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**Informe presentado por la Sra. Anne-Marie Lizin,
Experta independiente encargada de la cuestión de
los derechos humanos y la extrema pobreza**

Adición

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Resumen

La Experta independiente encargada de la cuestión de los derechos humanos y la extrema pobreza efectuó una visita al Yemen, por invitación de las autoridades de ese país, del 2 al 5 de octubre de 2003.

Esta visita era continuación de una precedente que efectuó la Experta independiente a título individual, que pudo comprobar los progresos realizados por las autoridades yemenitas en su movilización contra la extrema pobreza. En 2002, el Gobierno aprobó una estrategia

* El resumen se distribuye en todas las lenguas. El informe, que se adjunta al presente resumen, se distribuye en la lengua original, en árabe y en inglés.

de reducción de la pobreza, que obtuvo el apoyo de los principales donantes y que se había preparado con la participación de una sociedad civil cada vez más dinámica.

La estrategia aprovecha los conocimientos sobre los engranajes de la extrema pobreza adquiridos gracias a los diversos estudios posibilitados por la financiación y la asistencia técnica de donantes como las instituciones de las Naciones Unidas y el Banco Mundial. Esta estrategia se basa en un enfoque que persigue consolidar tanto los logros de la estabilización macroeconómica como captar inversión extranjera fortaleciendo al mismo tiempo la red de protección social.

Sin embargo, el contexto económico sigue siendo muy difícil debido a las repercusiones negativas de la inestabilidad política de la región y la consiguiente caída de los ingresos por turismo y del tráfico portuario. La extrema pobreza sigue afectando, por consiguiente, a un número cada vez mayor de yemenitas, en particular, y de manera desproporcionada a las mujeres.

El marco jurídico, y aún más las prácticas sociales conservadoras, constituyen un obstáculo para el disfrute de los derechos de la mujer y en parte son causa del fuerte ritmo del crecimiento demográfico que hipoteca el crecimiento futuro. El Consejo Nacional de la Mujer, así como el nuevo Ministerio de Derechos Humanos, son conscientes de esta situación y sus esfuerzos por modificarla merecen el apoyo de la comunidad internacional.

El Gobierno se esfuerza en ampliar la participación de todos en la adopción de decisiones y presta su apoyo al fomento de la sociedad civil al tiempo que se prepara la transición hacia la descentralización administrativa y política. Una mejor representación política de la mujer contribuiría a fortalecer el enfoque de género en las medidas adoptadas y los métodos de aplicación, en particular para reducir la natalidad y mejorar los efectos de la red de protección social en los más pobres. Sigue habiendo lagunas en la comunicación con los más pobres, lo que exige un esfuerzo suplementario para informarles de sus derechos y de las medidas que les son dirigidas.

La Experta independiente observó que el Yemen también había emprendido un ambicioso programa de modernización de la administración del estado civil. Lamenta, no obstante, que la multiplicación de los registros de proximidad entrañe duplicaciones, máxime cuando el coste de obtener un documento de identidad es demasiado elevado para que las personas y las familias más pobres puedan disfrutar de este servicio público fundamental. La Experta explicó la importancia de expedir documentos de identidad a todos a fin de poder confirmar su identidad y su ciudadanía, además de permitirles acogerse a programas de asistencia pública en los que es obligatorio presentar un documento de identidad o, incluso, para recurrir ante los tribunales a fin de obtener o defender sus derechos.

La Experta independiente recuerda la importancia que revestiría la creación de una institución nacional de derechos humanos, separada del ministerio, que ejerza una función de educación y coordinación.

Annex

**REPORT SUBMITTED BY THE INDEPENDENT EXPERT ON
EXTREME POVERTY, ANNE-MARIE LIZIN, ON HER
MISSION TO YEMEN (2-5 October 2003)**

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Introduction

1. The mission took place following an invitation from the Yemeni authorities, whom the independent expert thanks for their welcome. The mission to the Yemeni capital, Sanaa, took place from 2 to 5 October 2003. The expert met members of the Government, officials in charge of public policies on poverty or civil registration, representatives of the voluntary sector and officials of the United Nations and the European Commission who outlined their activities and discussed their contributions to efforts to combat extreme poverty. The expert also held discussions with poor people she met during her travels.

