

particular to structural adjustment programmes and external debt.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: some discrepancies between domestic legislation and the provisions of the Convention, as well as the slow pace of the current process of reform; lack of measures taken to disseminate information on the provisions of the Convention; that the stringent budgetary measures and external debt, as well as the persistence of widespread poverty and uneven income distribution, are still having a negative impact on the situation of children; the disparities in domestic legislation, especially concerning the minimum legal ages for access to work and for marriage, and the use of the biological criterion of puberty to set different ages of maturity between girls and boys; the growing disparities between rural and urban areas as well as the growing number of persons living in urban poor and marginalized areas; and the predominance of discrimination on the basis of ethnic origin, gender, social status, and disabilities.

The Committee expressed concern over: the insufficient measures taken in the area of birth registration, and the lack of awareness and understanding on registration procedures, especially in rural areas; the persistent practice of ill treatment of children; the insufficient awareness and lack of information, research, statistics and data on ill treatment and abuse, including sexual abuse, both within and outside the family; the insufficient legal protection measures and appropriate resources, both financial and human, as well as at the lack of adequately trained personnel to prevent and combat such forms of abuse; the insufficiency of rehabilitation measures for such children and their limited access to justice; and the insufficient protection measures regarding intercountry adoption.

Concerns were raised with regard to: the situation of children living in institutions, as well as the situation of children living in penitentiary centres with one of their parents; the lack of follow-up measures and a monitoring and evaluation system on the development of these groups of children; the persistence of a high infant mortality rate, limited access of children to basic health services, the persistence of common childhood diseases, the increase of malnutrition in children under 5 years, and increasing adolescent health-related problems such as teenage pregnancy, smoking and alcohol consumption; the lack of specific provisions in domestic legislation concerning the rights of asylum-seeking and refugee children and the right to family reunification; and, the situation of children living in the region of Chapare, who are constantly exposed to the side effects of anti-narcotics interventions and live in a violent environment; the situation of children living in towns on the border with Chile, whose lives are threatened by landmines planted in that region.

The Committee noted its concern over: economic exploitation which remains one of the major problems affecting children in Bolivia; the situation of children

living and working on the street; the absence of data and a comprehensive study on the issue of sexual exploitation of children; the conditions of children living in special institutions, the use of violence by law enforcement officials, the fact that deprivation of liberty is not systematically used only as a measure of last resort, and that children are detained together with adults.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ take all necessary steps to accelerate the current process of reform of domestic legislation to incorporate the provisions of the Convention;
- ♦ continue efforts related to the provision of sensitization programmes and training to all professional groups working with and for children;
- ♦ continue undertaking all appropriate measures to the maximum extent of its available resources, including international cooperation, to continue ensuring that sufficient budgetary allocation is provided to social services for children; pay particular attention to the protection of children belonging to vulnerable and marginalized groups; take into consideration the children's rights component in designing social policies and programmes; continue efforts to reduce the burden of its external debt, including the measures taken within the framework of the World Bank/International Monetary Fund's initiative "Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC)";
- ♦ introduce adequate reforms to the Draft Code of Children and Adolescents, and raise the minimum legal ages for work and marriage;
- ♦ increase measures to reduce economic and social disparities, including between rural and urban areas, and to prevent discrimination against the most disadvantaged groups of children;
- ♦ make further efforts to ensure the implementation of the principles of "best interests of the child" and "respect for the views of the child" — especially children's rights to participate in the family, at school, within other institutions, and in society in general — and reflect these principles in all policies and programmes relating to children;
- ♦ take all available measures to ensure the immediate registration of the birth of all children, and ensure that birth registration procedures are widely known by the population at large;
- ♦ take all appropriate measures to prevent and combat ill treatment and sexual abuse of children within the family, schools and society at large; set up social programmes to prevent all types of child abuse, and ensure the rehabilitation of child victims; strengthen law enforcement with respect to such crimes; develop adequate procedures and mechanisms to deal with complaints of child abuse;