

Genital Mutilation of the UNPF, the work carried out by the Inter-African Committee on Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children, and the fact that the Commission on the Status of Women addressed the issue of harmful traditional or customary practices at its session in 1998. The GA called upon all states, *inter alia*, to: (a) ratify, if they have not yet done so, the relevant human rights treaties and respect and fully implement their obligations under those treaties; (b) implement their international commitments in this field; (c) develop and implement national legislation and policies prohibiting such practices; (d) establish, if they have not done so, a concrete national mechanism for the implementation and monitoring of legislation, law enforcement and national policies; (e) intensify efforts to raise awareness of and mobilize international and national public opinion concerning the harmful effects of such practices; (f) promote the inclusion of discussion of the empowerment of women and their human rights in primary and secondary education curricula; (g) specifically address traditional or customary practices in such curricula and in the training of health personnel; (h) promote a collective and individual awareness of the human rights of women and girls and of how harmful traditional or customary practices violate those rights; (i) explore alternatives to harmful traditional or customary practices, in particular where those practices form part of a ritual ceremony or rite of passage; and (j) address the issue of traditional or customary practices in their national evaluations of the implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action.

Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women

The General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on the Women's Convention (A/C.3/53/L.12/Rev.1) in which it address such areas as universal ratification, the impact of reservations, CEDAW's adoption of general recommendation 23 on women in public life, states' cooperation with CEDAW, the draft optional protocol, and increased coordination among the human rights treaty bodies on issues affecting women and their enjoyment of all human rights.

Improvement of the status of women in the Secretariat

The General Assembly adopted by consensus a resolution on the status of women in the UN Secretariat (A/C.3/53/L.13) in which it, *inter alia*: noted some improvements in the hiring of, and practices towards, women, reaffirmed the goal of 50/50 gender distribution by the year 2000 in all categories of posts within the UN system, encouraged the Secretary-General to appoint more women as special representatives and envoys and to pursue good offices especially in matters related to peacekeeping, peace-building, preventive diplomacy and economic and social development; encouraged the Secretary-General to appoint more women to other high-level positions; requested the Secretary-General to continue the work to create a gender-sensitive work environment supportive of the needs of staff, both women and men,

including through the development of policies for flexible working time, flexible workplace arrangements, child-care and elder care needs, as well as through the expansion of gender-sensitivity training in all departments and offices; requested the Secretary-General to develop further the policy against harassment, including sexual harassment, and to issue detailed guidelines; strongly encouraged states to support the efforts to achieve the goal of 50/50 gender distribution. to identify women candidates for assignment to peacekeeping missions, and to improve the representation of women in military and civilian police contingents.



WORLD CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS, REVIEW OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE VIENNA DECLARATION AND PROGRAM OF ACTION (VDPA)

Interim Report of the Office of the High Commissioner on Follow-Up to the World Conference on Human Rights (E/CN.4/ 1998/104)

The Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights prepares an annual report on follow-up to the World Conference on Human Rights. The interim report to the 1998 Commission contains information on, *inter alia*: the framework of the review, the impact of the World Conference, universality and human rights, the right to development, non-discrimination, international cooperation, mainstreaming human rights in UN activities, target-oriented protection, UN human rights machinery, human rights education, and standard-setting and ratification of human rights treaties.

In setting the context, the report recalls that the five-year review of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action (VDPA) was intended to: (a) focus on the fundamental task of the international community today — implementing human rights worldwide; (b) promote positive developments and give due credit to achievements in implementing the VDPA; (c) identify major obstacles to full implementation of the VDPA and offer practical ideas for addressing these issues in the years ahead; (d) like the World Conference on Human Rights, be comprehensive and thematically oriented; (e) assist in identifying the goals and tasks ahead; and (f) envisage methods of achieving a concerted UN system-wide approach to human rights, including interaction between the implementation of the recommendations adopted by the