

- ♦ review its laws with a view to reducing the number of offences for which capital punishment can be imposed;
- ♦ bring the permissible restrictions on freedom of expression and the press into strict compliance with article 19 (3) of the Covenant;
- ♦ take steps to ensure that interception of postal articles or telegrams is subject to strict judicial supervision and that the relevant laws are brought into compliance with the Covenant;
- ♦ undertake efforts to ensure that all persons are able to move out of the country freely and without undue delay obtaining the necessary documents;
- ♦ ensure that education is provided in minority languages; and
- ♦ introduce appropriate awareness campaigns to create a deeper understanding of the Covenant and of the need to respect and protect human rights; develop training programmes for public officials and professional groups working in the area of human rights; and include the Covenant in school curricula and give consideration to reflecting it in training curricula.

Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women

Zimbabwe's initial report (CEDAW/C/ZWE/1, July 1996) was considered by the Committee at its January 1998 session. The report prepared by the government states that Zimbabwe is mainly a patriarchal society and has traditionally placed little recognition and value on women's participation outside of the home. National machinery for the protection of human rights generally, and human rights for women specifically, includes the Department of Women's Affairs, the Unit of Women in Development and the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights, and an Ombudsman's office. The report contains specific information on, *inter alia*: the absence of a constitutional prohibition on discrimination; temporary special measures to achieve equality in such areas as education and access to the public service; sex roles and stereotypes, customs and traditions detrimental to women's equality, stereotyping in the media; suppression of the traffic in, and exploitation of, women; participation in public and political life, the Electoral Act 1990, the Ward Development Committees (WADCs) and Village Development Committees (VIDCOs); nationality and citizenship; education and access to education, assistance through the Social Development Fund and the Social Dimensions Fund, the Zimbabwe Adult Basic Education Course; women and employment, the Labour Relations Act; health, health care and the national health policy; social security, the Social Welfare Assistance Act 1988, the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (PAAP), the National Social Security Authority Act 1989; the situation of rural women, the Land Acquisition Act 1990; equality before, and the protection of, the law; and marriage and the family, the Legal Age of Majority Act, domestic violence.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (A/53/38, paras. 120–166) noted developments after preparation of the government's report, including: the 1997 amendment to the Constitution explicitly prohibiting discrimination based on gender and adoption of the Sex Discrimination Removal Act; the appointment of gender focal points in all Ministries; introduction of gender-sensitivity training for police and judicial officers; and a programme to review school textbooks and development of a curriculum on human rights to be taught at the primary and secondary levels.

The Committee welcomed, *inter alia*: the amendment to the Constitution prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sex; the translation of the Convention into local languages in order to encourage its wider dissemination; the development of a National Gender Policy to implement the Beijing Platform for Action; the establishment of the Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and the strengthening of the office of the ombudsperson which can now investigate the police and security forces; the introduction of gender-sensitive training for police officers and the establishment of "victim-friendly courts"; and the implementation of affirmative action measures with respect to education, employment and political participation, particularly in the rural councils.

Factors hindering the implementation of the Convention were noted as including: the continued existence of, and adherence to, customary laws; prevailing traditional and socio-cultural attitudes towards women that contribute to the perpetuation of negative images of women; and the negative impact of the structural adjustment programmes, especially in the areas of education, health and employment.

The principal areas of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: discriminatory traditional practices, such as lobola (dowry), polygamy and female genital mutilation, despite the fact that the Constitution criminalizes any act of discrimination on the ground of sex and the practice of lobola has been made illegal; the failure to recognize in law violence against women, especially in society and in the domestic sphere; inadequate support of, and assistance for, victims of violence, such as rehabilitation programmes and temporary shelters; that the Ministry of National Affairs, Employment Creation and Cooperation — as the National Machinery for the Advancement of Women — has no real power or responsibility to initiate and implement policy measures to eliminate discrimination against women; and the low level of women's participation at the decision-making level.

The Committee expressed concern about: the fact that prostitutes are criminalized by law while their clients go unpunished; the recourse to prostitution as a means of survival by poor women, migrant women and women from other marginalised sectors; the effect of the HIV/AIDS pandemic and the very high rate of infection among young women, noting the risks of transmission to infants through childbirth and breastfeeding; reports relating to the refusal of some health-care providers to