2. The mission thanks the Permanent Mission of Yemen to the United Nations in Geneva, the Ministry of Human Rights, the United Nations Resident Coordinator, Mr. James Rawley, and his colleagues in Sanaa and the Honorary Consul of Belgium, Mr. Zaghlool Bazara, for their valuable assistance in the preparations for and smooth accomplishment of the mission.

A. General considerations

3. The independent expert had had an opportunity to visit the country in 1999 and was able to observe the impact of the changes under way: greater freedom of expression for women, greater awareness of human rights objectives within the Government, a real resolve to implement the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the launching of a process of decentralization in 2001 and the belief repeated by a number of persons she met that the events of 11 September 2001 would accelerate modernization in Yemen. The awareness and determination to act was by no means an obstacle to clear perceptions: data on extreme poverty remain high, and the Yemeni authorities do not conceal the difficulties they have in communicating appropriate information and securing adequate resources to address the challenges.

B. Determination to combat extreme poverty and the Poverty Reduction Strategy

4. The process of impoverishment in Yemen has worsened as a result of the conflicts affecting the region, and 42 per cent of Yemenis live below the poverty line. Since 11 September 2001, the situation has been disastrous: activity in the ports has slumped, the oil sector is in difficulties, unemployment affects nearly 35 per cent of the working population and revenue from tourism is declining in keeping with Yemen's negative image in the international media. All the members of the Government emphasized their determination to ensure the success of the Poverty Reduction Strategy adopted in 2002. The Strategy highlighted four objectives:

(a) A stable growth rate based on a diversified economy and helping to reduce disparities;

(b) Development of human resources through emphasis on population programmes and the improvement of health, education and training services;

(c) Strengthening of infrastructure, water supply and waste-water and rainwater management, roads and electricity;

(d) Protection for the poor and vulnerable thanks to a comprehensive social safety net.

5. The priority to be given to education, and particularly education for girls, is reiterated at every level. The system must first enable teachers to adapt; where the rights of women and girls are concerned, the movement can obviously begin at this level. The first stages in the change in education have been implemented.

6. A meeting with the Technical Monitoring Committee, grouping together representatives of ministries but also civil society, the private sector and the principal lenders, offered an opportunity to focus on the machinery established by the Government to ensure that the priorities identified are given all necessary attention and are reflected in the budget: health, education, water and sanitation. Mr. Soufan, the Deputy Prime Minister and Planning Minister, prepared a special organizational chart indicating all the Yemeni authorities relevant to the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, including the elected members of local councils. The Committee has five working groups on education, gender, health, decentralization and civil society.

7. The collection of statistics carried out for the preparation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy is continuing with updating of the data and the establishment of a labour market survey network supported by the United Nations agencies which have identified this area as one of the priorities under the United Nations Development Assistance Framework. Follow-up is impressive and will improve with the conduct of a new population census in 2004, which will also be used to update data on poverty and its socio-geographical breakdown. Nevertheless, the independent expert considers that gender could be given greater prominence in the Strategy.

C. Women's rights

8. The Prime Minister and all the ministers demonstrated their awareness of the need to enhance the status of women in Yemen rapidly through improvements in the legislative framework and effective protection by the courts. The promotion of awareness, through education and other methods, remains essential to overcome the conservatism which still prevails in some sectors of society. The situation of women prisoners, mentioned by the independent expert as an area of concern after her 1999 visit, has been addressed by the reforms: female prisoners are now authorized to leave prisons unaccompanied, for example, and in some prisons they can receive training and help with reintegration.

9. Female illiteracy is cited as the prime cause of serious poverty in Yemen, even though the school attendance rate has markedly improved following the construction of hundreds of schools in the villages. In the rural areas, only 29.7 per cent of young girls attend primary school. However, school curricula should enhance employment prospects by providing real professional skills. According to the Prime Minister, all efforts should be focused on changing the educational situation in Yemen, and religious leaders should make a contribution in the form of positive messages. The independent expert noted that religious education (350,000 pupils) and public education (4.5 million pupils) have been merged, and that all teachers fall under the sole authority of the Ministry of Education.

10. Each encounter offered an opportunity to underline the importance of lowering the birth rate (43.3 births per 1,000 inhabitants), but also the high level of infant mortality (78 deaths per 1,000 births). The population growth rate in Yemen stands at 3.5 per cent, polygamy

remains legal and the average family has 7.4 members. One of the principal reasons for the rise in material poverty is thus well known.

