

## FINLAND

### CESCR E/1992/23

(Arts. 13-15)

195. The Committee considered the second periodic report of Finland concerning the rights covered by articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant (E/1990/7/Add.1) at its 11<sup>th</sup>, 12<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup> meetings held on 2 and 4 December 1991 (E/C.12/1991/SR.11, 12 and 16).

196. The representative of the State party who introduced the report stated that Finnish policies, like those of other Nordic countries, were based on balanced development of civil and political rights on the one hand and economic, social and cultural rights on the other. She explained that the ratification of international human rights instruments by Finland had been the catalyst for the reform of the Constitution of 1919 and for the inclusion of references to economic, social and cultural rights, with the exception of the right to work. The representative noted that the Finnish Administration had a tendency to consider that there were no problems in regard to human rights in Finland since Finnish legislation conforms to the various international human rights instruments to which it is a party. To ensure that civil servants were sufficiently aware of the obligations for Finland under these instruments a training seminar for this purpose had been planned for March 1992.

197. The representative also noted that, although Finland had traditionally been an emigrant nation, it was becoming an immigrant nation and was evolving from a monocultural to a multicultural society. Finland had had, therefore, to adapt to a changing situation which was both a challenge and a resource for the country. With regard to minorities, there were presently 6,000 Sami, 6,000 Romanies, 1,200 Jews and 1,000 Tartars in Finland, among a total population of 5 million. Finland had the highest rate of female parliamentary membership in the world (38 per cent) and women comprised the majority of those participating in the fields of education and culture.

#### General matters

198. Members of the Committee asked for information on the measures taken to guarantee the exercise of the rights covered by articles 13 to 15 without any discrimination as to race, colour, creed, national or ethnic background; on the measures undertaken to publicize and promote the rights set forth in the Covenant; and on steps taken to facilitate a public discussion of the obligations assumed under the Covenant. Members also wished to know the extent to which non-nationals were guaranteed the rights covered under articles 13 to 15 and whether the provisions of the Covenant may be invoked by an individual before a court.

199. In reply to the questions asked, the representative of the State party explained that human rights were publicized and promoted in Finland through various programmes, projects and publications distributed free of charge. The convention and recommendations of UNESCO

concerning human rights, for example, had been published in Finnish.

200. The representative also drew attention to the creation in 1989 of a consultative body, the Advisory Board on International Human Rights Affairs, for the purpose of ensuring broad participation in the public debate over international and national human rights questions. Since 1990, reports submitted by the Government of Finland to the United Nations human rights treaty bodies had been published in Finnish and English and were thus available to citizens and non-governmental organizations for evaluation. Before embarking upon the preparation of a report to a given treaty body, the Advisory Board holds debate on the consideration of the previous report. The second periodic report of Finland to the Committee, however, had not been submitted to the Advisory Board.

201. In reply to specific questions about the Advisory Board, the representative explained that the current membership included individuals from political parties, research institutions and other organizations. One member was drawn from the Finnish section of Amnesty International, another from the Finnish Red Cross and another served as the Deputy Parliamentary Ombudsman. Disabled or minority groups were not represented but the Chairman of the Board was a member of Finland's Swedish-speaking minority.

202. The representative noted that there had been few references to economic, social and cultural rights in the courts, perhaps because it was felt that few of those rights could be enforced by means of individual court cases.

203. Concerning the status of the Romany population, the representative explained that there had been much discussion in Finland about the dilemma of trying to integrate the Romanies into the modern world while helping them to retain their identity and culture. The Romanies were socially disadvantaged and up to 20 per cent of them either lived in poor housing or were homeless. An official organ, the Advisory Board for Romany Affairs, had been created to safeguard their interests. Additionally, a committee had been studying a data system for Romany children. The report drawn up suggested a number of practical ways of promoting their identity from childhood onward. In 1991, Finland hosted a summer school for Romanies from all over Europe and further activities of this nature were envisaged.

#### Articles 13 and 14: Right to education

204. Members of the Committee requested information on the reforms in upper secondary and vocational education and whether these reforms had brought about greater regional equality; whether there were regional or other disparities in the accessibility to or availability of education; on the number and percentage of students in higher educational institutions, vocational training institutions and secondary schools; as well as detailed statistical information, including gender, ethnic, religious and national background, concerning school drop-outs. Members also wished to know about restrictions or limitations, if any, on free access to education by foreigners on the same basis as nationals; how the teaching of human rights was incorporated into school curricula; and what had been the scale and the impact of immigration on the field of education.

