

The economic and social difficulties faced by the government were acknowledged as factors hindering implementation of the Convention, in particular, the high level of external debt, the requirements of the structural adjustment programme, and the increasing level of unemployment and poverty.

Subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: that domestic legislation still does not fully reflect the principles and provisions of the Convention; while noting the establishment of the Corrupt Practices Commission, the need to strengthen law enforcement and combat corrupt practices in all areas covered by the Convention; the absence of an independent mechanism to register and address complaints from children concerning violations of their rights; the low minimum legal age for criminal responsibility, and the absence in legislation of a legal age defining the attainment of majority; and the insufficiency of measures to ensure that all children are guaranteed access to education and health services, and are protected against all forms of exploitation, particularly with regard to girls, children with disabilities, children belonging to minorities including hill tribes, children living in rural areas, children living in poverty, children living and/or working on the streets and asylum seeking children, illegal immigrant children, children in the juvenile justice system, and children born out of wedlock.

The Committee expressed concern that: traditional practices, culture and attitudes still limit the full implementation of article 12 (respect for the views of the child); many children are still not registered, particularly those living among nomadic and hill tribe communities; corporal punishment is still practised and domestic legislation does not prohibit its use within the family, the juvenile justice and alternative care systems, and generally within the society; the high rate of abandoned children continues, especially children born out of wedlock and children of poor families; and there is a lack of adequate alternative care facilities and qualified personnel to assist abandoned children. The Committee expressed concern, as well, that: there is a lack of awareness and information on domestic violence, the ill-treatment and abuse of children, including sexual abuse both within and outside the family; and there is a lack of appropriate resources for children, both financial and human, as well as a lack of adequately trained personnel to prevent and combat abuse.

Concern was also raised related to: poor breast-feeding practices and the high rate of malnutrition; the absence of data on adolescent health, including on teenage pregnancy, abortion, suicide, accidents, violence, substance abuse and HIV/AIDS; the lack of adequate facilities and services for persons with disabilities, including children; the fact that some children, particularly those living in poverty and among nomadic and hill tribe communities do not have access to education; the number of children, particularly girls, leaving school prematurely to work; the lack of clarity in the legal framework for protection of unaccompanied and asylum-seeking children; and the situation of children deprived of their liberty placed in

immigration detention centres, especially in view of the lengthy detention periods.

Additional concerns included: the high rate of economic exploitation, as well as the increasing number of children leaving school, sometimes at an early age, to work to support themselves and their families; the high rate of continued sexual abuse of children, including child prostitution and trafficking and sale of children, which affects both girls and boys; the failure to implement the juvenile justice system throughout the country, and reported cases of ill treatment of children by law enforcement personnel.

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

- ♦ undertake a review of domestic legislation to ensure full conformity with the principles and provisions of the Convention; consider the possibility of enacting a comprehensive code for children;
- ♦ take all appropriate measures, including training, to strengthen law enforcement and prevent corrupt practices;
- ♦ use a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the Convention by, *inter alia*, ensuring the decentralization of the process of promoting and protecting children's rights; take further steps to strengthen efforts to coordinate through the National Youth Bureau, particularly at the local level; review the system of data collection with a view to incorporating all the areas covered by the Convention, including children up to the age of 18 years, with specific emphasis on those who are vulnerable, including economically exploited children, children of single-parent families, children born out of wedlock, institutionalized children, as well as children of nomadic and hill tribe communities;
- ♦ make available to children an independent child-friendly mechanism to deal with complaints of violations of their rights and provide remedies for such violations; introduce an awareness raising campaign to facilitate the effective use by children of such a mechanism;
- ♦ give priority to budget allocations to ensure implementation of the economic, social and cultural rights of children, to the maximum extent of available resources and, where needed, within the framework of international cooperation;
- ♦ make a greater effort to ensure that the provisions of the Convention are widely known and understood by adults and children alike, residing in both rural and urban areas; reinforce adequate and systematic training and/or sensitization of professional groups working with and for children;
- ♦ increase efforts to ensure implementation of the principle of non-discrimination, particularly with regard to children in vulnerable groups;