11. The existing legislation relating to women is acceptable, even if it could be improved, but conservative social pressures are very strong. The right to work is recognized, but rarely enforced. There is a wide gap between legal provisions and actual practice, and access to the courts is difficult for women. The reunification of the country in 1990 involved a step backward in women's rights compared with those that had been granted to them by the former People's Democratic Republic of Yemen (Aden). The Democratic Republic's progressive Family Code was abolished and replaced throughout the country by the more retrograde personal status system which had been in force in the Yemen Arab Republic (Sanaa). There was mobilization among women, but it did not succeed in preventing this backward step. The worst violation of women's rights is the lack of real penalties in cases of conjugal violence: a rather mild fine is the usual punishment. Similarly, when women are killed, the courts often display unacceptable leniency despite the severity of the punishments stipulated in the law.

12. The National Council for Women is composed of women with a variety of political affiliations representing educated social categories; its members work in ministries, parties, education and voluntary organizations. It can be an excellent tool in the implementation of a strategy for the development of the rights of Yemeni women. The Council has 45 employees and falls administratively under the Higher Council for Women's Affairs.

13. Reducing the birth rate and filling quotas in decision-making bodies and in institutions such as the Chamber of Deputies (Majlis al-Nu'ab), the Consultative Council (Majlis al-Shura) and local councils are the most important objectives of the members of the National Council for Women, together with the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. The Council is clearly an institution in its infancy and one which ought to be able to count on support from all sides.

14. The members of the National Council for Women are aware that conditions are favourable for advancing women's rights, and believe that they have the ear of the Government in the shape of the Minister for Human Rights and the Prime Minister. The latter is going to support the campaign to counter violence against women. The Government is also working to combat illiteracy (90 per cent of women in the countryside). The Council is also pursuing a campaign against the sexual mutilation of women, which is rare in Yemen and punishable under the law. The Council is associated with the Technical Committee monitoring the Poverty Reduction Strategy to ensure that women's interests are taken into account.

15. The independent expert was pleased to be able to meet the secretary-general of an association engaged in praiseworthy work. The AIDS Human Rights Foundation recently established a 24-hour telephone line that women in Yemen can call in order to discuss their problems with professionals, including those involving violations of their rights. The information collected in this way will also throw greater light on the situation of oppressed women. The expert considers that this telephone line is a public service which deserves the full attention and support of the authorities, but should retain its independent and anonymous character as the only way of preserving the trust of vulnerable women. The association is also actively involved in upholding the rights of wheelchair-bound persons suffering from motor

disabilities. It fosters many initiatives to ensure that their right to mobility is recognized both by town planners and by the architects of public buildings or new hotels.

D. An excessively high birth rate

16. Reducing the birth rate is one of the objectives mentioned by all the Yemeni leaders whom the independent expert met. It is also the principal objective of Yemeni women, who are continuing to strive to realize the right of women to education and to combat illiteracy in general, since these are the most effective ways of informing women of the risks of multiple pregnancies and ensuring that they have access to contraceptive methods for purposes of birth spacing.

17. The Deputy Prime Minister in charge of development, Mr. Soufan, particularly stresses the link between his efforts, the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy and the urgent need to provide women with the means to reduce the number of births. A national conference on birth control policy made it possible to mobilize public opinion and to overcome some areas of resistance by explaining the economic constraints facing the country. The challenge is now to maintain this commitment by providing men and women with the contraceptive methods of their choice as well as appropriate sources of information. This also involves educating women and making them aware of their rights.

E. A dynamic civil society

18. The Government, upholding the democratic approach which was chosen in 1990, encourages diversity among voluntary organizations and involves them in the implementation of several of its programmes to benefit the poor. During various constructive meetings the independent expert was able to meet representatives of some of the 3,191 such organizations, around 700 of which are engaged in protection of human rights or the rights of specific groups. The voluntary sector, which has expanded since 1990, is dominated by the Al-Islah association. This association benefits from the strength of religious belief among Yemenis and their commitment to discharging their religious duty of solidarity with the poorest people. Al-Islah, like growing numbers of other local associations, has carried out many programmes throughout the country and is progressively adopting a long-term development approach, in keeping with its goal of social reform, instead of mere charity. Hence it places great emphasis on prisoners' rights, is active in the health sector (network of hospitals) and operates a 200-bed psychiatric hospital. This association also has orphanages looking after 16,000 children.

