

UNITED NATIONS  
General Assembly  
Thirty-ninth session

A/39/484  
20 September 1984

## INTERNATIONAL COVENANTS ON HUMAN RIGHTS

### Reporting obligations of States parties to the International Covenants on Human Rights and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

#### Note by the Secretary-General

In accordance with paragraph 6 of General Assembly resolution 38/117 of 16 December 1983, the Secretary-General transmits to the Assembly herewith the report of the meeting of chairmen of the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination convened pursuant to paragraph 5 of the above-mentioned resolution.

#### ANNEX

Report of Meeting of Chairpersons of the Commission on Human Rights, the  
Human Rights Committee, the Sessional Working Group of Governmental  
Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic,  
Social and Cultural Rights and the Committee on the Elimination of  
Racial Discrimination, held at Geneva on 16 and 17 August 1984 pursuant  
to General Assembly resolution 38/117

#### CONTENTS

	<u>Paragraphs</u>
I INTRODUCTION	1 - 3
II ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING	4 - 9
III REVIEW OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED	10 - 19

	A.	Human Rights Committee	12
	B.	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	13
	C.	Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International	14
	D.	General problems	15 - 19
IV		REVIEW OF THE RECENT EXAMINATION OF THE PROBLEMS BY THE ORGANS CONCERNED	20 - 26
	A.	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination	21
	B.	Human Rights Committee	22 - 24
	C.	Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	25
	D.	Commission on Human Rights	26
V		VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS	27 - 40
	A.	Exchange of information	28
	B.	Co-ordination of guidelines	29
	C.	Advisory services and assistance	30 - 32
	D.	Other matters	33 - 40

## I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-eighth session the General Assembly had before it a report it had requested of the Secretary-General on various issues concerning the functioning of reporting procedures under international conventions in the field of human rights as well as questions regarding their rationalization and co-ordination in the future (A/38/393). By its resolution 38/20 of 20 November 1983, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to transmit that report to the ninth meeting of the States parties to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination for consideration. The General Assembly also invited the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination to consider the analysis and recommendations contained in the report of the Secretary-General, taking into account the various suggestions made in the General

Assembly and at the ninth meeting of the States parties to the Convention, and to transmit its views and recommendations to the Assembly at its thirty-ninth session.

2. In resolution 38/117, the General Assembly asked the Secretary-General to transmit the above-mentioned report to the Economic and Social Council and requested the Council and its Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights to consider the suggestions contained therein, with a view to improving the situation regarding the submission of reports under the Covenant.

3. Furthermore, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to consider the possibility of convening, in accordance with a suggestion made by the Human Rights Committee - and within existing resources - a meeting of the chairmen of the bodies entrusted with the consideration of reports under the relevant human rights instruments, in order to consider the report of the Secretary-General, taking into account the results of General Assembly resolutions 38/20 and 38/117.

## II. ORGANIZATION OF THE MEETING

4. Following consultations, the Secretary-General organized a meeting of the following chairmen at Geneva, on 16 and 17 August 1984: the Chairman of the Commission on Human Rights (Mr. Peter H. Kooijmans), the Chairman of the Human Rights Committee (Mr. Andreas V. Mavrommatis), the Chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (Mr. Luis Valencia Rodriguez) and the Chairman of the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (Mr. Michael Bendix).

5. The following documentation was made available to the participants in the meeting:

General Assembly resolutions 38/20 and 38/117;

Report of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, 1983 (A/38/18);

Report of the Human Rights Committee, 1983 (A/38/40);

Report of the Secretary-General on the reporting obligations of States parties under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other relevant human rights instruments (A/38/393);

Decision 1 (XXIX) of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (A/39/18, chap ....

