

and support the employment of women in public service; changes in family law establishing additional protection for women against economic discrimination in cases of divorce; and creation of various female education programmes. The report states, however, that despite such examples of progress, women continue to be disproportionately subjected to violations of human rights — domestic violence, brutalization in war, harmful traditional practices, female infanticide, unequal access and discrimination in the allocation of economic and social resources, and denial of access to paid work.

On the situation of children, the report notes, *inter alia*: increased attention is paid in many countries to children and their status as human beings with full rights; extraterritorial laws have been adopted to punish those who engage in the sexual exploitation of children abroad; some states have enacted a prohibition of practices that harm girls; there have been changes in the treatment of child refugee claimants; legal reforms have been made to protect the child's welfare in situations of divorce; institutions have been created specifically for the protection of children, such as ombudspersons for children; improvements have been made in expanding access to health care and education; steps have been taken to cut infant and maternal mortality; and there has also been a great increase in the proportion of girls enrolled in schools in developing countries. Movement from commitment to action remains crucial, however, to address: the negative effects of poverty and structural adjustment; high infant mortality rates; malnutrition; child trafficking, sexual exploitation and bonded labour; inadequate health services and poor school attendance; persistent discrimination and cultural practices that harm girls; insufficient supplies, access to or services for children in war zones; and a lack of recourse for the complaints of children. The report also states that slavery continues to mark its scourge in the form of millions of child labourers, who are often themselves trafficked and sold into the most deplorable conditions. Reference is also made to the recruitment of child soldiers.

In the section dealing with special protection, the report provides commentary on the rights of: indigenous peoples, persons belonging to minorities, internally displaced persons, migrant workers, and persons with disabilities.

With regard to responses to acute human rights violations, the report notes the progress made in abolishing the use of capital punishment and recalls the VDPA's appeal to states to abrogate legislation leading to impunity for those responsible for grave violations of human rights. The adoption of the Statute for the International Criminal Court is cited as one example of international community's determination to hold all individuals, regardless of official rank or capacity, responsible for committing such horrific crimes as genocide, war crimes and crimes against humanity.

The review of advisory services and technical assistance notes that the programme is now active in more than

50 countries on five continents; programme areas include a broad range of institutional entry points for human rights, democracy and the rule of law, such as advisory services, training, fellowships and grants directed to constitutional assistance; legislative reform; free and fair elections; independent judiciaries; fair prosecutions; humane policing; decent penal institutions; effective parliaments; independent national institutions ("Paris Principles"); and strong and capable national non-governmental organizations. The failure of resources to keep pace with ever-increasing demands on the programme (the shortfall as of 31 August 1998: US\$5.2 million) is noted.

Referring to the UN Decade for Human Rights Education (1995-2004), the report recalls that the international Plan of Action for the Decade sets out detailed objectives for the international community: the building and strengthening of programmes and capacities for human rights education at the international, regional, national and local levels; the coordinated development of effective materials; the strengthening of the role and capacity of the mass media; and the global dissemination of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Within that framework, initiatives taken at the national level have included: sponsoring human rights training programmes for government officials and law enforcement officials, as well as representatives of civil society and providing overall policy guidance through the publication of training and resource materials; addition of human rights-related courses to school curricula at all levels of instruction; development of new methods of human rights instruction; and adoption of comprehensive plans of action for human rights education and establishment of national committees to coordinate activities in this area.

On implementation, the report notes that making human rights a reality was the overarching idea that guided the World Conference on Human Rights and states that the "post-Vienna" period does not offer a consistent picture with regard to the implementation of human rights. Resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights and the General Assembly, reports of special rapporteurs and working groups, as well as comments by the treaty-based bodies, provide evidence of positive developments in many countries. This optimistic picture is distorted, however, by national laws remaining in force, or even newly adopted, that are inconsistent with the letter or spirit of international human rights obligations. The report states that it is unquestionable that grave and large-scale human rights violations are both the source and result of conflicts that are currently predominantly of an internal nature and inflict severe damage on civilian populations. Referring to the Secretary-General's call for declaring the next century "the age of prevention", the High Commissioner noted that in the vast majority of cases, this is equated with addressing human rights problems as the root causes of conflicts.

The report concludes by suggesting that the General Assembly may wish to examine the response of govern-