

PANAMA

Date of admission to UN: 13 November 1945.

TREATIES: RATIFICATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Land and People: Panama has submitted a core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.14/Rev.1) for use by the treaty bodies. The report prepared by the government includes demographic data and information on the economy (growth, public debt, income distribution, employment), the structure of government, and the legal framework for the protection of human rights.

The Constitution forms the primary legal framework for the protection of human rights and sets out a number of rights that may not be suspended during a state of emergency, including equality before the law, non-discrimination, due process, freedom of religion and association, the prohibition of the death penalty, and non-retroactive application of law. The provisions in international human rights treaties are incorporated into domestic law and may be invoked in the courts after the treaty is adopted by formal act by the Legislative Assembly and endorsed by the executive.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Signed: 27 July 1976; ratified: 8 March 1977.

Panama's second periodic report was due 30 June 1995.

Civil and Political Rights

Signed: 27 July 1976; ratified: 8 March 1977.

Panama's third periodic report was due 31 March 1992; the fourth and fifth periodic reports were due 6 June 1993 and 1998 respectively.

Optional Protocol: Signed: 27 July 1976; ratified: 8 March 1977.

Second Optional Protocol: Acceded: 21 January 1993.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 8 December 1966; ratified: 16 August 1967.

Panama's 15th periodic report (CERD/C/338/Add.2) has been submitted but has not yet been scheduled for consideration by the Committee; the sixteenth periodic report is due 4 January 2000.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 26 June 1980; ratified: 29 October 1981.

Panama's second and third periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/PAN/2-3), which was considered at the Committee's June 1998 session; the fourth periodic report was due 28 November 1994.

Torture

Signed: 22 February 1985; ratified: 24 August 1987.

Panama's third periodic report (CAT/C/34/Add.9) was considered at the Committee's May 1998 session; the

fourth periodic report is due 27 September 2000.

Reservations and Declarations: Paragraph 1 of article 30.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 12 December 1990.

Panama's second periodic report was due 10 January 1998.

REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Panama's second and third periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/PAN/2-3, February 1997) which was considered by the Committee at its June 1998 session. The report prepared by the government contains general information on land and people, the economy, the political structure and the framework for the protection of human rights. Information is also provided on, *inter alia*: the Women and Development Action Plan (1994–2000); the National Women's Council and the National Women's Office, both established in 1995; the Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family, established in 1997; legislative and regulatory measures to eliminate discrimination against women; the Equal Opportunities Programme; NGOs promoting the comprehensive development of women; affirmative action; sex roles and stereotypes, establishment of the Office of Women's Affairs in the Ministry of Education in 1995; measures and considerations related to prostitution; participation in political and public life; women in, and access to, the education system; employment, legislation concerning women in the workplace, vocational training; child care services; health and health care, sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) and AIDS, female circumcision and other harmful practices, family planning; the situation of rural women, cooperatives, access to agricultural credit and loans; women and the family, the Family Code 1995; and legal measures related to prevention and punishment of violence against women. Annex II of the report contains a list of case law in which provisions in the commercial, administrative and civil codes were found to be unconstitutional. Annex III outlines the government's agenda and priorities with regard to implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CEDAW/C/1998/II/L.1/Add.4) commended, *inter alia*: the establishment of the Ministry of Youth, Women, Children and the Family; the government's support of women's NGOs; the 1997 reforms to the Electoral Code, stipulating that at least 30 per cent of the candidates for public election must be women; the 1995 Act qualifying domestic violence and child abuse as crimes; the establishment of family courts following the adoption of the Family Code; and efforts to make the mass media more aware of and to eliminate sexism and the projection of women as sex objects. Factors hindering implementation of the Convention were seen to include the difficult and special political, economic, social and legal situation of Panama, the unequal distribution of wealth, the struc-