

ties and institutions. National machinery related to human rights includes the National Assembly's Commission on Human Rights to which individuals and NGOs may address claims for human rights violations. A National Council on Demographic and Social Issues has been established to monitor the rights of persons belonging to various ethnic groups and coordinate the activities of NGOs on issues relating to women's rights. The government envisages creating a governmental inter-ministerial commission on human rights. Any individual, NGO or group of individuals claiming a violation of rights provided for in the European Convention, may – after all domestic remedies have been exhausted – apply to the European Commission on Human Rights and file a complaint.

#### **Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

Signed: 8 October 1968; ratified: 21 September 1970. Bulgaria's third periodic report (E/1994/104/Add.16) is scheduled for consideration at the Committee's April/May 1999 session; the fourth periodic report is due 30 June 1999.  
*Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraphs 1 and 3 of article 26.

#### **Civil and Political Rights**

Signed: 8 October 1968; ratified: 21 September 1970. Bulgaria's third periodic report was due 31 December 1994.  
*Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraphs 1 and 3 of article 48; declaration under article 41.

**Optional Protocol:** Acceded: 26 March 1992.

#### **Racial Discrimination**

Signed: 1 June 1966; ratified: 8 August 1966. Bulgaria's 15th periodic report was due 4 January 1998.  
*Reservations and Declarations:* Paragraph 1 of article 17 and paragraph 1 of article 18; declaration under article 14.

#### **Discrimination against Women**

Signed: 17 July 1980; ratified: 8 February 1982. Bulgaria's second and third periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/BGR/2-3) which was considered at the Committee's January 1998 session; the fourth periodic report was due 10 March 1995.

#### **Torture**

Signed: 10 June 1986; ratified: 16 December 1986. Bulgaria's second periodic report (CAT/C/17/Add.19) has been submitted and is pending for consideration at the Committee's May 1999 session; the third periodic report was 25 June 1996.  
*Reservations and Declarations:* Article 20.

#### **Rights of the Child**

Signed: 31 May 1990; ratified: 3 June 1991. Bulgaria's second periodic report is due 2 July 1998.

### **REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES**

#### **Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women**

Bulgaria's 2nd and 3rd periodic reports were submitted as one document (CEDAW/C/BGR/2-3, November 1994) which was considered by the Committee at its January 1998 session. The report prepared by the government contains information on demographics, the economic and political situation, and the situation of women prior to reforms. In relation to the period from 1990 to November 1994, the report refers to, *inter alia*: constitutional provisions establishing the equality of women and men before the law; legal measures related to the protection of women in the labour force; domestic violence, sexual abuse and rape; exploitation of prostitution and traffic in women; participation in political and public life; nationality and citizenship; access to education; the right to work and labour conditions, the Labour Code, the unemployment rate and compensation; special protection of maternity and children; abortion, maternal mortality rates, family planning, sexually transmitted diseases and HIV/AIDS; access to credit and loans; the situation of rural women; marriage and family law, the Family Code, spousal obligations and parental rights. The report states that the *de jure* equality of women with men does not automatically lead to their *de facto* equality in all spheres of political, economic and public life, despite the official policy aimed at the strict implementation of the principle of equality of the sexes. Reference is also made to concerns expressed by NGOs on the "feminization" of unemployment and poverty.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (A/53/38, paras. 208–261) referred to points raised during the government's oral presentation of its report pertaining to: the situation of the Roma minority and measures adopted to improve the situation of Roma children, in particular with regard to education; measures taken to implement the Beijing Platform for Action, including adoption by the Council of Ministers in July 1996 of a national action plan and the establishment of a permanent intergovernmental council to monitor application of the national plan; the government's proposal to appoint an ombudsperson who could be entrusted with the role of monitoring women's human rights and gender equality; the fact that domestic violence in Bulgaria was still not seen as a human rights abuse and that more awareness-raising campaigns were needed; and draft legislation that would criminalize domestic violence against children, including girls.

The Committee welcomed: the constitutional provisions on equality between women and men; the willingness of the government to improve the *de facto* and *de jure* situation of women who carry a disproportionate share of the burden associated with the radical political and economic changes in the country; recognition by the government that democracy will not be achieved without the full and equal participation of women in decision-making and all other areas of life; the proposed establishment of an ombudsperson for human rights who will also monitor