

- ▶ strengthen coordination between the various governmental mechanisms at both the national and local levels, with a view to developing a comprehensive policy on the elimination of racial discrimination and ensuring effective evaluation of the implementation of the Convention;
- ▶ pursue its efforts to establish an independent mechanism such as an ombudsman or a National Commission for Human Rights to monitor observance of human rights;
- ▶ pay more attention to the protection of the civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights of Romas and strengthen efforts to implement measures of affirmative action in that respect;
- ▶ develop adequate indicators and other means of monitoring the economic and social living conditions of Roma;
- ▶ provide, in the next report, statistical data and information on the situation of all minorities in relationship to the provisions of article 5 (non-discrimination);
- ▶ take more active steps to prevent and counter attitudes and acts of racial violence against individuals and to investigate such acts promptly and provide in the next report detailed information on the effective implementation of the provisions of the Penal Code, allegations and prosecutions of cases of acts of racial discrimination, and complaints and penalties relating to acts of racial and ethnic discrimination;
- ▶ take immediate steps to prevent and combat cases of excessive use of force by members of the security forces, including education and sensitization of law enforcement officials about the provisions of the Convention;
- ▶ prevent any de facto segregation of minorities;
- ▶ clarify its practice concerning the right of all Bulgarian citizens to participate in political life;
- ▶ launch a systematic information campaign to inform and educate all parts of society on the provisions of the Convention, provide human rights education at all levels in the educational system and provide comprehensive human rights training to all segments of the population with a view to combatting negative attitudes and prejudices towards minorities and to promote understanding, tolerance and friendship;
- ▶ make Bulgaria's declaration under article 14 of the Convention more widely known and ensure wide dissemination of both the government's report and the Committee's concluding observations and comments.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 17 July 1980; ratified: 8 February 1982.

Bulgaria's fourth periodic report was due 10 March 1995.

Torture

Signed: 10 June 1986; ratified: 16 December 1986.

Bulgaria's second and third periodic reports were due 25 June 1992 and 1996 respectively.

Reservations and Declarations: Article 20.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 31 May 1990; ratified: 3 June 1991.

Bulgaria's second periodic report is due 2 July 1998.

Bulgaria's initial report (CRC/C/8/Add.29) was considered by the Committee at its January 1997 session. The report prepared by the government contains a review of constitutional and legal provisions related to the areas and rights set out in the Convention and covers, *inter alia*: general principles (e.g., non-discrimination, the best interest of the child); name and nationality; freedom of expression, thought, conscience, religion, association and peaceful assembly; access to appropriate information; privacy; parental guidance and responsibilities; family reunification; adoption, illicit transfer and non-return; abuse and neglect, including physical and psychological recovery and social reintegration; survival and development; children with disabilities; health and social services; education, vocational training and guidance; children in emergency situations, in conflict with the law and in situations of exploitation; and children belonging to a minority or indigenous group.

The Committee's concluding observations (CRC/C/15/Add.66) welcomed various law reforms, including adoption of a new Constitution (1991), the Social Welfare Act (1991), the National Education Act (1992), and the Law on Care Centres for Homeless Children (1995), and the adoption of amendments to the Penal Code (1995) and to the recent Law for Combatting and Preventing Juvenile Justice Delinquency (1996). Note is taken of the precedence of international instruments over domestic law when those laws contradict provisions in the treaties ratified by Bulgaria. The Committee also welcomed the establishment, within the Council of Ministers, of a Youth and Children Committee (YCC) in 1995, which functions (a) to develop the state's policy towards children and young people by working to make protection of children a priority of state policy; (b) to elaborate and submit to the government draft acts and programmes for the development and protection of children; and (c) to distribute the subsidies approved by the state budget for implementing the state's policy with respect to children.

While recognizing that the transition to a market-oriented economy has had a serious impact on the population in general and on vulnerable groups, including children, in particular, the Committee identified a number of areas of concern. These include that: national laws and regulations are not fully consistent with the principles and provisions of the Convention; a law on the protection of the child has not yet been finalized and adopted; insufficient coordination among government bodies dealing with the welfare of children at the national and local levels has meant that Bulgaria has been unable to develop a comprehensive approach to the implementation of the Convention; Bulgaria lacks both an integrated strategy on children and a systematic mechanism to monitor progress in all areas covered by the Convention, and in relation to all groups of children, in urban and rural areas, and especially those affected by the consequences of the economic transition; the government's capacity to produce statistical data needs strengthening, as does its capacity to evaluate progress and assess the impact of policies adopted on children, in particular the most vulnerable groups of children.

The Committee expressed concern that there was no independent body to monitor observance of human rights, particularly the rights of the child. In terms of article 4 (economic, social and cultural rights), the Committee felt that the