

educational, social, economic and political life. The report notes, *inter alia*, that: women are not encouraged to participate in the political and public life of the country which is dominated by men; educational opportunities diminish for many girls as they grow up; women are victims of widespread domestic violence; women workers often face insults and humiliations, for instance, by being body-searched in the factories where they work; large numbers of women are sold or trafficked for prostitution; the lack of access to public health facilities takes a particularly heavy toll on the reproductive health of women; and, women are not given an active and direct role in decision-making affecting the political and public life of the country.

On the last point, the report notes that: the Council of Ministers does not include a woman; the Ministry of Women's Affairs is headed by a man; only seven of the 120 members of Parliament are women; of the 22 provinces in Cambodia, there is one woman deputy governor and no woman governor; of a total of 175 district chiefs, two are women; of a total of 1,558 commune chiefs, 10 are women; and, in the area of the administration of justice, there is a striking disparity between the number of women and men officials.

The report makes a number of additional points including that: the government should ensure that women have the right to participate in the formulation and implementation of government policy, to hold public office, and to perform all public functions at all levels of government; education is the key to the "empowerment" of women; and the government should take all necessary steps to protect and reinforce the right to quality education and provide opportunities for professional and personal advancement through, for example, training programmes that include women; and, according to a joint statistical study by the Ministry of Women's Affairs and the NGO Project Against Domestic Violence, one of every six women is physically abused by her spouse. The report notes that a draft law on domestic violence has been prepared and should be presented to the National Assembly for adoption without delay; emphasis on domestic violence should be included in the human rights training for police; that rape remains a widely unpunished crime with few cases brought to court and even fewer convictions; out-of-court negotiations remain common with either a financial arrangement reached or the agreement of the rapist to marry his victim; and, reports of marital rape continue to be received.

Commentary on the situation of children notes, *inter alia*, that approximately 30 per cent of the estimated 15,000 prostitutes in Phnom Penh are minors and young victims have been trafficked or lured into prostitution because of poverty, with most coming from rural areas and some from Vietnam. The government has made a commitment to tackle the problems of prostitution and sex trafficking; in response to actions by the authorities to crack down on prostitution, however, the practice is increasingly going "underground", with brothels reopening as massage and karaoke bars, making it more

difficult to investigate abuses and employ programmes for the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV/AIDS. The SRep noted that: reports were received related to police abuse during raids; there is a need for protection for NGO staff working in shelters for children and girls who have been freed from brothels; NGOs continue to do important work in the area of improving the health care available for children; the government must make a greater effort to implement the law on the suppression of kidnapping, trafficking, sale and exploitation of human beings and punish public officials found to have taken bribes for the release of suspected traffickers or pimps; child labour remains a problem, with children exploited as construction and factory workers, domestic servants, fish processors or street vendors; estimates indicate that there are more than 10,000 street children living in Phnom Penh alone, the majority of whom have come from the provinces; recruitment and forced recruitment of child soldiers has continued, with the number of child soldiers having increased in both warring factions following the events of July 1997; and problems continue in the area of juvenile justice.

On the issue of trafficking in persons, particularly between Cambodia and Thailand, the report refers to the fact that traffickers exploit the ignorance and poverty of their victims to persuade them to go. Some village boys are encouraged by their own families, and awareness of the negative prospects in such circumstances seems to be low in many areas of the country.

On the situation of ethnic minorities, the report refers to "xenophobic demagoguery" aimed at ethnic Vietnamese in Cambodia and the risks to the communities of Highland Peoples in terms of their cultures and traditional way of living. On the latter point, the report notes that the presence, citizenship and land use of the Highland Peoples have been disregarded in many government decisions, for example in such areas as logging concessions and concessions for industrial plantations on lands and forests which have been inhabited and used by Highland Peoples for many generations. Balancing the criticism and concern, note is made in the report of the preparation of a draft National Policy on Highland Peoples' Development, which integrates international human rights standards.

The recommendations in the report, include that:

- ♦ the National Assembly adopt legislation for the establishment of the Constitutional Council;
- ♦ the independence of the National Electoral Committee be protected and electoral committees on lower levels be appointed in an impartial spirit;
- ♦ political parties be given free and equal access to media, and decisions on disputes between factions on the issues of party names and logos be taken swiftly;
- ♦ decisive steps be taken to address impunity in political crimes, with investigations and prosecutions seriously pursued in the cases of the March 1997 grenade attack and July/August 1997 executions;