205. Members of the Committee requested further information regarding vocational training schools, including regulations relating to the standardization of curricula and teacher training requirements; on specific measures being taken to enable vocational school graduates to secure employment; and on the percentage of vocational school graduates who were unemployed. Members also wished to know the percentage of disabled persons attending special schools and the measures taken to integrate them into the educational system; the measures undertaken to ensure that the impending decentralization of the budgetary process will not adversely affect the right of all groups to educational opportunity; and the situation concerning drug addiction among youth, including the measures taken, particularly in the field of education, to improve the situation. In addition, members asked for information on the collective bargaining system for the negotiation of terms and conditions of employment and wished to know whether teachers had the right to strike and how the salaries and conditions of work for teachers compared to those in comparable posts in the public and private sectors.

206. In reply to the questions raised, the representative of the State party explained that the Government had recently adopted measures to make education more widely accessible, to raise the level of education and to ensure greater educational equality among the various regions and groups in Finland. This effort had taken place against the background of a rapidly changing social and economic situation in the country. In Finland, 18.5 per cent of Government expenditure was designated for education, which was second only to health and welfare as the sector with the largest single budgetary allocation. For the near future, it was foreseen that municipalities would take an increasing responsibility for the allocation, by sector, of central Government financial support.

207. Additionally, the representative pointed out that there had been significant reform regarding teaching qualifications in Finland during the 1980s. The goals of this reform were threefold: to broaden the range of professional competency, which had been until then narrow and highly specialized; to facilitate greater access to teachers' colleges and to universities; and to permit anyone wishing to pursue studies in higher education to do so. For example, graduates of technical institutes could now enter the university, whereas previously this was not possible. Competition for admission to the universities was intense, however, as there were sufficient places to admit only about 20 per cent of all individuals who applied. In order to improve this situation, a number of new public universities had been established. In some cases, these were formerly private institutions which, for reasons of financial difficulties, had passed to the control of the State. University education as well as secondary and professional training schools were provided free of charge.

208. As a result of the educational reforms undertaken by the Government, the programme for teacher training had been extended from a minimum of two years to three-and-a-half years, thereby permitting the individual to take fuller account of the increasingly complex Finnish society. Legislation passed in January 1991 provided for the establishment of private schools where students would become eligible for State and municipal aid and receive an education free of charge. In any event, parents had the right to remove their children from State schools and have them educated at home, where they were tested by officials each year to ensure that they were receiving a proper education.

209. In regard to the traditional roles assigned to men and women, the representative pointed out that a new project had been launched to encourage boys and girls to ignore stereotypes when

choosing occupations. She noted, however, that educational equality was inseparably linked to economic equality and that men could not be expected to choose low-income jobs that were traditionally reserved for women. In 1990, 55.8 per cent of new university students were women, a trend attributed to the fact that girls tended to concentrate on subject material leading to higher education whereas boys tended to focus more on vocational training.

210. In response to questions concerning special schools and groups, the representative explained that severely disabled children were educated in special State schools. There were nine such schools serving a population of about 500 disabled children. The goal of educational policy in Finland, however, was to integrate disabled children into regular schools and many teaching assistants had been hired to assist in this regard.

211. Concerning the Sami population, the representative noted that there had been a significant change in attitude over the last two decades. Since 1983, the Sami have been able to follow general courses in their own mother tongue and, since autumn 1991, could also complete their secondary education in the Sami language. School textbooks in Sami were still difficult to procure, but considerable efforts were being undertaken to rectify that situation. There was a quota of university places reserved for Sami students at the universities of Oulu, Lapland and Helsinki. Additionally, Oulu University offered courses for the Sami wishing to become teachers.

212. The representative stated that refugee children had a special right to comprehensive education for one year in separate groups comprised of at least four pupils. Otherwise, they were placed in regular classes and given special remedial instruction. Foreign children, whose numbers had increased significantly in recent years, had equal rights with nationals to attend every type of school and university.

213. With regard to the problem of drug use among youth, the emphasis in Finland had been on prevention by ensuring good living conditions and the provision of other interests and activities to children and young people. Alcohol abuse remained the principal problem and limitations on publicity for alcoholic drinks had been recently introduced. Responding to questions concerning adult education, the representative drew the attention of the Committee to a new law, adopted in January 1991, that will allow individuals to quit their jobs more easily in order to continue their education.

