

of national human rights infrastructures; (k) undertake human rights field activities and operations; and (l) provide education, information advisory services and technical assistance in the field of human rights.

Ratification, accession and succession are all terms that indicate that a State has formally become a State party to a treaty. The primary difference in these three terms has to do with the way that the treaty has been approved. **Ratification** indicates that the treaty has been approved by a State's governing bodies. A State is not bound by a convention that it has signed but not ratified. **Accession** means simply that a State has agreed to be bound by the terms of the treaty. **Succession** means that a newly-formed State has agreed to inherit the treaty obligations of its predecessor. For example, when Czechoslovakia ceased to exist, its successor States, the Czech Republic and Slovakia, each succeeded to the human rights treaties that Czechoslovakia had ratified earlier.

Reservation: A reservation is a unilateral statement formally made by a State upon signing, ratifying or acceding to an agreement. A State makes a reservation when it intends to modify or limit the effect of certain treaty provisions on that particular State. For example, a State may ratify a treaty but also say that it refuses to be bound by a specific provision in that treaty.

Security Council (SC): one of the six major organs of the UN, with the primary function of maintaining international peace and security. Currently, membership in the SC comprises 15 member States, five of which (China, France, Russia, United Kingdom and United States) are permanent members and have veto power. In recent years, as the link between human rights violations and violent conflict has been unequivocally established, the SC has become increasingly concerned with matters of human rights. For example, it was

the Security Council which established the ad hoc International Criminal Tribunals on former Yugoslavia and Rwanda.

State Party: A State party to a treaty is a State which has formally consented to be bound by the terms of the treaty.

Sub-Commission on the Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities:

established in 1946 as a subsidiary body of the Commission on Human Rights. It is currently comprised of 26 independent experts nominated by Member States and elected by the Commission for a period of four years. The Sub-Commission meets annually for four weeks in August in Geneva. Its mandate permits the Sub-Commission to consider country situations, propose standards and conduct studies on human rights issues. The Sub-Commission presently has four Working Groups; each meets, generally for a week, before the annual session of the Sub-Commission. Working Group on Communications meets in closed session to make recommendations to the Sub-Commission on the confidential 1503 procedure. The other three Working Groups are on Indigenous Populations, Contemporary Forms of Slavery, and Minorities. The Sub-Commission and the latter three Working Groups are open to NGOs in consultative status with ECOSOC, whose representatives may attend meetings and make oral or written statements.

Succession: See *Ratification*.

Third Committee: See *General Assembly*.

Treaty-body: Each of the six major human rights treaties reviewed in this report have established a committee of independent experts (i.e., a treaty-body) mandated to receive and review reports from States parties concerning their efforts to implement their treaty obligations under the convention.