General guidelines of the Human Rights Committee regarding the form and contents of reports from States parties under article 40, paragraph 1 (b), of the Covenant (CCPR/C/5 and CCPR/C/20);

Revised general guidelines of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination concerning the form and contents of reports by States parties under article 9, paragraph 1, of the Convention (CERD/C/70/Rev.1);

Reporting obligations of States parties under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination and other human rights instruments: analytical summary of the discussion of the report of the Secretary-General (A/38/393) by the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session. Note by the Secretary-General (CERD/SP/20);

General guidelines for reports by States parties under article 16 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, prepared by the Secretary-General in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1988 (LX) (arts. 6-9, E/1978/8, annex; arts. 10-12, E/1980/6, annex; arts. 13-15, E/1982/3, annex);

Report of the Commission on Human Rights, 1984 (E/1984/14);

Commission on Human Rights resolutions 1984/18 and 1984/44;

Report of the Sessional working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1984/83);

Report of the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, 1983 (E/CN.4/1984/3);

Seminar on the experience of different countries in the implementation of international standards on human rights (ST/HR/SER.A/15).

6. The meeting was opened by Mr. Kurt Herndl, Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights, who outlined some of the problems which had risen, the objectives of the meeting, the activities of the organs concerned and suggestions from various sources.

7. Mr. A. Mavrommatis was elected to preside over the meeting.

8. The chairmen noted that the General Assembly had requested that the meeting be convened so as to enable the chairmen of the bodies entrusted with the consideration of reports under human rights instruments "to consider the report of the Secretary-General" (A/38/393). Furthermore, the Secretary-General had been requested to inform the General Assembly at its thirty-ninth session of "the views and suggestions" expressed at the meeting. Accordingly, they decided first to proceed to a review of the problems experienced in the functioning of reporting procedures and then to attempt to draw up views and suggestions.

9. The chairmen engaged in general exchange of views on the issues facing their respective organs which proved to be quite useful and constructive. It emerged from the discussion that there was a convergence of views among the chairmen on the issues and problems facing their respective organs. They also provided clarifications and responded to questions raised at the meeting. The above-mentioned exchange of views took into account issues raised in the report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly (A/38/393) as well as issues raised by the chairmen concerning the reporting procedures of their respective organs and other problems encountered by those organs.

### III. REVIEW OF PROBLEMS EXPERIENCED

10. Reviewing the problem encountered, the chairmen identified the following as the most important: failure of some States parties to submit reports; delays in complying with the obligations assumed by States parties to submit reports; the varying quality of the reports submitted; the burden which several co-existing reporting systems placed on States parties; lack of qualified staff to prepare reports in some States parties; and the need to enhance the implementation of the provisions of international conventions.

11. The chairmen discussed the specific problems arising in each of their organs and were of the opinion that the foundations should be laid for co-operation amongst the various organs and appropriate modalities for such co-operation should be established.

#### A. Human Rights Committee

12. It was reported that the principal problem encountered by the Human Rights Committee related to the sparse content of some reports; delays in submission of some reports: non-submission of reports by very few States parties; failure to submit supplementary information promised; and non-submission of reports once the initial report had been examined. The Committee had also remarked on the lack of sufficient lawyers or other suitably qualified persons to prepare reports in some countries which had experienced difficulties.

#### B. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

13. The meeting was informed that, with a few exceptions, most States parties had submitted their initial reports to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, and that the main problem was the late submission or non-submission of subsequent reports. In some instances, however, States parties had never submitted a report, not even an initial report, notwithstanding repeated reminders (in some instances more than a dozen reminders had been sent) from the Secretary-General on behalf of the Committee. It was felt that that might indicate a lack of political will on the part of the State party concerned. The Committee had also remarked on the lack of qualified personnel in some States parties to draft reports.

#### C. Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

14. The Sessional Working Group had drawn attention to delays in submission of reports, non-submission of reports in some instances and the late receipt of reports, which did not enable the experts to study them carefully. The meeting was also informed that the Sessional Working Group was facing a unique problem due to the nature of its composition and the timing of its sessions. As a body of governmental experts meeting only one week before the session of the Economic and Social Council, the Sessional Working Group experienced difficulties in reaching a quorum and in carrying out its responsibilities satisfactorily since some of the governmental experts expected to participate

in the meetings also had other responsibilities. These difficulties had been compounded by vacancies in the membership of the Sessional Working Group and by the failure of some States parties to designate experts. It was therefore felt that consideration might be given to the possibility of electing the members of the Sessional Working Group in the same way as those of the Human Rights Committee and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and of holding the meetings of the Working Group at a more convenient time, giving members sufficient time to cope with the expected workload. If the present system was retained, however, it might be necessary to envisage the election of alternates, as had been done for the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities, so as to avoid the problems stemming from the lack of a quorum.

