

number of refugees and internally displaced persons whose stay in Azerbaijan may be prolonged.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee were: the lack of information concerning the status of the Covenant in domestic law; a generally low level of awareness among the general public of the emerging national legislative framework which includes provisions related to human rights; lack of an effective recourse mechanism for persons who consider that their rights have been violated; the fact that a Constitutional Court has not yet been established; the insufficient attention given to encouraging the development of small and medium sized enterprises; and, the inadequate attention paid to the adverse environmental consequences of some of the activities of the oil industry.

The Committee also expressed concern over: lack of information on the extent to which the general public is able to participate in the privatization process; the lack of detailed information in the report about the situation of refugees in Azerbaijan; the lack of sufficient information on the status of women, including in the areas of health care, professional opportunities and measured income differentials between women and men; the high level of unemployment and the fact that many people have entered the informal sector to secure sustenance; the attempts on the part of the government to eradicate the informal employment sector; the lack of detailed information on the right to form and join trade unions; the broad range of workers who are prohibited from exercising the right to strike; the reduction in the purchasing power of pensions and social insurance arising from the disintegration of public finance and the high rate of inflation; lack of effective control over intercountry adoption of children; inadequacies in medical care for women during pregnancy and childbirth; the rising level of poverty; the fact that a large proportion of the population is living without safe drinking water; the lack of affordable housing; the decline in agricultural production because of inefficiencies in the privatization process related to farms; inadequacies in food production and distribution; the declining quality of medical care and the decline in the number of persons benefiting from medical care; the fact that vulnerable groups and the homeless are not given adequate protection against forced evictions; and, the weakening of the educational system as a result of a general shortage of resources.

The Committee recommended that the government:

- ▶ grant the Covenant definitive status in domestic law so that it may be invoked in the courts and include instruction on the ICESCR in the training of lawyers, judges, social workers and other professionals relevant to economic, social and cultural rights;
- ▶ establish, as a matter of priority, the Constitutional Court;
- ▶ regulate the oil industry more effectively, particularly with regard to environmental protection;
- ▶ encourage diversification of the economy, including small and medium sized enterprises, conduct the privatization process in an open and transparent manner and ensure that the conditions under which oil concessions are granted are always made public;
- ▶ include in the next report information on the situation faced by refugees and obstacles faced by women in the protection of their economic, social and cultural rights;

- ▶ work with, and seek to regulate rather than eliminate, the informal sector, including through provision of low-interest loans and credit incentives;
- ▶ include in the next report detailed information on the right to form and join trade unions and clarify the meaning attributed to "political activities" prohibited in the 1994 Law on Trade Unions;
- ▶ address in a more efficient and focussed manner housing needs, particularly for disadvantaged groups and collect relevant information and enact appropriate legislation in the area of forced evictions;
- ▶ place effective control on inter-state adoption of children in order to prevent sexual and other forms of exploitation;
- ▶ ensure that all women receive adequate medical care during pregnancy and childbirth;
- ▶ address as a matter of utmost urgency the basic needs of the population, including safe drinking water, food, affordable housing and health care; and,
- ▶ allocate resources to ensure that national education standards are strictly observed.

Civil and Political Rights

Acceded: 13 August 1992.

Azerbaijan's second periodic report is due 12 November 1998.

Racial Discrimination

Acceded: 16 August 1996.

Azerbaijan's initial report was due 15 September 1997.

Discrimination against Women

Acceded: 10 July 1995.

Azerbaijan's initial report (CEDAW/C/AZE/1) has been submitted and is pending for consideration at the Committee's January 1998; the second periodic report is due 9 August 2000.

Torture

Acceded: 16 August 1996.

Azerbaijan's initial report was due 14 September 1997.

Rights of the Child

Acceded: 13 August 1992.

Azerbaijan's second periodic report is due 11 September 1999.

Azerbaijan's initial report (CRC/C/11/Add.8) was considered by the Committee at its May/June 1997 session. The report prepared by the government included information on: the effects of the armed conflict with Armenia; general measures on the implementation of the Convention; the legislative framework for children's rights; education, leisure and cultural activities; medical services and welfare; social problems, including crime; and, public and international organizations.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CRC/C/15/Add.77) noted: the comprehensive law reform currently being carried out; the establishment of the Commission on Minors' Affairs under the Cabinet of Ministers of Azerbaijan and of a Human Rights Commission in the Parliament; the steps taken by the government to publicize the