19. Many associations contribute to enhancing the role of women in programmes of vocational and economic integration and popularizing a much more open view of the role of women in society. According to many associations, women must be encouraged to go to hospital during pregnancy and for childbirth (which they do not yet do), to go to school, even if the related costs (obtaining a birth certificate and a uniform) are prohibitive, and to assert their rights in all circumstances. In due course, Yemeni women should also be much better represented among the country's political and economic leaders, as is proper in a democracy.

20. The climate of freedom within the associations is tangible, and most of them are aware of the Government's determination to develop pluralism and participation so as to continue the consolidation of democracy.

21. The independent expert was received by members of the executive bureau of the National Union of Associations of the Disabled, under the chairmanship of Professor Muhammad Nasser Humaid of the University of Sanaa. Each of the individuals present represented a specific association (persons with motor and mental disabilities, the deaf, the blind, the dumb and persons wounded in war); one of the most active is the association of victims of mines and explosives. The Union manages a public fund financed by various taxes (on cigarettes and air tickets) and distributes allowances for disability as well as assistance in rehabilitation and in returning to work. The Union pursues the integration of the disabled through work as far as possible, and secured the adoption of a law setting aside 5 per cent of jobs in the public sector for disabled persons; it also acts to counter discrimination. However, its leaders are aware that their efforts still fall short of meeting all the needs, especially in the countryside.

22. Disabled prisoners are sometimes ill-treated, and specific activities are targeted on prisons, especially in respect of the mentally disabled, who for a short time have been benefiting from the efforts of the Higher Council for Mental Health. The provision of compensation and prostheses for those wounded in war still stands at an inadequate level. The Union is very active in the field of international mobilization for the drawing up of an international convention in support of the rights of disabled persons, under United Nations auspices.

23. The independent expert was able to familiarize herself with an initial study of the impact of a community development project implemented with the support of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in five of the country's regions. The study carried out at the port of Al-Makha demonstrated the usefulness of this participatory approach, which seeks to exploit natural resources and local income-generation opportunities, including those for women. By making use of local associations, which are encouraged to work together with local elected councils, this innovative project will generate valuable experience in devising a method which should subsequently be applied across the board by the Yemeni authorities.

F. Social safety net

24. Since the mid-1990s, the Government of Yemen has established increasingly closely knit and effective arrangements for the protection of the least well-off and most vulnerable citizens, which are now incorporated into the Poverty Reduction Strategy. This safety net, funded from local and external resources, obtained by the lenders, is based on a twin concept: guaranteeing basic minimum provision for vulnerable persons who are unable to find work or are heads of household, and encouraging development in poor or isolated rural areas through targeted actions and the provision of training opportunities. The independent expert was able to familiarize herself in particular with the activities of the Social Welfare Fund, the Social Development Fund and the productive family centres. Time did not allow her to continue her inquiries into other components of these arrangements, such as the Agriculture and Fisheries Promotion Fund or the Public Works Project. The expert was able to observe how the arrangements are gradually evolving so as to adapt to the ongoing decentralization of the administrative and political system

with the election of local district and governorate councils. This is a positive development which should allow a more comprehensive approach to situations of poverty and scope for more rapid reaction and adjustment.

25. The Social Welfare Fund is the most interesting step in efforts to combat poverty in Yemen. It is operated by the Minister of Social Affairs and Employment, Mr. Al-Arhabi. The Fund was established in 1996 at the same time as a series of other funds or projects designed to assist poor groups in the country at a time when the Government was adopting macroeconomic reforms which had a particular impact on incomes (abolition of subsidies, rises in the prices of public services) or jobs (privatizations and restructuring).

26. As a part of the decentralization process, the funds earmarked for each district on the basis of the poverty level are allocated to several categories of vulnerable persons, for the most part women, in cooperation with the local authorities but in keeping with criteria defined centrally. Supervision needed to be organized, and the Minister of Social Affairs is aware that it is still capable of improvement. But at the present stage, it is a great success, and the European Union rightly plans to raise its contribution towards an institution which provides valued help to those who receive it.