Article 15: Right to take part in cultural life and to enjoy the benefits of scientific progress and to benefit from the protection of the interests of authors.

214. Members of the Committee requested information on how the determination was made as to whether associations for the purpose of the enjoyment of culture were “legal”, or not against the “common good” (see E/1982/3/Add.28, p. 7, second paragraph), and whether there was an appeals procedure in that regard. Members also asked for further information concerning regional disparities in the availability or accessibility to culture or cultural facilities: the place of education and culture in the overall socio-economic development plans of the country; the percentage of the national budget allocated to education and culture; developments in the coordination of activities concerning radio and television and whether independent broadcasting stations could operate without Government interference; practical measures being taken for the realization of the right to participate

fully in the cultural life of the country; and cultural activities and programmes especially for the benefit of older persons. Additionally, members wished to know about restrictions or difficulties in the enjoyment of the right to scientific progress and practical measures, if any, being taken to improve the situation.

215. In his reply, the representative of the State party explained that Finnish cultural policy in the 1970s had focused on democratization at the grass-roots level. Regional networks and art councils had been established to manage theaters, museums and art galleries. The representative noted that the Council of Europe had commended Finnish policies for promoting cultural activities. For young people, there were various kinds of music schools and conservatoires, which were very popular and attended by as many as 45,000 pupils. There were also schools for the fine arts as well as for arts and crafts. At the end of 1991, the Government would submit to Parliament a bill on basic education in the arts.

216. Regarding cultural activities and programmes especially for the benefit of older persons, the representative observed that the elderly represented a growing proportion of Finnish society and that they participated increasingly in political activity. A political party set up to further the interests of the elderly had met with little success but recently there had been sizeable demonstrations by older persons in response to the current economic crisis. The cultural centres in larger cities were very popular among the elderly and special prices for events were offered for them.

217. Concerning the protection of the works of authors and composers, the representative noted that Finland was a party to the international conventions on copyright and the work of all creative artists was protected, regardless of nationality. There was also a centre of studies against reprographic piracy, although the problem was not a serious one in Finland.

#### Concluding observations

218. The Committee expressed its gratitude to the representatives of Finland for the presentation of the report and for the detailed responses to the written questions submitted by the pre-sessional working group. As to the report itself, the prevailing opinion was that it was too short and not sufficiently informative. It did not do justice to the situation in the field of education and culture existing presently in Finland, which, as was noted, could serve as a model for many other countries.

219. A few critical remarks by the Committee concerned the disparities still existing among the regions, the insufficient proportion of women working in certain areas of the economy, and the disappearance of private educational institutions, due perhaps to insufficient financial support and the failure of the Government authorities to authorize the necessary certificates, the problem of school drop-outs, and the possibility of regression in respect of advances in education arising from decentralization and the new provision of funding for education through municipalities.

220. The Committee sought further information on the problems of minorities, immigrants, and physically and mentally disabled children. The role of the Advisory Board for International Human Rights Affairs, including its composition and participation in the preparation of reports to international supervisory bodies, also required further clarification. The Committee was also interested in programmes for teaching human rights at schools and in the role of trade unions and

employers in setting standards for vocational education to safeguard its practical pro-industry orientation.

221. The responses of the Finnish representatives to the above queries were generally satisfactory. So far as answers were not available, the delegation promised to provide further information. The Committee expressed its satisfaction with the significant strides made by Finland in the implementation of articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant.

## **CESCR E/1997/22**

296. The Committee considered the third periodic report of Finland on articles 1 to 15 of the Covenant (E/1994/104/Add.7) at its 37th, 38th and 40th meetings on 25 and 26 November 1996 and, at its 51st meeting on 4 December 1996, adopted the following concluding observations.

### **A. Introduction**

297. The Committee expresses its appreciation to the Government of Finland for its report, which follows the Committee's guidelines regarding the form and contents of States parties' reports. The Committee welcomes the submission by Finland of comprehensive written answers to its list of issues and expresses its satisfaction at the frank and constructive dialogue established with the State party, through a delegation composed of experts. The Committee also notes with satisfaction the information submitted by the Government in a core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.59/Rev.1), as well as the additional information on the implementation of articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant (E/1989/5/Add.10) submitted in response to the Committee's request after the consideration of the second periodic report of Finland in December 1991.

