

staff member, together with an FAO international staff member and two government officials, were taken hostage by the Sudanese People's Liberation Army. The detainees were released after 44 days of captivity. The WFP also reported that, in September 1995, two WFP food aid monitors were caught in a crossfire during attacks in the areas of Panthou, five WFP field monitor staff had to flee from Motot (Upper Nile) when it was attacked on 5 March 1996, and, later that month, a barge hired by WFP was forced to stop under gunfire on the southern bank of the Soba River by armed forces. In the latter incident, the barge's crew of 17 — including a WFP international consultant and three WFP local staff — were removed and held in custody while the barge was looted and vandalized and the crew stripped of their personal belongings.

Environment, Report of the S-G to the CHR:
(E/CN.4/1997/18, I.C)

The report of the Secretary-General provides information supplied by the government in which it is stated that: the powers related to protection of the environment and natural resources are exercised jointly by the federal and the provincial government agencies; there is a provision in the Constitution recognizing the rights of citizens to a healthy environment; efforts are under way to update the sectoral legislation and to promulgate a Comprehensive Environmental Act; sectoral legislation governing the use of resources includes legislation to safeguard the right to the agricultural environment, protect livestock, provide a healthy and safe environment, regulate land use and guarantee the right of citizens to organize themselves in the form of associations concerned with the environment. The government also stated that the Higher Council for the Environment and Natural Resources is endeavouring to monitor the implementation of the international environmental agreements to which the Sudan is a party.

GENERAL ASSEMBLY

Interim report of the Special Rapporteur to the General Assembly

The Special Rapporteur's interim report to the General Assembly (A/52/510) includes information on, *inter alia*: the provisions of the April 1997 Khartoum Agreement and constitutional decree No. 14/1997 on human rights and fundamental freedoms; the work of the Special Committee on Allegations of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Reported Cases of Slavery; the rights of women; and, the results of the investigation carried out by the Juba Commission into the events of 1992. The report is based, in part, on information received during a visit to Sudan from 2 to 10 September 1997 which had two objectives. The first was to discuss with officials and others the human rights dimensions and implications of the peace agreement (the Khartoum Agreement, signed 21 April 1997) between the government and representatives of several southern political organizations and rebel groups. The second was to receive first-hand information on the latest measures taken by the government, through the Consultative Council for Human Rights, to improve the situation of human rights.

With regard to the Khartoum Agreement and constitutional decree No. 14/1997, the report notes, *inter alia*: both explicitly recognize the principle and the right to self-determination in relation to the south; the two documents contain different wording, which may lead to differing interpretations — the first referring to the "people" of south Sudan and the second to "citizens"; both provide for the possibility of the peaceful secession of the southern states through a referendum in which the options will be unity or secession; both address the question of freedom of religion although the wording is different; and, neither has embraced the idea of a political system based on the principle of free competition of political parties.

Referring to the Special Committee on Allegations of Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances and Reported Cases of Slavery (established in May 1996), the SR notes that it carried out two fact-finding missions. The Special Committee's reports describe the findings of a visit to Southern Kordofan (12 June 1996 and concern allegations of enforced or involuntary disappearances of 240 Sudanese citizens from a number of locations in the Nuba Mountains area (15 August 1996). The SR states that both reports essentially refute the information and allegations submitted to them by the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances, concluding that certain details contained in the allegations submitted by the source demonstrate a misperception of the realities of the situation, or that in some cases the information submitted is incomplete or erroneous. Summaries of the main points in the Special Committee's reports are provided (paras. 25–33).

In the section dealing with the situation of women, the report comments on discrepancies in information received related to the 23 October 1996 Public Order Act on the status of women, which had been previously noted as raising serious questions regarding the freedom of movement of women living in the capital city and the surrounding area and being characterized as instituting "strict sexual segregation in public", and legislation dating to March 1996. The report includes text from the documentation dated March 1996 related to: regulations for holding private and public parties; regulations on the use of public vehicles; women's hairdressing salons — licensing, regulations of work and inspection of salons; and women's dress tailoring places.

The report refers to the results of the investigation carried out by the Juba Commission into the events of 1992, arising from fighting between the army and the SPLA. Several reports had indicated: following the cessation of fighting the security services arrested hundreds of army and Juba police personnel and civilians, including Sudanese nationals working with international aid agencies; the people arrested were severely tortured and some of them tried by special courts, based only on their confession given under torture, and sentenced to death; the death sentences were summarily executed without the possibility of pardon; and, some of those arrested, whose whereabouts are not yet known by their families, were killed or died during torture while in detention. Portions of the 21 May 1997 report of the Advisory Council for Human Rights on events in Juba (the Juba report) are quoted, noting, *inter alia*: large numbers of civilians fled Juba haphazardly to Khartoum or to other places, thus explaining some cases of missing persons; arrests were made after each of the attacks in