#### D. General problems

15. The chairmen also discussed the ways in which the different organs had attempted to deal with the above-mentioned problems. They included the sending of reminders to States parties; the delegation of a member of the organ to engage in contacts with a representative of the State party concerned; inviting a representative of the State party concerned to attend informal meetings with the organ concerned; sending an expert to visit the country concerned for discussions with the Government; and citing the States parties which had not submitted reports in the annual report to the General Assembly. The chairmen felt that the General Assembly could consider the role it might be able to play when it was informed that several reminders had been sent to a State party, but that the State party had nevertheless not submitted its report.

16. The chairmen also raised a number of general issues which they felt would require consideration in the future. Among them were the burden of several co-existing reporting systems upon Governments, particularly Governments with limited qualified personnel; the structural problems posed for national administrations due, for example, to the fact that the preparation of a report might require the participation and approval of several ministries of Government. In that regard reference was made to the report of the Seminar on the experience of different countries in the implementation of international standards on human rights (ST/HR/SER.A/15) at which participants had advanced various suggestions for the development of the human rights infrastructure which could enable States parties to comply with their reporting and other obligations. The short periodicity of reports in some organs and the lack of qualified personnel to prepare and present reports in some States parties were also mentioned.

17. The chairmen also felt that it would be necessary to consider, in the future, ways and means of improving general publicity for the activities of the various organs. Publicity could be particularly important in the event of non-compliance by a State party with its reporting obligations.

18. Finally, the chairmen felt that consideration could be given to granting the specialized agencies a more substantial role in the operation of the reporting procedures, when appropriate.

19. The factors giving rise to the above-mentioned problems were then discussed. The chairmen noted that, in the report of the Secretary-General to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, several States parties had indicated that the burden placed upon small countries, in particular, was one

of the main reasons for non-compliance with reporting obligations. Some States parties had also mentioned the fact that parties to various human rights instruments were required to prepare simultaneous reports to different organs.

#### IV. REVIEW OF THE RECENT EXAMINATION OF THE PROBLEMS BY THE ORGANS CONCERNED

20. The chairmen then exchanged information on the discussions which had recently taken place on the above-mentioned issues in their respective organs. They noted that they were engaged in an initial discussion of issues which might require further discussion in their respective organs.

##### A. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

21. It was noted that, at its 673rd meeting, on 22 March 1984, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had concluded certain States parties had failed to submit the required report under article 9 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination owing to difficulties resulting, *inter alia*, from unavailability of the skilled personnel needed to enable them to fulfill their obligations under the Convention. The Committee also felt that there might be a problem of overloading in the reporting system as a result of the obligations of States parties under several international instruments in the field of human rights. However, in all three instances, a change in the periodicity of the reporting obligations would not be a solution because the reporting system was the most decisive element in the monitoring process with which the Committee was charged, and was the principal means by which pressure was brought to bear upon States parties to fulfill their substantive obligation to eliminate racial discrimination in all its forms. Therefore the Committee was not in favour of a longer period for reporting under the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, or of amending the Convention. On the contrary, it felt that the necessary assistance in terms of training and advisory services should be provided and it would wholeheartedly support any action to be initiated by the Secretary-General in that respect. The Committee also gave its full support to the suggestion of co-ordinating meetings of the chairmen of the supervisory bodies operating under the various human rights instruments.

##### B. Human Rights Committee

22. It was recalled that, in its report to the General Assembly at its thirty-eighth session, members of the Human Rights Committee had noted the concern voiced in the Third Committee over the difficulties encountered by States parties in submitting reports in view of the lack of resources and the proliferation of reporting procedures under various instruments. Members of the Committee had emphasized the importance of co-ordinating among United Nations organs and had considered that the best way to achieve it was for the Centre for Human Rights to bring together representatives of those organs for short meetings, with a view to considering the matter in the light of the experience of their respective organs.