### **B. Positive aspects**

298. The Committee notes the generally high level of achievement by Finland of its obligations in respect of the protection of the rights set forth in the Covenant. In this regard, the Committee expresses its appreciation of the recent amendments which have been incorporated in the Constitution concerning the protection of certain economic, social and cultural rights of all persons under the State party's jurisdiction. The Committee also notes with satisfaction the existence and the activities of the Advisory Board on Human Rights Affairs, composed of representatives of various human rights organizations and of several ministries, and of the Parliamentary Ombudsman, who has competence in the field of human rights.

299. The Committee welcomes the measures taken to promote equality between men and women, such as the establishment of the Council for Equality, the Equality Ombudsman and the recent adoption of legislation requiring at least 40 per cent representation of both sexes in Government-appointed bodies at the national and local levels.

300. The Committee also welcomes the Government's policies and programmes aimed at creating new jobs and at helping the unemployed to join or return to the labour force, through vocational training programmes, particularly those aimed at young people.

301. The Committee notes with satisfaction the measures taken to protect and shelter victims of domestic violence, in particular the activities deployed in this respect by the Government-subsidized Union of Shelter Homes. The Committee also welcomes the recent criminalization of marital rape as a means to combat the phenomenon of violence against women.

302. The Committee notes with satisfaction the measures aimed at promoting the teaching of the Roma and Saami languages in schools and welcomes the possibility provided to the elected

representatives of the Saami people to address the Parliament on issues affecting their interests.

303. The Committee notes that, despite difficulties due to the economic recession, Finland regularly contributes, although at a reduced level, to programmes of international cooperation, thus potentially promoting the realization of economic, social and cultural rights in other countries.

#### C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant

304. The Committee notes that the economic recession facing Finland and the policies adopted to meet the convergence criteria for participating in the European economic and monetary union have had significant consequences for the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights by the Finnish population as a whole, and by vulnerable social groups in particular. In this regard, the Committee notes that the recent budgetary cuts in social expenditure, as well as economic restructuring and the decentralization of social service arrangements, are factors which may affect the full implementation of the provisions of the Covenant. However, the Committee notes the Government's view that European Union membership has been a useful instrument towards fulfilling its economic policy goals, including those aimed at fighting unemployment.

#### D. Principal subjects of concern

305. The Committee notes that, although the provisions of the Covenant may be directly invoked before the courts or referred to by the courts, this has not yet been the case. In this respect, the Committee expresses concern that lawyers and judges may not be sufficiently aware of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

306. The Committee is concerned that, although equality between men and women is established in the law, it is not fully achieved in practice, in particular in relation to equal remuneration, and that, in general, women continue to encounter more obstacles than men in advancing to higher professional positions.

307. While it notes with satisfaction the recent decrease in the percentage of the population who are unemployed, the Committee is still concerned that the level of unemployment remains high, especially among young people, immigrants and refugees.

308. Although it notes that collective agreements in some sectors of professional activity contain provisions for the determination of minimum wages, the Committee is concerned that no minimum wage is guaranteed by law.

309. The Committee expresses its concern that the major cuts in social security and other welfare expenditures have reduced the disposable incomes of single parents and young families with children, affected the situation of persons without regular income under the Sickness Insurance Act, and led to the cessation of adjustments to pensions and unemployment benefits.

310. The Committee expresses its concern at reports that members of the Roma minority have been discriminated against when decisions have been taken by some authorities in respect of the allocation of publicly-owned dwellings.



311. The Committee regrets the lack of official statistical data and other information with regard to problems such as domestic violence, child abuse, child pornography, child and adolescent suicide and alcohol abuse (the latter also affecting children and adolescents), which prevents both the authorities and the Committee from ascertaining the real extent of these problems.

312. The Committee expresses its concern at the recent increase in the school drop-out rate, which particularly affects children from economically disadvantaged groups and children belonging to minorities.

#### E. Suggestions and recommendations

313. The Committee recommends that specifically targeted training programmes be launched by the authorities to increase the awareness of judges and lawyers of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

314. The Committee recommends that the Government intensify its efforts to ensure that equality between men and women, in particular with regard to employment and salary matters, is effective in practice.

315. The Committee urges that consideration be given to enacting legislation providing for minimum wages, and their periodic adjustment, so that protection is ensured also to workers who are not protected by sectoral collective agreements.

