

remained an urgent need to improve national medical coverage through the health care system; labour disputes, affecting primarily public administration and plantations and refineries, were mainly the result of wage demands but also arose in response to non-payment of wages; restrictions on trade union freedoms were less numerous and serious than in the past; little attention had been paid to women's rights as a separate issue; and indigenous women were doubly disadvantaged and victimized by discrimination.

In the section addressing the identity and rights of indigenous peoples, the report refers to work of the Coordination Office of Organizations of the Mayan People of Guatemala (COPMAGUA), the members of which had committed themselves to offsetting the deficiencies of official institutions and agencies that should work to the benefit of indigenous peoples. The report states that indigenous peoples are the victims of *de facto* and, less frequently, *de jure* discrimination in areas where they make up the majority of the population. The report notes that a crucial question which remained open concerned the implementation of the Indigenous Agreement at the local and regional levels. The report states that indigenous communities have for several decades been in the midst of a serious crisis linked to modernization, which has been aggravated by the conflict. Information received by the mission indicated that the government had not yet introduced measures for encouraging or developing the indigenous communities' forms of social organization and that indigenous participation in the framework of the country's regionalization process had even less of a place on the agenda.

The report addresses other issues of concern and substance such as: the fact that the future of those forced into internal displacement by the armed conflict remained unclear, owing in part to difficulties in identifying them because they are scattered throughout the country, thereby creating the impossibility of establishing a specific policy for this type of uprooted population group; the continuing difficulties encountered by the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations, that began work in July 1997, in collecting information from the army which had been providing general rather than specific operational plans, making it hard to reconstruct the truth and establish precisely how certain situations arose which resulted in serious violations of civilians' rights; and, the lack of progress made in operationalizing the compensation programme for victims of human rights violations, in part because the government took the position that such a programme could be organized more effectively if the proposals made by the Commission to Clarify Past Human Rights Violations, due in the first quarter of 1998, could be taken into consideration. The report notes that: the peace process had been hampered by the slowness and inadequacy of decisions on plans and projects for incorporating members of the URNG into society; there had been no acts of violence against members of the URNG that could be interpreted as specifically targeting the organization, and the cases that had arisen bore every indication of being isolated

and selective events rather than constituting a pattern of politically motivated aggression; and the URNG had begun the process to become a political party but the fact that it had not been a registered party had limited both its role in the national sphere and its public statements.

The conclusions in the report cite a number of areas where measures still need to be taken. The mission therefore recommended, *inter alia*, that:

- ♦ special attention be paid to the history of social and political exclusion of the Maya, Garifuna and Xinca peoples;
- ♦ bearing in mind the limited extent to which the main actors on the political and institutional scene identify with the peace agreements, the government ensure that the agreements are adequately publicized by all means available;
- ♦ with a view to strengthening civilian power, the Congress give prompt and appropriate attention to the existing proposals for constitutional reform submitted by both the government and the Commission on the Strengthening of the Justice System;
- ♦ judicial functions be separated from administrative functions so that the Supreme Court and each of its divisions can give its exclusive attention to judicial tasks;
- ♦ the recommendations of the CSJS related to the mechanisms for the selection and appointment of judges be implemented as soon as possible;
- ♦ the strengthening of the Judicial Training School and the training unit of the Public Prosecutor's Office be continued;
- ♦ special attention be given to strengthening and improving the Public Prosecutor's Office, including through improved training for its professional staff, increasing the number of public defenders and continuing to add bilingual officials and public defenders;
- ♦ new efforts be made to strengthen the investigatory capacity of the Office of the Human Rights Procurator as well as to professionalize the office;
- ♦ the National Civil Police and the Police Academy be strengthened through the expansion of in-service training programmes for the entire police force in order better to address the situation of citizen insecurity;
- ♦ the National Civil Police take responsibility for all aspects of action to combat abduction and be provided with specialized or elite units to improve efforts to combat extortion and abduction;
- ♦ the office of the Presidential Chief of Staff be dissolved as soon as possible and a new agency organized to guarantee the security of the President, the Vice-President and members of their families;