23. In the same report, the Committee had referred to the question of technical assistance, mainly in the legal field, that might be requested from or given to States parties where the lack of expertise had made it difficult for them to implement their obligations under the International Covenant on Civil

and Political Rights. The Committee had requested the Secretary-General to find out how technical assistance could be provided to States parties which requested it.

24. The chairmen noted with appreciation that, at its recently concluded twenty-second session, the Human Rights Committee had adopted a decision authorizing one of its members to visit a State party with a view to placing his expertise and advice at the disposal of the Government of that State party, in order to enable it to discharge its reporting obligations under the Covenant. A similar offer had previously been made to another country but it had not been taken up. The chairmen considered that procedure a very useful development and looked forward to its extension to other cases in the future.

#### C. Sessional Working Group of Government Experts on the Implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

25. The meeting noted, that in its report to the first regular session of the Economic and Social Council for 1984, the Group had expressed the opinion that the prolongation of the biennial intervals in the submission of reports by one year would not be a useful means of improving the situation. Rather, realizing the difficulties a number of States parties experienced in submitting initial and/or periodic reports on time, the Group had supported the suggestion that technical assistance and co-operation should be extended, through the United Nations or its affiliated organizations, to those States parties which might need and might formally request such assistance. Attention was specifically drawn to the expertise and assistance which relevant specialized agencies could be called upon to furnish in accordance with articles 22 and 23 of the Covenant.

#### D. Commission on Human Rights

26. It was noted that in resolution 1984/18, adopted on 6 March 1984, the Commission on Human Rights had requested the Secretary-General to consider ways and means of assisting States parties to the International Covenants in the preparation of their reports, including the awarding of fellowships to government officials engaged in the preparation of such reports, regional training courses and other possibilities available under the programme of advisory services. In resolution 1984/44 on advisory services in the field of human rights, the Commission had expressed its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his efforts to provide assistance in the field of human rights to Governments, at their request, under the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights and had invited the Secretary-General to report to the Commission at its forty-first session on the progress made in the provision of such expert assistance to Governments in the field of human rights, and to outline suggestions for a long-term programme of action in that field.

### V. VIEWS AND SUGGESTIONS

27. The chairmen noted that a number of suggestions had already been put forward by Governments, the organs concerned and the Secretary-General. Those suggestions were reviewed by the chairmen who then agreed to focus on the following main issues: (a) exchange of information;



(b) co-ordination of guidelines; (c) advisory services and assistance; and (d) other matters.

A. Exchange of information

28. The chairmen took note of the fact that, pursuant to resolutions adopted by the General Assembly, the annual reports of the Commission on Human Rights, the Human Rights Committee, the Sessional Working Group of Experts, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Sub-Commission on Prevention of Discrimination and Protection of Minorities were being exchanged on a regular basis. The chairmen considered that exchange of documentation to be useful and encouraged its continuation. They also felt that it would be useful if the exchange of information could be enhanced in the future through the following measures:

(a) The guidelines and rules of procedure of the various organs could be included in a single document and made available for easy reference to the members of the different organs;

(b) General comments, decisions or views of the various organs could similarly be assembled in a single document and made available on an ongoing basis to the members of the various organs;

(c) In respect of each State party to the International Covenants and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, a summary table should be prepared listing all the reports submitted by a State party under the various instruments as well as reports which were still outstanding. A reference file containing all the reports submitted by a State party under the different instruments could be assembled in the working languages and made available to the members of the various organs for consultation whenever the report of that State party came up for consideration within any of the supervising organs;

(d) Consolidated tables showing the state of ratification of the International Covenants and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination should be submitted at each session of the Human Rights Committee, the Sessional Working Group and the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination.

B. Co-ordination of guidelines

29. The chairmen took note of the guidelines for the submission of reports which had been drawn up within the respective organs. While conscious of the distinctiveness of each instrument and each supervisory organ, the chairmen nevertheless felt that the introductory part of each guideline could eventually be streamlined and that States parties could be assisted in the submission of the general information on their country needed under the various treaties to which they were parties. The chairmen were therefore of the opinion that the following measures could be considered with a view to assisting States parties.

