

enforced disappearances; reminded governments of the need to ensure that authorities conduct prompt and impartial inquiries in all circumstances, whenever there is a reason to believe that an enforced disappearance has occurred in territory under their jurisdiction, and that, if allegations are confirmed, perpetrators should be prosecuted; and again urged the governments concerned to take steps to protect the families of disappeared persons against any intimidation or ill-treatment to which they might be subjected.

With regard to the Working Group (WG), the GA, *inter alia*: recalled the importance of the WG as a channel of communication between the families of disappeared persons and the government concerned; invited the WG to identify obstacles to the realization of the provisions of the Declaration, to recommend ways of overcoming those obstacles, and to continue a dialogue with governments and relevant intergovernmental and non-governmental organizations; encouraged the WG to continue to consider the question of impunity, in close collaboration with the rapporteur appointed by the Sub-Commission and with due regard for relevant provisions of the Declaration; and requested the Group to pay the utmost attention to cases of children subjected to enforced disappearance and children of disappeared persons, and to cooperate closely with the governments concerned to search for and identify those children. The GA also appealed to the governments concerned to cooperate fully with the WG, to reply promptly to its requests for information, and to give serious consideration to inviting the WG to visit their countries.



ECONOMIC, SOCIAL AND CULTURAL RIGHTS

Reports of the Secretary-General

The reports of the Secretary-General (SG), as requested by the 1997 Commission, were to consider economic, social and cultural rights from the perspective of the special problems faced by developing countries attempting to achieve these human rights. They were to focus on the international debt strategy and contain an analysis of its effects on the enjoyment of the human rights of the people of the developing countries, and in particular of the most vulnerable and low-income groups.

The first report (E/CN.4/1998/24) summarizes comments and observations received from the government of Ecuador, the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Industrial Development Organization, and from two NGOs, OXFAM International and the Foodfirst Information and Action Network (FIAN). The report also includes a summary of the comments and proposals made during the second session of the Intergovernmental Group of Experts on the Right to Development in October 1997.

The second report (E/CN.4/1998/25) is based on information and observations received from: the governments of Cuba, Lebanon and Morocco; the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Public Information, the Division for Palestinian Rights and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP); two of the UN's specialized agencies, viz. the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) and the International Labour Organisation (ILO); the Council of Europe; and two NGOs, viz. the International Federation of Settlements and Neighbourhood Centres and Pax Romana. A number of comments were addressed to the question of whether or not a special rapporteur on economic, social and cultural rights should be appointed by the Commission. Criticisms of such an appointment included that it would: not guarantee effective promotion and protection of these rights; would essentially duplicate the monitoring process of the UN conferences on economic and social issues; be very broad and carry the danger of the work being unfocused; function more as a promotional mandate, therefore requiring more resources but potentially receiving only the same resources as those allocated to other mechanisms; and duplicate a significant part of the mandate of the OHCHR as well as that of the ILO. Some support for an appointment was expressed, on the understanding that the mandate should be well-defined and highly focussed.

The right to food

At its 1997 session, the Commission adopted resolution 1997/8, reaffirming that hunger constitutes an outrage and a violation of human dignity and, further, that urgent measures at the national, regional and international level were needed for its elimination. The resolution also endorsed the request made in the World Food Summit Plan of Action to the High Commissioner for Human Rights, in consultation with others, to define better the rights related to food in article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and propose ways to implement and realize those rights. The Commission invited the High Commissioner to report to the 1998 session on the implementation of the 1997 resolution.

The High Commissioner's report to the 1998 Commission (E/CN.4/1998/21) notes that one of the concrete and practical responses made by the OHCHR to the objectives and commitments set out in the Rome Declaration and Programme of Action was, in December 1997, to convene an expert consultation on the human right to adequate food. The seminar was attended by a number of independent experts as well as representatives from FAO, World Food Programme, International Fund for Agricultural Development, the UNHCR, the Subcommittee on Nutrition of the Administrative Committee on Coordination, as well as the Chairman of FAO's Committee on World Food Security.

The summary of the general discussion held at the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights referred to the need to ensure that a human rights framework was