

equipment, supplies and drugs needed for delivery of services such as the prevention and treatment of reproductive tract infections, including sexually transmitted diseases, prevention of HIV/AIDS, and technical assistance, training and salary support for health personnel; and

- ♦ the suggestions and recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child related to: incorporation of human rights education on child rights in training curricula of police and immigration officials; provision in their own language of information on children's rights to all refugee children; introduction of legislation for the protection of the rights of refugees, in line with the relevant international standards; review of existing legislation and procedures with regard to their compatibility with the Convention; and, comprehensive review of policies in relation to children seeking asylum.

The report concludes with a number of observations related to the creation of an effective early warning system and sets the context for those remarks by stating that the multiplicity of causes and problems associated with mass exoduses calls for corresponding multifaceted and comprehensive responses. Specific points then made include that:

- ♦ early warning has been recognized as an essential tool for undertaking preventive action and mobilizing a response at the earliest stage possible in order to mitigate and/or avoid factors which force people to flee their homes;
- ♦ progress has been made in early warning activities at the conceptual level and in terms of methodology; the remaining challenges relate, on the one hand, to the collection, verification and analysis of relevant information and, on the other, to the effective sharing of the results, with a view to formulating appropriate responses in a timely manner;
- ♦ since a multitude of factors may lead to crisis, there is a corresponding need to monitor a wide range of indicators to accommodate the reality that emergencies often result from a combination of factors, none of which would in themselves be sufficiently grave to signal clearly an imminent crisis but which, in combination with other factors, form an overall picture justifying this conclusion, bearing in mind that there may be signs of a worsening situation in some sectors of society, while in others there may be improvements;
- ♦ in order to improve analysis, it is important that all actors possessing the different types of required expertise provide information on a regular basis, and that they are represented in fora where situations are being reviewed;
- ♦ the dissemination of early warning information through electronic means, such as ReliefWeb, should be further expanded;

- ♦ bearing in mind the assumption that early warning is a cost-effective way of minimizing human suffering, it may be questioned whether adequate attention and resources have been allocated for this purpose; and
- ♦ it should be noted that it is difficult to demonstrate the achievements of an early warning exercise, but easy to demonstrate its failures.

Statement by the High Commissioner for Refugees

As in previous years the UN High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), Mrs. Sadako Ogata, addressed the Commission at its 1998 session. The statement focussed on the human rights aspect of mass exodus and displacement and noted, *inter alia*, that: the root causes of refugee displacement are inextricably linked to persecution and the denial of human rights; acute poverty and the effects of cumulative discrimination often reflect a society's unequal distribution of wealth and privileges which may lead to the civil and political instability that lies at the root of forced displacement; the physical safety and human dignity of those forced to flee across borders is preserved through the principle of asylum, a principle that has been eroded in recent years with refugees having been prevented from seeking effective protection and returned to countries where their lives are in danger; there is a need to engage governments in a serious debate about humanitarian principles and standards for the treatment of refugees and displaced persons; and, human rights standards are of great importance in the search for, and implementation of, lasting solutions for refugees and other forcibly displaced persons.

The High Commissioner for Refugees also noted: the only legacy of violence is further violence and only a careful measure of justice, forgiveness and reconciliation can break the cycle of violence and displacement; the process of accountability should not be limited to states but should also extend to individual perpetrators of serious human rights violations; accountability through justice (national and international, for example, at the International Criminal Court) is imperative within any comprehensive approach directed at peace and reconciliation; and, human rights are owned by the people, not by states or governments, thus the focus in the search for solutions must be on the people. Expanding on the need to focus on the people, the High Commissioner stated that the focus must include: support for local efforts to rebuild confidence and respect for due process of law; a community-based approach which can often circumvent or alleviate the worst effects of political obstruction at the national level; support for projects that "add value" to efforts already underway, viz. supplement and complement rehabilitation and reconciliation initiatives that may already exist in the community; and, support for special initiatives for women returnees, including income-generation and economic empowerment programmes since women are often the primary breadwinners and caretakers of the family.