(a) The guidelines drawn up under the different instruments could each contain an identical part requiring the State party to provide information on matters such as: geographical and demographic characteristics of the country and its basic economic and social conditions; its constitutional structure including the legislative, executive and judicial organs of Government; basic

legislation dealing with civil and political rights, equality and non-discrimination, measures against racial discrimination, and economic, social and cultural rights;

(b) The Secretary-General could request each State party to the Covenants and to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination to prepare a composite picture (country profile) using the information indicated under (a) above and to update that information as necessary. Once such a composite picture had been prepared by the country concerned it could be made available to each of the organs concerned whenever that organ had to consider a report by a State party. To enable the State party to draw up a composite picture along the lines suggested above, the Secretariat, in its note to each State party, could draw attention to, and provide copies of, materials already submitted by that State party in previous reports under the instruments in question;

(c) In addition to the composite picture of each State party, the Secretariat could progressively assemble and maintain, in various working languages, reference copies of the texts of the basic constitutional and legal provisions of each State party, preceded by a summary fact sheet of the geographical and demographic features of the country in question. Over a period of time the country profiles could facilitate the task of the various supervisory organs;

(d) Attention could be given in the future to ways and means of dealing with factors and difficulties experienced by States parties in their efforts to implement international conventions in the field of human rights. Similarly, efforts should be made to avoid duplication among the reporting systems. It was recommended that those matters be discussed at future meetings of chairmen.

### C. Advisory services and assistance

30 In their review of the problems encountered in the operation of reporting procedures, their causes, and possible ways and means of assisting States parties, the chairmen noted that there was general agreement among the supervisory organs themselves, Governments and the Secretary-General that one of the most effective ways of assisting States parties would be for the Secretary-General to devise and implement a programme of advisory services and technical assistance to enable States parties better to comply with their obligations under the International Covenants on Human Rights. The chairmen noted, for example, that, in the report of the Secretary-General to the thirty-eighth session of the General Assembly, some Governments had recommended that experts could be sent on short missions to States parties facing difficulties and requesting technical assistance in that area. The Secretary-General himself had suggested that consideration could be given to ways and means of providing technical assistance, through the United Nations or its affiliated organizations to those States parties which needed or requested it. The Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination had expressed the view that assistance in terms of training and advisory services should be provided. The Human Rights Committee had referred to the need for technical assistance to States parties, while the Sessional Working Group of Governmental Experts had supported the suggestion that technical assistance and co-operation should be extended, through the United Nations and the relevant specialized agencies, to those States parties in need of such assistance. The Commission on Human Rights had specifically requested the Secretary-General to develop expert assistance to Governments in the field of human rights and to consider ways and means of assisting States parties in the preparation of their reports, including the awarding of fellowships to government officials engaged in the preparation of such reports.

31. In view of this concurrence of views in favour of the provision of advisory services and technical assistance to States parties in need of such advice and assistance, the chairmen strongly recommend to the General Assembly that the Secretary-General be invited to carry out such a programme of advice and assistance in an effective manner and provided with the means which would enable him to do so. In the development of such a programme, the ideas which have already been advanced by the various organs, some of which are referred to above, have the full support of the chairmen and should be given priority attention. The chairmen would also recommend that the following suggestions be implemented as part of a future programme of advisory services and assistance:

(a) A manual providing practical advice on the preparation and submission of reports, and consideration of such reports, could be prepared by the Secretary-General, drawing upon the reporting procedures and experience of the different supervisory organs. Such a manual could also include specimen reports for the guidance of those drafting and presenting reports;

(b) As recommended by the Commission on Human Rights, a proportion of the human rights fellowships awarded each year could be allocated to government officials who need to develop their skills in the operation of the reporting procedures, particularly those who are called upon to prepare and present such reports. In the communication to Governments inviting nominations for fellowships it could be brought to their attention that they may nominate persons for fellowships who are called upon to prepare or present reports;

(c) A programme of regional training courses for persons engaged in the preparation or presentation of reports could be implemented, in co-operation with UNITAR, on an ongoing basis. The members of supervisory organs could usefully be drawn upon as lecturers at such training courses;

