



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/C.12/1/Add.84
19 December 2002

Original: ENGLISH

COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS
Twenty-ninth session
11-29 November 2002

**CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER
ARTICLES 16 AND 17 OF THE COVENANT**

**Concluding observations of the Committee on
Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

SOLOMON ISLANDS

1. The Committee considered the initial report of the Solomon Islands on the implementation of the Covenant (E/1990/5/Add.50) at its 38th and 39th meetings, held on 18 November 2002 (see E/C.12/2002/SR.38 and 39), and adopted, at its 56th meeting, held on 29 November 2002, the following concluding observations.

A. Introduction

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the initial report of the Solomon Islands, which was prepared generally in conformity with the Committee's guidelines. However, the Committee regrets that the State party did not provide written replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/Q/SOL/1). The Committee also regrets the absence of a delegation from the State party, which prevented the Committee from having a detailed and constructive dialogue with representatives of the State party.

B. Positive aspects

3. The Committee welcomes the conclusion of a technical cooperation agreement between the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) and the Government of the Solomon Islands. The Committee encourages the expansion in this agreement of activities which specifically focus on economic, social and cultural rights.

4. The Committee welcomes the initiatives undertaken by the State party in the field of constitutional reform, as well as the programmes established with a view to strengthening the rule of law, supporting the truth and reconciliation process and strengthening civil society with international assistance and cooperation.

C. Factors and difficulties impeding the implementation of the Covenant

5. The Committee considers that the recent economic recession, worsened by a high rate of generalized poverty and an economy of subsistence, as well as social tension and political instability, have impeded the implementation of economic, social and cultural rights contained in the Covenant.

D. Principal subjects of concern

6. The Committee is concerned about the inadequate representation of women at all levels of decision-making bodies of the State party and the persistence of patriarchal attitudes in the society.

7. The Committee is also concerned that 45 per cent of the population aged 14 and above are involved in unpaid work, as pointed out in paragraph 26 of the State party's report. The Committee is further concerned at the high rate of unemployment and underemployment in the State party, especially among women and young people.

8. The Committee is concerned that the State party has not ratified most of the main International Labour Organization Conventions relating to economic, social and cultural rights.

9. The Committee is also concerned that the erosion of the traditional social support among relatives and the "wantok" system is not being complemented and supported by some other forms of social assistance.

10. The Committee is alarmed at the high incidence of domestic violence against women and children in the State party.

11. While commending the intensive efforts made by the State party to combat malaria, the Committee notes with concern that malaria remains a major public health problem in the State party. The Committee is also concerned that acute respiratory infections, as well as sexually transmitted infections, remain the main cause of health problems, as indicated in the *Human Development Report 2002*.

12. The Committee is concerned that malnutrition, especially among young people, is widespread, despite the fact that food supplies are available in almost sufficient quantities in all parts of the country.

13. The Committee is also concerned that many communities in the State party do not have access to safe drinking water and proper sanitation facilities, which poses severe health risks to them.

14. The Committee is deeply concerned that primary education is not compulsory in the State party, as provided for in article 14 of the Covenant. The Committee notes furthermore that the cost of textbooks, stationery and teaching materials is unaffordable for many parents and makes primary education inaccessible to many.

15. The Committee is concerned that fewer girls than boys enrol in primary schools and that there is a high drop-out rate among girls in both primary and secondary schools.

16. While noting the considerable efforts made by the State party to reduce illiteracy, the Committee remains concerned that illiteracy, especially among women, poses a grave problem.

E. Suggestions and recommendations

17. The Committee recommends that a national plan of action for human rights be formulated. The Committee requests the State party to attach a copy of that plan of action to its second periodic report and to provide information on the implementation of the plan and how it promotes and protects economic, social and cultural rights.

18. The Committee urges the State party to take all effective measures to prohibit discrimination on the basis of nationality or sex in all fields of economic, social and cultural life. In addition, the Committee requests the State party to provide, in its next periodic report, detailed information about any government policies, programmes and measures adopted to assist in the implementation of the legislation on equality between men and women, as provided for in articles 2, paragraph 2, and 3 of the Covenant.

19. The Committee also urges the State party to design and implement a national job-creation programme and to provide vocational training, in particular to women and young people. The Committee recommends that the State party encourage the establishment of small businesses, including through the creation of accessible credit schemes.

20. The Committee requests that the State party provide, in its next periodic report, detailed information on the Trade Union Act, mentioned in paragraph 91 of the State party's report.

21. The Committee recommends that the State party consider ratifying the main International Labour Organization Conventions relating to economic, social and cultural rights, such as Convention No. 87 on Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organize, Convention No. 98 on Right to Organize and Collective Bargaining and Convention No. 182 on Worst Forms of Child Labour.

22. The Committee also recommends that the State party take effective measures to address the problem of the erosion of traditional support system and “wantok” communities, particularly in rural areas, and complement and support such a system by some other forms of social assistance.

23. The Committee urges the State party to adopt and implement effective legislative and administrative measures to protect members of the family, particularly women and children, from domestic violence. The Committee recommends that the State party establish support services for victims of domestic violence and take steps to sensitize law enforcement officials and the general public to the gravity of this issue.

24. The Committee also urges the State party to fully integrate human rights, particularly economic, social and cultural rights, in its poverty-reduction strategies. In this regard, the Committee refers the State party to the Statement on Poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, adopted by the Committee on 4 May 2001 (E/2002/22-E/C.12/2001/17, annex VII).

25. The Committee further urges the State party to address the problem of malnutrition, including through seeking assistance from international organizations.

26. The Committee urges the State party to seek international cooperation and assistance with a view to ensuring access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation systems for all rural and urban communities.

27. The Committee also urges the State party to intensify its malaria control programme and to address the problem of acute respiratory infections and sexually transmitted diseases, inter alia, through appropriate education and training of caregivers at all levels. The Committee encourages the State party to continue its close cooperation with the World Health Organization and other health-care organizations in this regard.

28. The Committee further urges the State party to take steps to ensure that all children are able to fully exercise their right to free and compulsory primary education, in accordance with article 14 of the Covenant, and to seek assistance from the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization in this regard. The Committee refers the State party to its General Comment No. 11 (1999) on plans of action for primary education.

29. The Committee recommends that the State party take effective measures, including programmes which explicitly target parents, to eliminate gender disparity in enrolment rates both at primary and secondary education levels.

30. The Committee also recommends that the State party increase its efforts to reduce the high rate of illiteracy, especially among women.

31. The Committee encourages the State party to provide human rights education in schools at all levels and to raise awareness about human rights, in particular economic, social and cultural rights, among State officials and the judiciary.

32. The Committee requests that the State party disseminate the present concluding observations as widely as possible among the State institutions concerned and the general public.

33. The Committee urges the State party to include in its second periodic report updated and detailed information, backed up by statistical and comparative data, on the concrete measures it has taken to address the principal subjects of concern and to implement the recommendations contained in the present concluding observations. The Committee recommends that the State party avail itself of technical assistance from OHCHR and the relevant United Nations specialized agencies in the preparation and presentation of its next report, as well as in the implementation of the concluding observations.

34. The Committee calls upon the State party to ensure that a delegation of the State party will be able to present its second periodic report to the Committee. If the State party so wishes, the Committee is willing to undertake a mission to the Solomon Islands with a view to assisting the State party in implementing its obligations under the Covenant, in the light of the present concluding observations.

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