

Concern was also raised over: the fact that Swedish-speaking persons do not always have the possibility of using their language in dealing with authorities; the practice of holding asylum seekers and aliens with irregular status in public prisons and police detention places pending inquiry as to their status; and the fact that Jehovah's Witnesses are granted by domestic law preferential treatment as compared with other groups of conscientious objectors.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ continue to give priority to positive measures and to civil processes which are able to determine issues of compensation or other remedies, especially in cases of discrimination;
- ♦ make efforts to provide to the Sami and Roma minority printed texts of all available human rights documents, translated into the Sami and Roma languages where possible, noting that "important" UN and European conventions are already translated into Sami languages and disseminated to the Sami;
- ♦ provide training to government agencies to intervene positively to help to overcome racist attitudes and to initiate proceedings where any pattern of discrimination is identified, particularly against the Roma;
- ♦ review the procedure allowing for trial *in absentia*;
- ♦ take further positive steps to overcome discriminatory and xenophobic attitudes and prejudice, and to foster tolerance;
- ♦ consider withdrawing the remaining reservations entered to the Covenant;
- ♦ give consideration to implementing the current proposals for the reform of indefinite imprisonment, in light of existing provisions on preventive detention; and
- ♦ implement the proposal to establish separate holding areas for asylum seekers and aliens with irregular status.

THEMATIC REPORTS

Mechanisms of the Commission on Human Rights

Sale of children, child prostitution, child pornography, Special Rapporteur on the: (E/CN.4/1998/101, paras. 6, 101)

In the section concerning children as viewers of sexually explicit material on the Internet, the report refers to the anonymity which the Internet provides as is its most important asset to users who seek to access sensitive information. Commenting on the possibility to re-route e-mail and images through "anonymous re-mailers" the Special Rapporteur (SR) noted that in Finland one such re-mailer service was voluntarily closed down by the

operator who was accused of paedophilia, an accusation strongly denied. The SR also noted that a British organization, "The Samaritans" — which counsels people contemplating suicide and which has increasing numbers of computer contacts, many of whom used the "re-mailer" service to remain anonymous — reacted adversely to the shut-down.

Mechanisms and Reports of the Sub-Commission

Traditional practices affecting the health of women and girls, Special Rapporteur on: (E/CN.4/Sub.2/1998/11, paras. 78–82)

The report refers to information provided by the government related to measures to abolish female circumcision. Under Finnish law, genital mutilation of women and girls is a crime punishable under the Criminal Code, whether it is committed in Finland or abroad. According to the severity of the operation, the penalty may entail several years of imprisonment. With regard to education, the government noted that basic education includes information on female genital mutilation and therefore all young people attending school are informed. As for women and children who have come from countries with different cultures, efforts are made to inform them of the harm caused by female genital mutilation and of the penalties which the practice entails through a brochure on the subject published by the Ministry of Labour and the Ministry of Social Affairs. Courses have been held for members of the medical profession in order to prepare them for treating immigrants from such countries as Somalia. The government noted that the social security services and members of the medical professions, as well as teachers, have an obligation to intervene in situations where the health and development of a child are threatened.



FRANCE

Date of admission to UN: 24 October 1945.

TREATIES: RATIFICATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Land and People: France has submitted a core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.17/Rev.1) for use by the treaty bodies. The report contains demographic data as well as information on the general political structure and the legal framework for the protection of human rights.

A number of offices and institutions have jurisdiction in matters related to human rights and include the Constitutional Council, ordinary courts (civil, district, major jurisdiction, commercial, labour, social security tribunals, joint agricultural tenancy tribunals), juvenile courts, military courts, courts of appeal, the Court of Assizes, the Court of Cassation, appeal courts and the Council of State. Remedies for violations may be claimed