27. Through the Social Welfare Fund, 1,000 rials (about US\$ 5.40) per month is given to each extremely poor person in the country, plus 500 rials per child, subject to a ceiling of 2,000 rials. The amount is small, so as to encourage individuals to accept any paid work at a higher level. The Minister of Social Affairs favours the involvement of local councils in deciding who is eligible for assistance. The Ministry's social workers are responsible for investigating and selecting beneficiaries, and not the local authorities, who put forward names. The criteria are strict. There are 550,000 cases, but there is certainly room to increase the number of beneficiaries. The associations participate in identifying beneficiaries and in the payment of allowances in cooperation with the postal administration. Increasingly, the Social Welfare Fund works together with other agencies in the social sector to ensure that those capable of work receive training, learn to read and write or are able to secure funding for income-producing activities.

28. While she appreciates the efforts of the Yemeni authorities and the lenders to finance the Social Welfare Fund and ensure that it is managed well, the independent expert notes that the low level of the allowance certainly does not enable individuals to guarantee the fundamental right to feed oneself. She calls for this issue to be carefully studied.

29. The Social Development Fund, the third phase of which was approved in 2003, is mainly financed by foreign lenders (World Bank, United Nations, European Union, Arab Fund for Economic and Social Development, Islamic Development Bank, and bilateral aid from several countries), with a growing contribution from Yemen's State budget. Between 1996 and 2003, the Fund carried out 3,300 projects, and plans to implement 4,400 during its third phase, with a total budget of US\$ 340 million.

30. The Social Development Fund has a special status which guarantees its financial independence and conditions for personnel recruitment and management which fall outside the law governing the public service but which make it a focus of efficiency and innovation in the

sphere of management and interaction with all its partners in the private sector (individual consultants, small building enterprises) and the voluntary sector. Its activities cover three sectors:

(a) Community development: improvement of living conditions (water, education, health, roads, protection of the heritage or the environment) in roughly 118,000 localities containing a population of 19 million, 75 per cent of whom are rural dwellers;

(b) Development of micro-enterprises through support for intermediary associations which handle microcredit activities on behalf of the Fund. The second phase of the United Nations Capital Development Fund's Microstart programme is integrated with these activities;

(c) Strengthening of capabilities and institutional support for farmers' or fishermen's associations and cooperatives, local councils and consultants in charge of preparing and supervising Fund activities and projects.

31. The Social Development Fund has launched pilot activities in some regions in order to explore the best ways of assisting the most isolated rural areas, whose inhabitants are additionally sometimes victims of social discrimination. Expansion under the next phase will enable the proportion of female project leaders to be raised to 50 per cent. The lenders are satisfied and Yemen is hoping for a substantial increase in resources.

G. Ministry of Human Rights

32. The independent expert was able to carry out her mission in close cooperation with the new Ministry and the Minister, Ms. Alsoswa, who took up her post only a few months ago. The former State Secretariat for Human Rights and the National Council for Human Rights, which existed in parallel, have been abolished and their staff transferred to the new ministry. The Minister hopes that the Ministry will play the role of an institution protecting human rights by receiving complaints from citizens and bringing them to the courts where necessary.

33. However, the independent expert must point out that this praiseworthy intention falls short of the Principles relating to the status of national institutions for protection and promotion of human rights (the Paris Principles) adopted by the United Nations General Assembly. The expert calls on the Yemeni authorities to consider establishing an independent institution and leaving to the Ministry the task of focusing on capacity-building and the integration of human rights in all areas of governmental activity.

34. The results achieved in the sphere of human rights and the projects identified by the Minister deserve the attention of the Commission on Human Rights: major progress with regard to freedom of association, support for women's rights, a greater presence of women in the administration and particularly in the system of justice. There are 47 female judges in Yemen, and the Minister intends to give them her full support. Another aspect of the work involves investigating conditions in the prisons and regularly checking that no one has been detained without benefiting from the protection of the law. The link between extreme poverty and

individual rights is clear. An excessively high birth rate associated with illiteracy - this is the key to poverty, and it is linked to failure to acknowledge the role and legal equality of women in Yemeni society.

