

those which discriminate against women and keep women from securing financial resources necessary to access and secure land, property and housing and, in this regard, that special consideration be given to single women and households headed by women; called upon the international trade, investment and financial institutions to take fully into account the human rights implications for women of their policies; invited the High Commissioner for Human Rights to undertake initiatives that promote women's rights to land, property and to an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing; invited the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women to pay special attention to women's rights to land, property and an adequate standard of living, including adequate housing, and to explore the possibility of adopting a general recommendation on this theme; and invited the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to undertake a thorough discussion of the critical issue of the relationship between women's rights to land and property and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and to include the results of this discussion in its general comment on women.



HUMAN RIGHTS TREATY BODIES

Since the adoption of resolution 37/44 on 3 December 1982, the General Assembly has continuously kept under review the issue of the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights, including reporting obligations under international instruments. Following adoption of GA resolution 38/117 in December 1983, the Secretary-General convened the first meeting of the persons chairing the treaty bodies; subsequent sessions were convened biannually until 1995 when the meetings were placed on an annual basis.

At its 1997 session, the General Assembly welcomed the proposal that the chairpersons hold an extraordinary three-day meeting early in 1998 to continue the reform process aimed at improving the effective implementation of international instruments on human rights. The report of this additional session, held in February 1998 (A/53/125) reflects discussions on, *inter alia*: universal ratification; reservations to treaties; periodicity of reporting; staff and servicing of the treaty bodies; problems related to complaints procedures; a global plan of action; examination of situations in the absence of state party reports; problems of small states; general comments and the possible use of joint statements; human rights training; the independence of experts; the 50th anniversary of the Universal Declaration; reporting of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights; and cooperation with special rapporteurs and other special procedures. The conclusions and recommendations of the meeting included, *inter alia*, that:

- ◆ on the basis that universal ratification of the six core human rights treaties constitutes an essential dimension of a global order committed to the full respect of human rights, the UN system as a whole accord an even higher priority to efforts to encourage and facilitate ratification of each of the six treaties by every state;
- ◆ as a major priority of the technical cooperation programme of the OHCHR, assistance be provided to states, upon request, with the process of ratifying the human rights treaties and, where needed, in the preparation of reports;
- ◆ recalling the emphasis attached in the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action to the importance of limiting the number and extent of reservations to human rights treaties, the approach taken by the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Human Rights Committee — of adopting General Comments on the question of reservations — be accepted by the International Law Commission when considering the question of reservations to the human rights treaties;
- ◆ staff available to service all aspects of the activities of the treaty bodies be increased in order to facilitate the adoption and implementation of the type of procedural and other improvements in treaty body functioning which has consistently been endorsed by the General Assembly and the Commission on Human Rights;
- ◆ there be a designated committee secretary servicing each Committee on a full-time basis in order to ensure continuity, efficiency and expertise;
- ◆ servicing of the optional complaints procedure be conducted by staff members with strong legal qualifications, detailed knowledge of the relevant jurisprudence, and relevant experience;
- ◆ the functions performed by the treaty bodies be considered a core function of the UN and be adequately funded from the regular budget and, during the time of budget restraint, voluntary funding for the work of the six treaty bodies be sought;
- ◆ committees faced with a situation of persistent non-reporting explore every available alternative, including the offer of advisory services and technical assistance to the state in the preparation of the overdue report; as a final resort, committees be willing to consider proceeding with a consideration of the situation, on the basis of information provided by the state party to other international bodies, and taking account of all other relevant information;
- ◆ in response to the problems of small states in meeting reporting obligations, the Secretariat prepare an analysis: (a) exploring the different approaches which might be used to define "small States", such as using an arbitrary cut-off of one million persons or alterna-