316. The Committee encourages the Government to take adequate measures to ensure that the reduction of budgetary allocations for social welfare programmes does not result in the violation of the State party's obligations under the Covenant. The Committee particularly lays emphasis on the need to protect the rights of socially vulnerable groups, such as young families with children, refugees and elderly or unemployed persons.

317. The Committee draws the attention of the authorities to the need to eliminate discrimination of any kind in the exercise of the rights set forth in the Covenant, especially the right to housing.

318. The Committee encourages the Government to continue its efforts to combat the problems of alcoholism, domestic violence, child and adolescent suicide and child abuse and it recommends that statistical data be collected and that thorough and targeted studies be conducted on the extent, the causes and the consequences of such problems. The Committee particularly draws the attention of the authorities to the importance to be given to detection measures and preventives policies. It also stresses the need to ensure that specific and appropriate penal legislation is enacted and applied in order to combat child abuse and child pornography.

319. The Committee also draws the attention of the State party to the emerging problem of school drop-out, which mainly affects children from vulnerable social groups, such as economically disadvantaged children and children belonging to minorities. In this regard, the Committee recommends that specific measures be taken to ensure that these children can complete their studies to the extent of their academic capacities.

320. The Committee recommends that the concerns expressed in the present concluding observations, as well as the issues raised during the discussion of the third periodic report which remain unanswered, be addressed in the State party's fourth periodic report.

321. The Committee encourages the State party to disseminate widely the present concluding observations adopted by the Committee following its consideration of the State party's third periodic report.

## **CESCR E/2001/22**

427. The Committee considered the fourth periodic report of Finland on the implementation of the Covenant (E/C.12/4/Add.1) at its 61st to 63rd meetings, held on 15 and 16 November 2000, and adopted, at its 74th and 75th meetings, held on 24 November 2000, the following concluding observations.

### **A. Introduction**

428. The Committee welcomes the submission of the fourth periodic report of Finland, which has been prepared in general in conformity with the revised reporting guidelines established by the Committee. The Committee notes with satisfaction the responses given in the report to its previous concluding observations.

429. The Committee expresses its appreciation for the readiness of the State party to advance the date of the consideration of its fourth periodic report, which is the first fourth periodic report received and considered by the Committee. The Committee also welcomes the timely submission of written replies to the list of issues, even at such short notice.

430. The Committee notes with satisfaction the open, candid and constructive dialogue with the members of the Finnish delegation and thanks them for the additional information that they provided to the Committee upon returning to the capital.

### **B. Positive aspects**

431. The Committee commends the State party on its ratification of the Additional Protocol to the European Social Charter Providing for a System of Collective Complaints, and for its support for the draft optional protocol to the Covenant.

432. The Committee welcomes the participation of non-governmental organizations in the drafting of the State party's periodic reports on the implementation of human rights conventions.

433. The Committee notes with satisfaction the inclusion in the State party's Constitution of age as a prohibited ground of discrimination.

434. The Committee notes with appreciation the adoption by the State party of a programme on the integration of immigrants (April 1999), as well as the proposal prepared by the Ministry of Labour for a plan of action to prevent ethnic discrimination and racism. The Committee further welcomes the proposal for the establishment of an Office of Ombudsman against Ethnic Discrimination.

435. The Committee welcomes the decrease in unemployment, in general, and the fall in youth unemployment, in particular in Finland over the reporting period.

436. The Committee notes with appreciation that at the one hundred and fifty-ninth session of the

UNESCO Executive Board (May 2000) Finland underlined the importance of collaboration between the Committee and UNESCO in the context of follow-up to the Dakar Framework for Action adopted by the World Education Forum (April 2000), with a view to achieving the effective realization of the right to education.

### **C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant**

437. The Committee notes the favourable economic conditions prevailing in Finland and observes no insurmountable factors or difficulties preventing the State party from effectively implementing the Covenant.

### **D. Principal subjects of concern**

438. The Committee is concerned that, while the Covenant may be directly invoked before the courts of Finland, there is no case law data suggesting that this has ever happened. In this respect, the Committee is concerned that lawyers and judges may not be sufficiently aware of the rights enshrined in the Covenant.

439. The Committee notes with concern that in 1999 Finland devoted only 0.32 per cent of its GNP to international cooperation, while the United Nations recommendation in this regard is 0.7 per cent for industrialized countries.

440. The Committee regrets that, despite the many initiatives taken by the State party to combat racial discrimination, racist attitudes prevail among the population, perpetuating discrimination against minorities and foreigners, especially in employment.

