

inequitable international political and economic order was also responsible for the outbreak and continuation of such conflicts, as were the actions of other states in some cases; violations of human rights, the most immediate cause of mass exoduses, were generally manifestations of other, more complex, phenomena; use of force, foreign occupation or domination, and unilateral economic coercion or international sanctions to "resolve" conflicts, "halt" violations of human rights and "promote" democracy, were factors in creating refugees and mass exoduses; and, chronic underdevelopment was ultimately the basic cause of the mass exodus phenomenon.

The government emphasized that the actual prevention of mass exoduses called not simply for early-warning and humanitarian assistance measures, but for lasting and effective solutions and noted that greater bilateral and multilateral efforts were needed, with specific commitments and effective contributions to developing countries in order to promote the realization of all human rights, in particular the right to development.

Minimum humanitarian standards, Report of the S-G to the CHR: (E/CN.4/1997/77, Section I, Cuba, paras. 1-18)

The report of the Secretary-General includes information provided by the government in which a number of points are made, including that: measures to establish minimum humanitarian standards should be based on the principles of sovereign equality and non-interference in the internal affairs of states; the scope of the provisions of international humanitarian law and of human rights themselves must be properly monitored to prevent the superposition of concepts and notions which might lead to the formulation of policies contrary to these principles; concepts, such as that of "public emergency", must be properly defined; the Declaration of Minimum Humanitarian Standards adopted by the expert meeting in Turku/Abo, Finland, in 1990 uses concepts such as internal violence, disturbances, tensions and public emergency, which are not clearly defined from the legal point of view and on which there is still no consensus about a standard; respect for the principles of international law, such as non-interference in internal affairs, sovereign equality, the independence and sovereignty of states and the right to self-determination of peoples, is as important as the adoption of minimum humanitarian standards in avoiding human suffering; and, the unfair and unequal international political and economic order, underdevelopment, the unequal distribution of income among countries and within countries and, in some cases, the actions of other states and the implementation of measures of coercion are also responsible for the outbreak and continuation of internal conflicts and the suffering they cause.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Report of the CHR Special Rapporteur

The interim report of the CHR Special Rapporteur (A/52/479) states that information received suggested a continuation of the pattern of human rights abuses set in previous years with no change in terms of the rights to non-discrimination on political grounds and freedom of expression, assembly and association. The report notes, however,

that groups continued to spring up as forums in which possible alternative solutions to the problems currently facing society were discussed and some groups had managed to bring their conclusions to the attention of the authorities with a view to promoting a dialogue. The authorities have showed no sign of openness to such a dialogue and have maintained a repressive attitude most of the time. As a result, such groups remain weak, since there is virtually no way to strengthen them. The report states that there have been no changes in other areas addressed in previous reports, such as the lack of independence in the administration of justice, prison conditions, the lack of trade union freedoms or the precarious working conditions caused by the economic situation.

In the section dealing with non-discrimination on political grounds and freedom of expression and association, the report notes information indicating: harassment of individuals by authorities, including arrest and detention, particularly by state security bodies, for reasons linked to the peaceful exercise of the right to freedom of expression and association; and, the majority of those harassed had ties to groups with political, trade union, human rights or similar leanings and independent journalists whose requests to be legalized are systematically left unanswered by the authorities. The commentary on the situation in prisons refers to conditions such as: the need for inmates to find pieces of plastic to avoid getting wet while they sleep because the buildings are in such disrepair that rain pours through; countless rats living in the areas where food is stored and prepared; unbearable meal-times in cafeterias because of the huge quantity of flies; overcrowding; lack of sufficient food and deficiencies in vitamins and protein; a shortage of medicines and medical assistance; the spread of infections and epidemics of illnesses like scabies and amoebic dysentery; beatings and a lack of respect shown to prisoners in the use of obscene words, shouts, shoves and kicks; and, constant searches of inmates and routine opening of their mail.

The report cites comments by several of the human rights treaty bodies which, unlike the Special Rapporteur, enjoy the cooperation the government.

In this regard, the report recalls the work of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and its favourable response to: progressive legislation on gender equality, the significant increase in the number of women in all fields and levels of education, the steady decline in maternal mortality; and, the decline in the drop-out rates for girls and the development of adult education programmes for women. The Committee noted with concern, however: the persistence of gender stereotypes despite the high levels of school enrolment; the fact that domestic work and child care continued to be the responsibility of women; the need to expand the participation of women at the highest levels of political power; indirect discrimination arising from the fact that women traditionally were less well paid; the government's assertion that domestic violence was infrequent and was not considered to be a social problem; because of the embargo, the serious shortage of essential products like medicines and contraceptive devices; and, the re-emergence of prostitution, which was linked to the growth in tourism and to the economic problems facing women. The report notes that the Committee recommended that, *inter alia*: successful