

measures taken to ensure the implementation of children's economic, social and cultural rights to the maximum were not adequate and that existing bodies, including the Youth and Children Committee, did not have adequate capacity to address these issues. The Committee also referred to an insufficiency in policies, measures and programmes for the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable children.

Concern was expressed that the general principles of the Convention, are not being fully applied and integrated into the implementation of all articles of the Convention. Particular concern was expressed that the measures to prevent and combat discrimination practised against Roma children, disabled children and children born out of wedlock were insufficient. Of equal concern to the Committee was the fact that, when tackling situations of detention, institutionalization, abandonment of children and the right of the child to testify in court, insufficient consideration was given to the principle of the best interests of the child.

Acknowledging the initiatives already undertaken by the authorities, the Committee stated its continuing concern that the measures taken to inform and educate all parts of society, adults and children alike, on the provisions and principles of the Convention were insufficient, as was the training on the Convention provided to professional groups, such as lawyers, judges, law enforcement personnel, teachers, social workers and civil servants. The Committee also noted with concern the reported ill-treatment of children in the family and in institutions, and the lack of adequate measures for the psycho-social recovery from such abuses. Cases of ill-treatment of children by law enforcement personnel, in or outside detention centres, were noted as well as a recent rise in child prostitution, and the production and dissemination of child pornography. On the last point the Committee expressed its serious concern that no specific and appropriate legislation and programmes exist to prevent and combat sexual abuse and exploitation.

In the area of adoption, recent changes in the legislation regulating the practice were acknowledged but shortcomings were seen to include a lack of compatibility of the current legal framework with the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to the principle of the best interests of the child. The Committee also stated that it was worried about the insufficient measures taken to tackle the issues of child malnutrition, disability, mental health, early pregnancies, cases of early marriage, and the problem of youth suicide. Other areas of concern included: the school drop-out rate and insufficient alternative educational programmes; insufficiencies in the measures taken to ensure that the school curricula is guided by the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to human rights education; the absence of legal safeguards to protect children employed in the informal sector; incompatibilities in the area of the administration of juvenile justice and articles in the Convention, as well as other international standards; inadequacies in implementation of the rights of a child to legal assistance and judicial review, and the stipulation that deprivation of liberty be used only as a last resort; and, stigmatization of the most vulnerable categories of children, including those belonging to the Roma minority.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ undertake a comprehensive review of the national legislation to bring it fully into conformity with the principles and provisions of the Convention, especially in the areas of labour, adoption, the administration of juvenile justice and domestic violence;
- ▶ consider, on an urgent basis, the adoption of a law on the protection of the child;
- ▶ strengthen coordination between the various governmental mechanisms involved in children's rights, at both the national and local levels, with a view to developing a comprehensive policy on children and ensuring effective evaluation of the implementation of the Convention;
- ▶ give priority attention to the development of a system of data collection and to the identification of appropriate disaggregated indicators with a view to addressing all areas of the Convention and use the data collected as a basis for the design of programmes to improve the situation of children, particularly those belonging to the most disadvantaged groups;
- ▶ consider establishing an independent mechanism to monitor observance of children's rights, such as an Ombudsperson or a National Commission for Children's Rights;
- ▶ take all necessary measures to take fully into account the principle of the best interests of the child for every decision related to the child's right to give testimony before a court;
- ▶ launch a systematic information campaign, for both children and adults, on the Convention and consider incorporating it in school curricula;
- ▶ take appropriate measures to facilitate access by children to information about their rights;
- ▶ develop a comprehensive training programme for professional groups working with and for children;
- ▶ ensure to the extent possible that social services have sufficient financial resources to meet the needs of children, paying particular attention to the protection of children belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups;
- ▶ develop appropriate alternatives to institutional care and, in cases where the placement of children in institutions is necessary, adopt measures to ensure periodic review of the treatment provided to those children and all other circumstances relevant to their placement;
- ▶ consider establishing a system of "guardian ad litem" (court appointed guardian);
- ▶ adopt measures to provide appropriate assistance to the family to meet child-rearing responsibilities, including parental guidance and counselling with a view, *inter alia*, to preventing domestic violence and abuse, abandonment and institutionalization;
- ▶ strengthen sex education to prevent early pregnancies and launch information campaigns concerning family planning;
- ▶ undertake a national and comprehensive study on suicide among youth to enable the authorities to improve their