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COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC, SOCIAL  
AND CULTURAL RIGHTS  
Thirtieth session  
5-23 May 2003

**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**

**ICELAND**

1. The Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights considered the third periodic report of Iceland on the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/1994/104/Add.25) at its 14th, 15th and 16th meetings, held on 13 and 14 May 2003 (E/C.12/2003/SR.14, 15 and 16), and adopted, at its 29th meeting, held on 23 May 2003 (E/C.12/2003/SR.29), the following concluding observations.

**A. Introduction**

2. The Committee welcomes the submission of the third periodic report of Iceland, which has been prepared in conformity with the guidelines of the Committee. The Committee also notes with appreciation the comprehensive written replies submitted by the State party to its list of issues (E/C.12/Q/ICE/2).

3. The Committee expresses its satisfaction with the in-depth, constructive and frank dialogue with the State party's delegation, which consisted of members with expertise in different fields relevant to the provisions of the Covenant.

### **B. Positive aspects**

4. The Committee welcomes the recent court practice in the State party whereby constitutional provisions are interpreted in the light of its international obligations. The Committee also notes with appreciation references made in the report and by the delegation to judgements of the Supreme Court of Iceland in which the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has been invoked.

5. The Committee notes with satisfaction the adoption of new legislation on the Public Health Institute which seeks to promote public health in Iceland and to implement a National Health Policy.

6. The Committee notes with appreciation the new Act on Maternity, Paternity and Parental Leave which reconciles family life and work, provides for time for parents to devote to their children, and promotes the sharing of parental responsibilities and gender equality in the labour market.

7. The Committee welcomes the adoption of the new Act on Child Protection containing a comprehensive set of provisions and of new amended rules concerning, inter alia, measures to protect children from neglect and ill-treatment at home.

8. The Committee notes with satisfaction the amendments enacted in the Tobacco Prevention Act, the objective of which is to reduce the consumption of tobacco products by imposing supplementary restrictions on their sale and by reinforcing the prohibition of their advertisement.

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

9. The Committee notes that there are no factors and difficulties which impede the effective implementation of the Covenant in the State party.

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

10. The Committee regrets that, as stated in its previous concluding observations (E/C.12/1/Add.32), the State party has not given full effect to the Covenant provisions in its domestic legal order, especially by providing for judicial and other remedies for violations of economic, social and cultural rights.

11. The Committee regrets that Iceland devotes only 0.16 per cent of its gross domestic product (GDP) to international cooperation, while the United Nations recommendation in this regard is 0.7 per cent for developed countries.

12. The Committee notes with concern that inequality between men and women continues to exist, particularly with respect to wages.

13. While taking note of the measures undertaken by the State party to promote access to employment and improve the working environment for persons with disabilities, the Committee is concerned about the lack of disaggregated statistical data on people with disabilities in employment in its third periodic report as well as in the dialogue with the State party's delegation.
14. The Committee notes with concern that, in spite of the measures undertaken by the State party to reduce the frequency of occupational accidents both on land and at sea, particularly accidents involving seamen employed on fishing vessels, there is still a relatively high rate of accidents.
15. The Committee is concerned about the persistent problem of domestic violence in the State party and that the State party has not adopted specific legislation on this issue.
16. The Committee notes with concern that the support provided to single-parent families remains insufficient.
17. The Committee is concerned about the existence of poverty and social exclusion in the State party, in spite of the efforts undertaken to combat the phenomenon.
18. The Committee expresses its concern about the high level of alcohol and drug consumption in the State party, in particular among young people.

#### **E. Suggestions and recommendations**

19. **The Committee reiterates its previous recommendation (ibid., para. 18) that if measures are taken to incorporate treaty obligations with respect to civil and political rights in the Icelandic legal system, similar measures should be taken simultaneously in respect of economic, social and cultural rights. In this regard, the Committee draws the attention of the State party to its general comment No. 9 on the domestic application of the Covenant.**
20. **The Committee recommends that the State party continue its activities in the area of international cooperation and increase its official development assistance to 0.7 per cent of its GDP, as recommended by the United Nations. The Committee also urges the State party to take into account the provisions of the Covenant in its bilateral project agreements with other countries.**
21. **The Committee calls upon the State party to intensify its efforts to ensure that women and men enjoy full and equal participation in the labour market, particularly in terms of equal pay for work of equal value. In this regard, the Committee recommends that the State party review its mechanisms for obtaining statistical information so as to enable an effective assessment of the progress achieved.**
22. **The Committee urges the State party to continue its efforts to implement current policies and programmes aimed at improving access to employment and improving the working conditions of people with disabilities and to provide disaggregated statistical data on this matter in its next periodic report.**

23. **The Committee urges the State party to enhance its efforts to reduce the frequency of occupational accidents both on land and at sea by raising awareness of the importance of preventive measures and, in particular, by providing training to seamen in matters relating to vessel stability and the use and treatment of hoisting equipment. In this regard, the Committee also recommends that the State party ratify ILO Conventions No. 174 concerning the prevention of major industrial accidents and No. 81 concerning labour inspection.**

24. **The Committee recommends that the State party ratify ILO Conventions No. 117 concerning the basic aims and standards of social policy and No. 118 concerning equality of treatment in social security.**

25. **The Committee urges the State party to adopt specific legislation on domestic violence.**

26. **The Committee urges the State party to increase its efforts to provide greater support to single-parent families.**

27. **The Committee reiterates its recommendation made in its earlier concluding observations (E/C.12/1/Add.32, para. 22) on the poverty situation in Iceland and urges the State party to pursue efforts to combat poverty and social exclusion, particularly of the disadvantaged and marginalized groups, with the adoption of clear indicators to assess progress achieved, and requests the State party to report on this matter in its next periodic report, including the findings of the special committee set up in this regard. The Committee refers the State party to the statement adopted by the Committee on 4 May 2001 on poverty and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (E/C.12/2001/10).**

28. **The Committee calls upon the State party to take effective measures to address the high level of alcohol and drug consumption, particularly among young people.**

29. **The Committee encourages the State party to raise awareness about human rights, in particular about economic, social and cultural rights, among State officials, the judiciary and other actors responsible for the implementation of the Covenant.**

30. **The Committee requests the State party to disseminate the present concluding observations widely at all levels of the society and, in particular, among State officials and the judiciary and to inform the Committee, in its next periodic report, of all steps undertaken to implement them.**

31. **The Committee also encourages the State party to continue to consult with non-governmental organizations and other institutions of the civil society in the preparation of the next periodic report.**

32. **The Committee requests the State party to submit its fourth periodic report by 30 June 2008.**

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