

Racial Discrimination

Acceded: 23 June 1976.

Ethiopia's seventh through 11th period reports (covering the period 1989–1997) have not been submitted; the 11th periodic report was due 23 July 1997.

At its August 1997 session the Committee reviewed implementation of the Convention in absence of a report from the government. The Committee's concluding observations and comments (A/52/18, paras. 406–408) noted that no report had been submitted since 1989 and that the government had not responded to the invitation to participate in the meeting. The Committee decided that a communication should be sent to the government of Ethiopia setting out its reporting obligations and urging that the dialogue with the Committee be resumed as soon as possible. The Committee suggested that the government may wish to avail itself of the technical assistance offered under the advisory services and technical assistance programme of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights with the aim of drawing up and submitting a report to the Committee's next session.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 8 July 1980; ratified: 10 September 1981.

Ethiopia's fourth periodic report was due 22 April 1994.

Reservations and Declarations: Paragraph 1 of article 29.

Torture

Acceded: 14 March 1994.

Ethiopia's initial report was due 12 April 1995.

Rights of the Child

Acceded: 14 May 1991.

Ethiopia's second periodic report is due 12 June 1998.

Ethiopia's initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.27) was considered by the Committee at its January 1997 session. The report prepared by the government includes information on areas such as: employment, marriageable age, criminal liability, civil and civic rights, education, sexual consent and the general principles related to the best interests of the child. Information is also provided on, *inter alia*: name and nationality, preservation of identity, freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association and assembly, privacy, family environment and alternative care, health and welfare, education, and special protection measures.

The Committee's concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.67) note with appreciation the steps taken since 1991 to set up democratic institutions in the country, including the adoption of a new Constitution which incorporates international human rights standards and a specific reference to some of the rights set out in the Convention on the Rights of the Child. The Committee noted that the Convention, as well as other international human rights treaties, are incorporated into domestic law, and that article 13 of the Constitution states that human rights provisions of the Constitution are to be interpreted in line with international human rights instruments ratified by Ethiopia. The Committee also welcomed the political commitment within the country to improve the situation of children, as seen in the establishment of an Inter-ministerial Legal Committee to review national legislation and its compatibility with the provisions of the Convention, and committees on the rights of the child at the national, regional, zonal and *woreda* levels, as well as through the

adoption of a National Plan of Action and the establishment of a Ministerial Committee to monitor its implementation. Note was taken as well of information campaigns on HIV/AIDS and harmful traditional practices affecting children. In terms of the latter, the Committee welcomed the establishment of the National Committee on Traditional Practices, which has a mandate to develop information and sensitization campaigns on all forms of harmful traditional practices affecting the health of women and children, with a particular emphasis on female genital mutilation. The Committee noted with appreciation that primary education has been made free while, at the same time, expressing regret that it has not yet been made compulsory.

The factors identified by the Committee as impediments to full implementation of the Convention included: economic, social and political challenges arising in part from years of civil war and the transition to democracy; the existence of inter-regional and urban/rural disparities, in particular with regard to the availability of resources and infrastructure; and, certain traditional practices and customs, particularly in rural areas, that hamper the effective implementation of the provisions of the Convention, especially with regard to girls.

The principal subjects of concern to the Committee included: failure of the government to publish the full text of the Convention in the *Official Gazette*, making it difficult for law enforcement officials, judicial personnel and other professionals working with and for children to have access to and an understanding of its provisions; the lack of awareness and understanding in Ethiopia of the principles and provisions of the Convention; the lack of adequate and systematic training for law enforcement officials, judicial personnel, teachers, social workers and medical personnel; the fact that insufficient attention has been paid in practice as well as in legislation to the principles of the best interests of the child, respect for the child's views and the child's participation in family, social and school life; the lack of adequate mechanisms for the collection of reliable quantitative and qualitative data on the situation of children throughout the country, thereby hindering an effective assessment of the situation of each and all groups of children in all parts of the country and making adoption of targeted policies in the field of the protection of the rights of children difficult; and, the negative effects of poverty on children, as illustrated by high levels of infant and under-five mortality rates and malnutrition, and at the low levels of school enrolment, education, immunization coverage and health services in general.

The Committee also noted with concern discrepancies between the provisions in domestic law and the principles and rights set out in the Convention, including: a different minimum age of marriage between girls (15 years of age) and boys (18 years of age); the possibility, under the Penal Code, of sentencing children to corporal punishment; provision in the Civil Code for "light bodily punishment" as an educative measure within the family; and limitation of the right to counsel when the child may be represented by his or her parents or legal guardian during legal proceedings. Concern was reiterated over prevailing traditional attitudes and harmful practices, such as female genital mutilation, early marriages and teenage pregnancies, and the persistence of discriminatory social attitudes against vulnerable groups of children,