypes;
- ▶ pay particular attention to removing obstacles arising from stereotypes that result in women being paid 25 per

cent less than men for their work, despite the protection afforded by labour law, which recognizes the principle of "equal pay for equal work"; and,

- ▶ include in its next report statistical data disaggregated by sex with regard to all areas in the Convention.

#### **Torture**

Signed: 15 February 1985; ratified: 29 July 1991.

Venezuela's initial report was due 27 August 1992; the second periodic report was due 27 August 1996.

#### **Rights of the Child**

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 13 September 1990.

Venezuela's initial report (CRC/C/3/Add.54) has been submitted and is pending for the May/June 1999 session of the Committee; the second periodic report was due 12 October 1997.

*Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraphs (b) and (d) of article 21 and article 30.

### **THEMATIC REPORTS**

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

**Arbitrary detention, Working Group on:** (E/CN.4/1997/4, paras. 4, 5, 17; E/CN.4/1997/4/Add.1, Decision 26)

The main report notes that six cases and an urgent appeal on behalf of two persons were transmitted. The government responded to some of the cases but no details of the cases or responses were provided.

The case addressed by the Working Group (WG) concerned six individuals who had been detained but were released. The WG considered that no further action was necessary.

**Disappearances, Working Group on enforced or involuntary:** (E/CN.4/1997/34, paras. 369-371)

No new cases of disappearance were transmitted to the government by the Working Group (WG). Of the 10 cases previously reported, four were clarified. Three of the six outstanding cases occurred in December 1991 and concern student leaders who had reportedly been intercepted by security forces during a commercial fishing expedition. A fourth case concerned a businessman arrested in February 1991 by the police. A fifth case concerned a 14 year-old girl who was allegedly abducted in March 1993 following a military raid on her house in a peasant community. The last outstanding case relates to a person who was allegedly detained in February 1995 in the vicinity of Puerto Ayacucho, by members of the Navy Infantry, following incidents in which eight Venezuelan soldiers were reportedly ambushed and killed by Colombian guerrillas. The information provided by the government on the cases from 1993 and 1995 did not meet the criteria needed to consider them clarified. The WG requested the authorities to provide more precise information on these cases. The WG therefore considers all six cases still to be outstanding.

**Extrajudicial, summary or arbitrary execution, Special Rapporteur on:** (E/CN.4/1997/60, paras. 15, 16; E/CN.4/1997/60/Add.1, paras. 555-558)

The Special Rapporteur (SR) transmitted an urgent appeal to the government requesting that the necessary