35. In the fields of education and health, it is negative social pressure with regard to women which hampers their access. The Minister is also watching over freedom of the press. She is preparing for an increase in the representation of women in politics and looking forward to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. In order to gain understanding for her policies and hear any objections, the Minister has initiated a wide-ranging dialogue and held meetings with religious groups. The Minister's courage deserves the support of the international community.

H. Meetings with poor women

36. During spontaneous meetings with poor women encountered during her travels, the independent expert was able to appreciate the little information poor people possess about the system of social welfare which could help them. Clearly, insufficient information is reaching people who are illiterate (sweepers and beggars) or consider themselves condemned to marginalization.

37. Another lesson drawn from these impromptu discussions is that voluntary organizations are regarded as being much closer to those who live in extreme poverty than public institutions.

I. The civil registration programme

38. In her contacts with voluntary organizations, the independent expert was able to appreciate the awareness of the need for up-to-date and accessible civil registration to enable everyone to enjoy their human rights. From the point of view of registration of births, the situation in Yemen is disturbing, and this has repercussions in various areas (lack of knowledge of the true demographic situation, of population movements, and of needs to be met as regards planning of services in the countryside).

39. If a woman gives birth in hospital, which is rare, she is given a paper that enables her to go and register the child and obtain a birth certificate, which is obligatory for school enrolment. This is so provided that the person registering the child possesses an identity card and a family record book. The sum of 500 rials (about US\$ 2.70) is charged for all these documents - a large amount for poor families, and one which explains why they are in no hurry to go and register births. Children deprived of an education - girls for the most part - bear the consequences of the decision to charge a high price for these documents. There is also a need to convince men, who often deny their wives identity cards, that they are entitled to one.

40. A negative aspect of the lack of coordination within the Government is the proliferation of computerized databases which are not sufficiently interlinked. In addition to the national civil registration database operated by the Ministry of the Interior, which issues national identity numbers, there are the electoral rolls in the Higher Electoral Commission, the register of State employees in the Ministry of the Civil Service and the register of pension recipients in the Social Welfare Fund. The Government, which spends large amounts on maintaining these separate databases, is now having difficulty in financing the high-priority civil registration project.

41. The Ministry of the Interior allowed the independent expert to visit the premises of the current, highly efficient programme, which makes use of the latest technology. General Al-Barhawi emphasized the usefulness of the programme in reporting the existence of a child at birth, ensuring respect for the right to vote and combating electoral fraud. Both voluntary organizations and the Ministry of the Interior official stress the very high cost of identity documents, which is still prohibitive for poor families; it is compounded by the cost of transport to district capitals in the case of country dwellers. Reducing the cost of civil registration documents could provide a great stimulus for progress, in order to stimulate compulsory education, for example, but lowering the price must be practicable, and for that purpose additional financial resources must be provided.

CONCLUSION

42. **The independent expert took note of the following points:**

Yemen is a country which wishes to mark its policies with the stamp of human rights and has placed efforts to combat poverty, together with a clear understanding of the difficulties involved, at the centre of the activities of the national and local authorities;

Voluntary organizations are a new phenomenon in Yemen, and this sector is dominated by the principal organization, Al-Islah;

Importance of the decentralization process: the local authorities are active and demand a more important role in efforts to combat poverty;

Ongoing implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, which is mobilizing all the resources of the authorities in the framework of a dynamic technical monitoring committee;

Absolute importance of a population policy designed to reduce the number of births and aimed at women and men, through modernization of the traditional religious message;

Reduction or inadequate level of foreign assistance as compared with countries at an equivalent level of development, even if the substantial support provided to the Social Development Fund is appreciated;

Excellent development of a very modern civil registration programme, but one which remains costly (500 rials per document) and hence prohibitive for the poor. Some husbands still deny their wives identity cards;

Yemen is making significant efforts to demonstrate its commitment to human rights and their protection: ratification of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, preparation for ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention and the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.

RECOMMENDATIONS

43. The independent expert:

Congratulates the Government of Yemen on the efforts it is making in the implementation of the civil registration programme;

Emphasizes the progress made in relation to the position of women in Yemen's prisons since her 1999 visit;

Congratulates the Minister responsible for human rights on her courage and her determination to struggle to curb obscurantism.

