

role of social safety nets as a means of protecting economic, social and cultural rights, human rights education, the interpretation and practice application of obligations on states parties, and a draft optional protocol to the Covenant. The Committee seeks written information from non-governmental organizations and at each of its sessions sets aside one meeting to receive oral information from NGOs.

(c) **Committee on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)** (**Fact Sheet No. 22)

CEDAW was created to monitor implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women which was adopted 1979 by the General Assembly and entered into force on 3 September 1981. The Committee comprises 23 members who are elected to four-year terms by states parties. States parties are required to submit reports to CEDAW every four years on the legal, judicial and policy measures they have taken and on the actual situation of the process of fully integrating women into the political, economic, social and cultural areas of their society. Article 20 of the Convention stipulates that the Committee meets once yearly for a period of two weeks. In 1995, however, the Committee received the approval of states parties to meet twice yearly in three-week sessions (January and June) in order to facilitate clearance of the backlog of state reports. States parties have been requested to amend article 20 in order to regularize the present temporary arrangement of twice yearly session. From time to time the Committee adopts general recommendations which are intended to assist states parties in terms of the steps to be taken to fulfil their obligations under the Convention. Recently, CERD also began issuing General Comments interpreting the content of articles of the Convention. Information to assist the Committee in its work is not only sought from various of the UN specialized agencies but also from non-governmental human rights and women's organizations as well as independent agencies.

(d) **Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD)** (**Fact Sheet No. 12)

CERD monitors the implementation of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination, which entered into force on 4 January 1969. CERD, composed of 18 experts elected by States parties for a term of four years, meets twice a year (in March and August) in three week sessions. CERD members examine the periodic reports State parties are required to make — comprehensive reports every four years, with brief updates at intervening two-year periods — and issue comments and recommendations on the basis of their dialogue with government representatives. In cases where a State's reports are seriously overdue, the Committee may review the situation in that country without a report.

In addition, the Committee may receive and act on a state-to-state complaint as well as communications received from individuals or groups claiming to be victims of a violation of the Convention. CERD is also designated to monitor the aim of the Convention regarding Trust and Non-Self-Governing Territories.

(e) **Committee on the Rights of the Child (CRC)** (**Fact Sheet No. 10, Rev.1)

CRC monitors the effective implementation by States parties of the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Convention was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly on 20 November 1989 and entered into force on 2 September 1990. This convention is the one which has the largest number of ratifications; only two States (USA and Somalia) have not yet ratified. CRC is composed of 10 experts who are nominated and elected to a term of four years by states parties. Members may be re-elected. The Committee meets three times each year (January, May, September). States parties must submit their initial report within two years of ratification or accession and thereafter every five years. The Committee seeks close cooperation not only with relevant UN bodies and agencies but also others, including non-governmental organizations. The Committee's discussions with states parties are normally open to the public and the Committee encourages governments to make the national reporting procedure open and transparent. The Committee's reporting guidelines for states emphasize concrete implementation measures to make a reality of the principles and provisions of the Convention.

In addition to reviewing State parties reports, the CRC interprets substantive articles of the Convention. In January 1993 the Committee initiated a procedure under which general discussions may be held on a specific theme or question. Since then, discussions have been held on the issues of the protection of children in armed conflicts, the economic exploitation of children, the rights of the child in the family context, the rights of girls, juvenile justice, and children living in a world with HIV/AIDS.

(f) **Human Rights Committee (HRC)** (**Fact Sheet No. 15)

HRC was established to monitor the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), which was adopted by the General Assembly on 16 December 1966 and entered into force 23 March 1976. It also monitors the implementation of the two Protocols to the ICCPR. The First Protocol, which was adopted and entered into force at the same time as the Covenant, allows individuals to submit complaints against a State party alleging violations of human rights or fundamental freedoms protected by the Covenant. The Second Protocol, which was adopted on 15 December 1989 and entered into force on 11 July 1991, seeks the abolition of death penalty.