

as one document (CERD/C/320/Add.2) which is pending for the Committee's March 1999 session; the 15th periodic report is due 13 August 1999.

### Discrimination against Women

Signed: 17 July 1980; ratified: 4 September 1986.

Finland's third periodic report (CEDAW/C/FIN/3) has been submitted and is pending for the Committee's January 1999 session; the fourth periodic report is due 4 October 1999.

### Torture

Signed: 4 February 1985; ratified: 30 August 1989.

Finland's third periodic report (CAT/C/44/Add.5) has been submitted and is pending consideration at the Committee's November 1999 session.

*Reservations and Declarations:* Declaration under articles 21 and 22.

### Rights of the Child

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 20 June 1991.

Finland's second periodic report (CRC/C/70/Add.3) has been submitted and is pending for the Committee's October 2000 session; the third periodic report is due 19 July 2003.

## REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

### Human Rights Committee

Finland's fourth periodic report (CCPR/C/95/Add.6, August 1995) was considered by the Committee at its April 1998 session. The report prepared by the government focuses on amendments to the provisions on fundamental rights in the Constitution Act. The reform was aimed at increasing the direct applicability of fundamental rights in the courts and by other public authorities, tightening the conditions under which fundamental rights may be restricted, and clarifying the system of supervising fundamental rights by including basic provisions relating to them in the Constitution. The report contains information on, *inter alia*: the special status of the Åland Islands and the new Autonomy Act 1991; the rights and protections of the Samis; protection of the rights of Romanians, Russian immigrants and other minorities; extension of rights protections in a number of areas to aliens; inclusion in the reformed law of a general prohibition against discrimination and extension of forms and manifestations of discrimination punishable by law; the Act on Equality between Women and Men; legal provisions related to derogation and the new State Defence Act; reforms related to life, liberty and security of person; recidivism and preventive detention; freedom of movement and choice of residence; deportation procedures and the right to asylum; revisions to criminal procedures; sanctions for marital rape; the right to privacy; freedom of religion and non-military service; freedom of expression and opinion, the right to information, the right to publish; peaceful assembly and the right to association, trade unions; and the right to vote and be elected.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CCPR/C/79/Add.91) welcomed: Finland's ratification of the Second Optional Protocol, the reform of the Constitution to incorporate the provisions of the Covenant and other human rights instruments into the Constitution; the extension of the application of fundamental rights to non-citizens; reform of criminal procedure which, *inter alia*, ensures detainees are brought to court without delay and have the right to a speedy trial and communication with family and counsel; the constitutional recognition of the Sami and Roma people and of their rights, along with other groups, to develop their language and culture; the existence of Advisory Boards for both Sami and Romani Affairs, mandated to advance the interests of these minority populations; the right of Samis, since 1992, to communicate with the authorities in their native language and to be consulted through their representatives on matters affecting them closely; and provisions that primary and secondary education students may be taught in their mother tongue of Sami or Romani.

The Committee also welcomed: efforts to promote racial tolerance by the establishment of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, the Chancellor of Justice, the Ombudsman for Aliens, and the Advisory Board for Refugee and Migrant Affairs, as well as the implementation of a human rights curriculum in the school; efforts to safeguard the well-being of women and children in domestic abuse situations by the establishment of nationwide crisis centres and shelters and the treatment of men who abuse; criminalization of rape in marriage and new measures to combat trafficking in women and children; and implementation of the Aliens Act and other legislative measures which broaden the criteria for the issuance of residency permits, create procedures for review of deportation decisions and give the Ombudsman for Aliens a role in these proceedings, and give alien residents the right to vote in local elections.

Subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: the possibility that criminal law alone may not be appropriate to determine suitable remedies for violations of certain rights and freedoms; that the issue of land rights of the Sami have not been resolved; the continuing disparity in remuneration between the sexes and the relatively low proportion of women in higher levels of the public service; continuing *de facto* discrimination against members of the Roma minority, especially in the area of private housing, employment and services; the apparent provision in law that, after due notice, a person charged before the courts with certain offences may be tried in absentia, if his or her presence was not necessary, and sentenced to a fine or up to three months' imprisonment with no possibility for retrial after 30 days; the increase in negative attitudes and *de facto* discrimination toward immigrants among some of the population, and also of instances of violence; and that there is still legal provision for preventive detention of certain convicted persons ("dangerous recidivists") to be determined by the Prison Court.