

customary — making it difficult to adopt and enforce laws which genuinely protect women's rights.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: religious and customary laws and practices in the family context that violate women's human rights; inadequacies in the legal and constitutional framework; the lack of statistical data in such areas as domestic violence, prostitution, women's labour — including in the informal sector, and women's and children's health; the inadequate representation of women in the judiciary; the various forms of violence against women and the absence of laws, programmes and policies to address this serious problem; and the low literacy rate among women and the low attendance rate of girls at secondary institutions.

Concern was also raised over: the lack of statistics and information on AIDS and STDs and the fact that polygamy and prostitution contribute to the spread of sexually transmitted diseases; the rates of maternal and infant mortality and the lack of medical facilities for women and children; and the fact that rural women have little access to education and credit facilities.

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

- ♦ take effective measures to change laws and cultural norms which allow such practices as polygamy, one-sided repudiation, unequal subsistence rights and shares, and the stipulation that women may not travel without the permission of a male relative;
- ♦ collect statistical information disaggregated by sex in all areas of importance in the lives of women and include that data in future reports;
- ♦ adopt temporary special measures to increase the participation of women in the judiciary;
- ♦ collect information on violence against women; introduce and enforce appropriate laws, programmes and policies to confront all forms of violence against women; establish shelters for victims; introduce measures to ensure that women are protected from reprisal where they report their victimization; introduce, at all levels of education, courses on women's and children's rights and public awareness campaigns highlighting these issues;
- ♦ increase efforts, through implementation of a specific programme, to reduce illiteracy among women, particularly in rural areas, and promote access by girls to secondary education; ensure that primary education is free;
- ♦ compile statistical data and information on the incidence of HIV/AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases;
- ♦ increase efforts to guarantee access to medical services and hospital medical facilities, particularly in the context of women's health needs; make family

planning programmes available to all, including young women and men; establish, as a priority, provision of free access to health services; and

- ♦ strengthen socio-economic programmes so as to reduce discrimination suffered by rural women.

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS

Report of the Special Rapporteur

The Special Rapporteur (SR) on the situation in Nigeria was appointed at the 1997 session of the Commission. In the enabling resolution the Commission expressed concern over, *inter alia*: continuing violations such as arbitrary detention and failure to respect due process of law; continued use of the flawed judicial process that had previously led to the arbitrary execution of Ken Saro-Wiwa and his associates; the refusal of the government to cooperate with the Commission; and the fact that the absence of representative government was contrary to the popular support for democratic government which was expressed in the 1993 elections. The Commission called on the government to respect and meet the obligations Nigeria had freely undertaken under the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and other human rights instruments, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It also called on Nigeria to cooperate fully with the Commission and its mechanisms and take concrete steps to restore democratic government without delay. The Special Rapporteur for 1998 was Soli Sorabjee.

The report to the 1998 Commission (E/CN.4/1998/62) includes a brief description of communications with the government concerning an in-country visit, as well as historical information on conditions in Nigeria, the government's international obligations, mechanisms for the protection of human rights, allegations related to specific rights, and measures related to human rights that were taken by the government. The report notes that the SR was unable to secure approval from the Nigerian authorities for a fact-finding mission to Nigeria prior to the 1998 session on the Commission. As a consequence, the report was based on information gathered during consultations in London and Geneva with individuals, NGO representatives, representatives of inter-governmental organizations and specialized agencies, as well as commentary in the reports of several of the Commission's thematic mechanisms, e.g., arbitrary detention, summary/arbitrary execution, the independence of judges and lawyers, torture, and freedom of expression.

The report recalls the November 1993 decision of the Provisional Ruling Council (PRC), the October 1995 PRC announcement of a three-year programme for the restoration of democracy and return to civilian rule, and the fact that the government had established three of the five institutions scheduled to be created according to its transition timetable — namely the Transitional Implementation Committee, the National Electoral Commis-