

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included: insufficiencies in the steps taken to study and review the compatibility of national legislation with the principles and provisions of the Convention; the sectoral approach adopted by and ineffectiveness of existing mechanisms monitoring the implementation of the Convention; the lack of an independent mechanism, such as an Ombudsman, accessible to children to deal with complaints of the violation of their rights and to provide remedies for such violations; the fact that in certain instances statistics on the situation of children are being collected only for children up to the age of 15; and, the inadequacy of measures taken to incorporate education about the principles and provisions of the Convention fully into the training given to professionals working with and for children.

The Committee expressed concern over: the failure to provide for a minimum age for sexual consent and the absence of harmonization between the age for the completion of compulsory schooling and the minimum age for employment; the insufficiencies of measures taken to ensure respect for the views of the child, in the family and social life, as well as in the context of administrative, social welfare and other procedures affecting and applying to them; the insufficiency of information provided on the implementation of the civil rights and freedoms of children; the apparent absence of independent mechanisms for monitoring the situation of children in institutions; the insufficiency of measures to protect children from abuse, despite the establishment of an early warning system for violence against children, and the opportunity for children to report abuse and other violations of their rights in the family, schools or other institutions and to have a complaint taken seriously and responded to effectively; and, an increase in the number of children with behavioural problems and the inadequacy of existing mechanisms to address their problems effectively.

Concern was also expressed over: the fact that obstacles remain to the effective implementation of the family planning and education programmes in the country, particularly in view of the lack of quality materials and services available; the absence of statistics relating to the incidence of school drop-out; the decline in the number of children enrolled in secondary education; the reduction in the availability of scholarships for children to continue their education; the fact that, in light of the considerable social and economic problems facing the country, insufficient efforts are being taken to devise preventive strategies to ensure that problems such as drug abuse and trafficking, child labour, child prostitution and suicide, do not become more prevalent; and, the failure to address fully some issues relating to the system of juvenile justice, including the compatibility of the juvenile justice system with the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially in relation to the protection afforded to children aged 16 to 18 years of age and the detention of children with adults.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ consider the possibility of withdrawing the declaration it made to the Convention;
- ▶ undertake a review of its national legislation in order to ensure its full compatibility with the principles and provisions of the Convention;

- ▶ consider acceding to or ratifying related human rights instruments, including the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption of 1993 and the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 1951;
- ▶ take action to strengthen the capacity of the country's monitoring and coordinating mechanisms concerning the rights of the child with the aim of ensuring a holistic approach to implementation of the Convention and raising the political visibility of issues relating to children;
- ▶ make further efforts to ensure that the Convention is used as a political tool and a framework for action on behalf of children;
- ▶ incorporate policies, programmes, aims and goals reflecting the principles and provisions of the Convention into future national and local programmes of action on children;
- ▶ consider introducing systems, within the framework of international cooperation, which provide for the collection, compilation and analysis of data concerning children up to the age of 18, including information on the violations of the rights of the child, disaggregated, *inter alia*, by gender and location;
- ▶ include education about the principles and provisions of the Convention in the training of professionals working with and for children;
- ▶ harmonize legislation, including with respect to the age of completion of compulsory schooling and the minimum age for employment;
- ▶ take further measures to ensure the effective implementation of the general principles of the Convention;
- ▶ pursue efforts to ensure a holistic approach to the implementation of the Convention and give special attention to the implementation of the civil rights and freedoms of children;
- ▶ take further measures to protect children from abuse and mistreatment, in particular through the development of a widespread public information campaign for the prevention of corporal punishment and bullying of children, whether by adults or by other children;
- ▶ as a complement to the strategy in place for dealing with accidents affecting children, consider focussing even greater efforts on preventive measures;
- ▶ devote further resources and assistance to activities in the area of family planning and health education programmes, with a view to addressing the problem of teenage or unwanted pregnancies and changing male sexual behaviour;
- ▶ establish programmes on issues related to the incidence and treatment of children infected with or affected by HIV/AIDS and by sexually-transmitted diseases, and programmes to reduce the apparent recourse to abortion as a method of family planning;
- ▶ undertake major efforts to broaden the coverage of reproductive health educational programmes beyond married couples;