441. The Committee expresses concern about the practical enjoyment of their labour rights by the so-called “stand-by” workers who allegedly can be laid off without notice.

442. The Committee reiterates its concern, expressed in its previous concluding observations on the third periodic report of Finland,<sup>1</sup> that although collective agreements in some sectors of professional activity contain provisions for the determination of minimum wages, no minimum wage is guaranteed nationally.

443. While welcoming the several studies and projects concerning violence against women carried out in the past few years in Finland, the Committee notes with concern that the phenomenon has reached alarming proportions. The Committee reiterates its regret at the absence of comparative statistical information on the extent of the problem, as well as lack of information on the remedies, rehabilitation and services provided to victims.

444. The Committee notes with concern the lack of affordable accommodation, especially in the

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<sup>1</sup> See *Official Records of the Economic and Social Council, 1997, Supplement No. 2 (E/1997/22-E/C.12/1996/6)*, chap. IV, para. 308.

Helsinki metropolitan area, for the homeless, a group consisting mainly of alcoholics, drug abusers, victims of domestic violence and the mentally ill.

445. The Committee regrets the weakening of the public health-care system as a result of cuts in the Government's health spending.

446. The Committee is particularly concerned that certain municipalities allocate insufficient funds to health-care services. This has resulted in inequality with regard to levels of health-care service provision depending on the place of residence, to the detriment in particular of children, persons with physical and mental disabilities and older persons.

## **E. Suggestions and recommendations**

447. The Committee urges the State party to formulate and implement a national plan of action for the protection and promotion of human rights, as recommended in paragraph 71 of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action.<sup>9</sup>

448. The Committee encourages the State party to ensure that all judges and lawyers receive further training provided free of charge to familiarize them with the provisions of the Covenant and the general comments adopted by the Committee.

449. The Committee recommends that the State party review its budget allocation for international cooperation with a view to increasing its contribution in accordance with the United Nations recommendation.

450. The Committee encourages the State party, as a member of international financial institutions, to do all it can to ensure that the policies and decisions of those organizations are in conformity with the obligations of States parties to the Covenant, in particular the obligations contained in article 2, paragraph 1, concerning international assistance and cooperation.

451. The Committee urges the State party to finalize its review of the legislation concerning the Sami population with a view to ratifying ILO Convention No. 169 (1989) concerning indigenous and tribal peoples in independent countries. The Committee recommends that the State party settle the question of Sami land title as a matter of high priority.

452. The Committee requests the State party to provide information in its fifth periodic report on the enjoyment by the Roma of their economic, social and cultural rights.

453. The Committee urges the State party to continue and strengthen its efforts to combat racism and xenophobia.

454. The Committee recommends that the State party ensure that legislative provisions concerning job security are effectively implemented, especially as regards the most vulnerable groups, such as part-time, "stand-by" workers and foreigners.

455. The Committee reiterates the recommendation made in its concluding observations on the

third periodic report of Finland<sup>2</sup> that the State party provide for minimum wages at the national level, in order for protection to be ensured also to workers who are not protected by sectoral collective agreements.

456. The Committee requests the State party to provide comparative statistical data, in its fifth periodic report, on the extent of violence against women. The Committee also requests detailed information on the results of the measures taken by the Government to address the phenomenon, including on facilities, rehabilitation and remedies accorded to victims.

457. The Committee further recommends that the State party ensure that adequate resources are afforded to public health services and that the cost of private health care remains affordable to all sectors of society.

458. The Committee calls on the State party to ensure that municipalities provide adequate health services, especially to vulnerable groups such as children, older persons and persons with physical and mental disabilities. In this respect, the Committee requests the State party to provide information, in its fifth periodic report, on the services available in municipalities particularly for those in need of mental health-care services.

459. The Committee calls upon the State party to take special care in ensuring the equality of standards in education for all in accordance with article 13 of the Covenant and the Committee's General Comments No. 11 (1999) concerning plans of action for primary education (art. 14 of the Covenant) and No. 13 (1999) concerning the right to education (art. 13 of the Covenant).

460. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate these concluding observations as widely as possible among its citizens.

461. The Committee requests the State party to address, in its fifth periodic report, the implementation of these concluding observations.

462. The Committee requests the State party to submit its fifth periodic report by 30 June 2005.

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<sup>2</sup> Ibid., para. 315.