

on the structure of government, the system of law and the framework for the protection of human rights.

In addition to legal provisions on human rights, the Office of the Ombudsman was established by Act of Parliament in 1982. The Ombudsman is empowered to investigate administrative actions taken by ministries, government departments and statutory authorities which are alleged to have caused injustice. Actions by the defence forces, police, prison services, the President and presidential staff, the Cabinet office, the Attorney-General and judicial officers, however, may not be investigated by the Office. Neither may the Office initiate an investigation in the absence of a complaint. The Constitution protects the rights to life, freedom from slavery and forced labour, freedom from inhuman treatment and others. Provisions also guarantee the rights of freedom of conscience, expression, assembly, association and movement. Any person who feels that rights set out in the Declaration of Rights have been violated may apply to the Supreme Court for redress. The Declaration of Rights may also be invoked in other courts and it is established practice that the rights contained in the Declaration are considered on the basis of the interpretation of equivalent rights in other jurisdictions and relevant international and regional human rights instruments.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Acceded: 13 May 1991.

Zimbabwe's second periodic report was due 30 June 1998.

Civil and Political Rights

Acceded: 13 May 1991.

Zimbabwe's initial report (CCPR/C/74/Add.3) was considered at the Committee's March 1998 session; the second periodic report was due 1 August 1997.

Reservations and Declarations: Declaration under article 41.

Racial Discrimination

Acceded: 13 May 1991.

Zimbabwe's second, third and fourth periodic reports were due 12 June 1994, 1996 and 1998 respectively.

Discrimination against Women

Acceded: 13 May 1991.

Zimbabwe's initial report (CEDAW/C/ZWE/1) was considered at the Committee's May 1998 session; the second periodic report was due 12 June 1996.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 8 March 1990; ratified: 11 September 1990.

Zimbabwe's second periodic report was due 10 October 1997.

REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Human Rights Committee

Zimbabwe's initial report (CCPR/C/74/Add.3, November 1996) was considered by the Committee at its March

1998 session. The report prepared by the government includes references to case law relevant to certain Covenant rights and contains information on, *inter alia*: constitutional provisions and guarantees of rights; the organization and independence of the judiciary; the Office of the Ombudsman; laws on the status and situation of women, the need for progressive marriage and inheritance laws, institutions established to address women's concerns and problems; the death penalty and the right to life; the prohibition of torture, corporal punishment; medical and scientific research; the right to liberty and provisions in the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act; treatment of prisoners; freedom of movement and choice of residence, refugees and deportation procedures, extradition; equality before the courts and due process; freedom of thought, conscience and religion; freedom of opinion and expression, the Privileges, Immunities and Powers of Parliament Act, the Law and Order Maintenance Act, freedom of the press, the Censorship and Entertainment Control Act; freedom of assembly and association, trade unions and workers' rights; social security, health care, social welfare assistance, the Poverty Alleviation Action Plan (1994); children's rights, the Child Labour Task Force; the right to vote and be elected, the electoral process, political parties.

In the section concerning the rights of minorities, the report states there are still pockets of minority ethnic groups whose cultural practices conflict with other fundamental human rights. Some of these practices are early marriages, usually arranged between parents without the consent of the individuals concerned, circumcision practices, and the pledging of girls for economic gain (*kuzvarira*) or as appeasement to the spirits of a murdered person (*kuripa ngozi*). The inclusion of civil and political rights into school curricula, and the promotion of different cultures are some of the strategies used to alter such practices.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CCPR/C/79/Add.89) welcomed: the on-going review of domestic legislation and customary law in order to ensure their compatibility with the Covenant, particularly in the area of women's rights; the recent constitutional amendment which includes gender as a prohibited ground of discrimination; decisions of the Supreme Court upholding rights protected by the Covenant; the establishment of the Office of the Ombudsman with power to investigate citizens' complaints concerning alleged violations of human rights by officials; the establishment of an Inter-Ministerial Committee on Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law; police training conducted by NGOs and efforts undertaken to integrate human rights education in the school curricula; the provision of statistics on AIDS and the efforts undertaken to incorporate HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns into school curricula.

Principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: the persistence of behavioral attitudes in the society, as well as cultural and religious practices, which impede the full realization of human rights;