(d) More seminars under the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights could be devoted to the discussion of issues affecting the implementation of international conventions in the field of human rights and their reporting procedures. In this regard the chairpersons noted that a successful seminar was organized in 1983 on the experience of different countries in the implementation of international standards on human rights (ST/HR/SER.A/15);

(e) The development of a system of regional advisors on international human rights standards could be envisaged to visit countries, advise on legislation, discuss problems encountered by Governments and make available to Governments the collective international experience in the implementation of international standards:

(f) The dispatch of experts, from the membership of the organs or from the Centre for Human Rights, on short missions to advise Governments, at their request, could be envisaged. In this regard the commendable example set by the Human Rights Committee in sending one of its members to be available to a Government for advice and assistance could be followed for other countries in the future;

31. Under the programme of advisory services in the field of human rights, the Secretary-General

could develop, within the Centre for Human Rights, a facility specializing in the provision of advice and assistance to Governments in the implementation of international conventions in the field of human rights. This facility could be drawn upon by Governments in need of advice or assistance and could even be gradually extended to the development, where necessary, of the kind of draft legislation required by the international instruments in question for sample legislation on selected human rights problems. Precedents for national institutions for the promotion and protection of human rights could be collected and made available to Governments in case of need.

32. The chairmen realized that implementation of the above-mentioned suggestions would entail some financial implications and suggested that, in order to limit costs as far as possible, existing academic or related institutions could be used where appropriate. The possibility of promoting bilateral assistance could also be envisaged.

#### D. Other matters

33 The chairmen were of the unanimous view that the opportunity provided by the meeting to exchange views and discuss matters common to the various organs was very valuable. They felt that such meetings should be held regularly in the future, possibly on an annual or biennial basis.

34. The chairmen recognized that their first meeting had been devoted to issues arising in the Human Rights Committee, the Sessional Working Group, the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and the Commission on Human Rights, because the reporting procedures of those organs had been operational for some years and problems were therefore now coming to light. It could be anticipated, however, that, as the reporting procedure under the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women developed and as experience was gained with that procedure, issues might arise within the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women which might need to be taken into account at future meetings. The chairmen therefore requested the Secretary-General to examine the possibility of arranging for the participation of the Chairman of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women at any forthcoming meetings of chairmen. They noted that issues relating to the reporting procedure under the International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid were covered by the participation of the chairmen of the Commission on Human Rights.

35. The chairmen also felt that the Secretary-General could assist greatly in encouraging States which had not already done so to ratify the International Covenants and the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. In that regard they suggested that the Secretary-General could raise the question of ratifications when he met heads of State, Foreign Ministers or other high level officials during the sessions of the General Assembly or other organs or might in the course of his visits to capitals. The Centre for Human Rights and the Assistant Secretary-General for Human Rights could also undertake similar activities to promote ratifications.

36. The chairmen felt that a very practical way of facilitating the tasks of States parties which were called upon to submit reports might be to invite them to send an official to the Centre for Human Rights for consultations, well before their report was due, and at a time when one of the supervisory organs was meeting. The official would then have an opportunity to speak to the experts in the Centre

and the members of the supervisory organ concerned and to witness the proceedings of the latter. In cases of need, it might be envisaged that the travel costs of such a national official be borne, in part, by the United Nations.

37. The chairmen also felt that it might be useful for the Centre for Human Rights to examine the possibility of maintaining a list of qualified experts who could be made available to Governments at their request to assist them in preparing or presenting their reports.

38. The chairmen were of the view that it was especially important for the report of a State party to be examined in the presence of a representative of that State party in order to ensure that an ongoing and flexible dialogue was maintained between the supervisory organs and the States parties of their respective instruments.

39. The chairmen were also of the opinion that, at future meetings, consideration could be given to how the procedures and methods for considering reports could be improved with a view to assisting States parties in complying with their reporting obligations as well as in coping with the increasing burdens stemming from reporting obligations under various international conventions.

40. The chairmen also felt that the members of their respective organs could use whatever opportunities arose in the future to inform themselves of the activities of the other supervisory organs as well as to develop their understanding of the activities of those organs.