44. The independent expert recommends that the Government of Yemen should:

Pursue its efforts to promote recognition of women's rights, by supporting campaigns against violence and adopting a law setting quotas for representation in parliament or in local councils;

Re-establish an independent national human rights institution in keeping with the Paris Principles, which would enable the Ministry of Human Rights to concentrate on education and coordination;

Assign priority to efforts to combat illiteracy among women and the reduction of the birth rate;

Fulfil its intention to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, as well as the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court;

Continue to strengthen the role assigned to local authorities in efforts to combat poverty, together with adequate monitoring at the national level;

Develop the already excellent civil registration programme in the Ministry of the Interior, to make it accessible to as many people as possible with a charge for issuing documents set below 500 rials.

45. The independent expert recommends that the United Nations agencies in the field and the other lenders should:

Consider giving direct assistance to the National Council for Women;

Continue their support for the Social Welfare Fund while increasing the resources available;

Provide financial support for the civil registration programme so that it can be accessible at lower cost and can be made obligatory for men, women and children;

Continue their support for local capacity-building, inter alia by making use of international consultants only when strictly necessary;

Request the European Union to enhance its support for the Social Welfare Fund to ensure that the number of beneficiaries (the hoped-for increase is 10,000 cases per year) and the amount per beneficiary can be raised.

46. The independent expert calls on the Secretary-General to ensure that Yemen's efforts are made known to United Nations institutions and given encouragement at the highest level.

47. The independent expert recommends that the international non-governmental organizations should continue to provide active support to the diversity of Yemeni voluntary organizations, particularly the associations of disabled persons and the associations dealing with women's rights.

Appendix

LIST OF PERSONS MET

During her mission, the independent expert met the following persons: the Prime Minister, Mr. Abdulkader Bajammal, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Planning and International Cooperation, Mr. Ahmed Soufan, the Minister of Social Affairs and Labour, Mr. Abdulkarim Al-Arhabi, and, on several occasions, Ms. Amat al-Aleem Alsoswa, Minister for Human Rights. Other senior officials met included the Deputy Minister for International Cooperation in the Ministry of Planning and International Cooperation, Mr. Hisham Sharaf Abdallah, and his colleague, Mr. Yahya Al-Mutawakel, Adviser and Head of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Monitoring Unit. In the Ministry of Social Affairs and Labour, Mr. Ali Saleh Abdallah, Deputy Minister, Mr. Ghazi Abdallah Abderrab, Director-General of the National Labour Market Surveys Programme, Mr. Muhammad Saleh Al-Nimr, Director-General of the National Programme for Social Development and the Productive Family, Mr. Kasem Ahmed Khalil, Deputy Director of the Social Welfare Fund, Mr. Abdesalam Kasem, Director-General of the Public Works Project, Mr. Naef Al-Haidari, Director of the Programme to Combat Poverty (UNDP), Mr. Rachid Ali Al-Nousairi, Director-General for Women's and Children's Affairs and official responsible for the integration of women in development. An excellent visit to the national civil registration headquarters in the Ministry of the Interior was led by its head, General Al-Barawi. The mission also met members of the National Council for Women and of the Executive Bureau of the National Union of Associations of Disabled Persons, chaired by Mr. Muhammad Naser Humaid, and representatives of associations active in the promotion of women's rights and human rights: Ms. Rajah Musabeh (AIDS Human Rights Foundation), Ms. Basma Al-Qubatti (Social Organization for Family Development), Ms. Fathya Barhan and Ms. Abeer Hashem Al-Absi (Women's Economic Empowerment Association), Ms. Amat al-Aleem Al-Dailami (Women's Development Centre), Mr. Abdelwahab Al-Ansi and Mr. Yahya Hasan Al-Daba'i (Charitable Society for Social Welfare - Al-Islah). The independent expert was also able to hold discussions with the following persons in United Nations agencies in Yemen: Mr. Moin Karim, Deputy Resident Representative of UNDP and Acting Resident Coordinator, Mr. Ghulam Isaczai, Assistant Resident Representative of UNDP, Mr. Abdo Seif, head of UNDP programmes to combat poverty, Ms. Shanti Risal, joint UNDP-UNHCHR programme for the strengthening of human rights and Mr. Jean-Bernard De Milito and Mr. Eric Deschoenmaecker of the European Union delegation, who came from Jordan to take stock of cooperation with Yemen.
