

MCH91-82-6-2

HUMAN RIGHTS

Status of International Instruments
as at 31 December 1991

*Update: Chart of ratification, see foreword to **Human Rights - Status of International Instruments (ST/HR/5)**, United Nations publication (Sales No. E.87.XIV.2); replaces text of 31 March 1991.*

States	(1)	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights	
	(2)	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	
	(3)	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	
	(4)	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty	
	(5)	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	
	(6)	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid	
	(7)	International Convention against Apartheid in Sports	
	(8)	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide	
	(9)	Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity	
	(10)	Convention on the Rights of the Child	
	(11)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	
	(12)	Convention on the Political Rights of Women	
	(13)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women	
	(14)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages	
	(15)	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment	
	(16)	Slavery Convention of 1926	
	(17)	1953 Protocol amending the 1926 Convention	
	(18)	Slavery Convention of 1926 as amended	
	(19)	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery	
	(20)	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others	
	(21)	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness	
	(22)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons	
	(23)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees	
	(24)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees	
	(25)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families	
States			
Afghanistan	X		
Albania	X		
Algeria	X		
Angola	Xa		
Antigua and Barbuda	X		
Argentina	X		
Australia	X		
Austria	X		
Bahamas	X		
Bahrain	X		
Bangladesh	X		
Barbados	X		
Belarus	X		
Belgium	X		
Belize	X		
Benin	X		
Bhutan	X		
Bolivia	X		
Botswana	X		
Brazil	X		
Brunei Darussalam	X		
Bulgaria	X		
Burkina Faso	X		
Burma, see Myanmar	X		
Burundi	X		
Cambodia	s		
Cameroon	X		
Canada	Xa		
Cape Verde	X		
Central African Republic	X		
Chad	X		
Afghanistan			
Albania			
Algeria			
Angola	Xc		
Antigua and Barbuda	X		
Argentina	X		
Australia	X		
Austria	X		
Bahamas	X		
Bahrain	X		
Bangladesh	X		
Barbados	X		
Belarus	X		
Belgium	X		
Belize	X		
Benin	X		
Bhutan	X		
Bolivia	X		
Botswana	X		
Brazil	X		
Brunei Darussalam	X		
Bulgaria	X		
Burkina Faso	X		
Burma, see Myanmar	X		
Burundi	X		
Cambodia	X		
Cameroon	X		
Canada	X		
Cape Verde	X		
Central African Republic	X		
Chad	X		

Chile	X	(11)	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
China	Xa	(12)	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Colombia	X	(13)	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Comoros	Xa	(14)	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty
Congo	X	(15)	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
Costa Rica	X	(16)	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
Côte d'Ivoire	X	(17)	International Convention against Apartheid in Sports
Cuba	X	(18)	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
Cyprus	X	(19)	Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity
Czechoslovakia	X	(20)	Convention on the Rights of the Child
Dem. People's Rep. of Korea	X	(21)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Denmark	X	(22)	Convention on the Political Rights of Women
Djibouti	Xa	(23)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
Dominica	X	(24)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
Dominican Republic	X	(25)	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Ecuador	X	(26)	Slavery Convention of 1926
Egypt	Xa	(27)	1953 Protocol amending the 1926 Convention
El Salvador	X	(28)	Slavery Convention of 1926 as amended
Equatorial Guinea	X	(29)	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
Estonia	X	(30)	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others
Ethiopia	X	(31)	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
Fiji	X	(32)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
Finland	X	(33)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
France	Xa	(34)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
Gabon	X	(35)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families
Gambia	X		
Germany	Xa		
Ghana	X		
Greece	X		
Grenada	X		

States	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Guatemala	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guinea	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guinea-Bissau	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guyana	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Haiti		X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Holy See					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Honduras	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
India	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indonesia	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iran (Islamic Rep.)	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iraq	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ireland	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Israel	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Italy	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jamaica	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Japan	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jordan	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kenya	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kiribati	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kuwait	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lebanon	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lesotho	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Liberia	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Liechtenstein	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lithuania	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg	X				X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guatemala					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guinea					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guinea-Bissau					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Guyana					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Haiti					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Holy See					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Honduras					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Hungary					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iceland					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
India					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Indonesia					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iran (Islamic Rep.)					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Iraq					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ireland					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Israel					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Italy					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jamaica					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Japan					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Jordan					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kenya					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kiribati					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Kuwait					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lao People's Dem. Rep.					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lebanon					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lesotho					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Liberia					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Liechtenstein					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Lithuania					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Luxembourg					X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X

Guatemala	X	(11)	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Guinea	X	(12)	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Guinea-Bissau	X	(13)	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Guyana	X	(14)	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty
Haiti	X	(15)	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
Holy See	X	(16)	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
Honduras	X	(17)	International Convention against Apartheid in Sports
Hungary	X	(18)	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
Iceland	X	(19)	Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity
India	X	(20)	Convention on the Rights of the Child
Indonesia	X	(21)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Iran (Islamic Rep.)	X	(22)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
Iraq	X	(23)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
Ireland	X	(24)	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Israel	X	(25)	Slavery Convention of 1926
Italy	X	(26)	1953 Protocol amending the 1926 Convention
Jamaica	X	(27)	Slavery Convention of 1926 as amended
Japan	X	(28)	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
Jordan	X	(29)	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others
Kenya	X	(30)	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
Kiribati	X	(31)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
Kuwait	X	(32)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Lao People's Dem. Rep.	X	(33)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
Lebanon	X	(34)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families
Lesotho	X	(35)	
Liberia	X	(36)	
Libyan Arab Jamahiriya	X	(37)	
Liechtenstein	X	(38)	
Lithuania	X	(39)	
Luxembourg	X	(40)	

Madagascar	X	(11)	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Malawi	X	(12)	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Malaysia	X	(3)	Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
Maldives	X	(4)	Second Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights aiming at the abolition of the death penalty
Mali	X	(5)	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
Malta	Xa	(6)	International Convention on the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid
Mauritania	X	(7)	International Convention against Apartheid in Sports
Mauritius	X	(8)	Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide
Mexico	X	(9)	Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity
Monaco	X	(10)	Convention on the Rights of the Child
Mongolia	X	(11)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women
Morocco	X	(12)	Convention on the Political Rights of Women
Mozambique	X	(13)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
Myanmar	X	(14)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
Namibia	X	(15)	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Nauru	X	(16)	Slavery Convention of 1926
Nepal	X	(17)	1953 Protocol amending the 1926 Convention
Netherlands	X	(18)	Slavery Convention of 1926 as amended
New Zealand	X	(19)	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
Nicaragua	X	(20)	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others
Niger	X	(21)	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
Nigeria	X	(22)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
Norway	X	(23)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Oman	X	(24)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
Pakistan	X	(25)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families
Panama	X		
Papua New Guinea	X		
Paraguay	X		
Peru	X		
Philippines	X		
Poland	X		

Madagascar	X	(13)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
Malawi	X	(14)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
Malaysia	X	(15)	Convention against Torture and other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
Maldives	X	(16)	Slavery Convention of 1926
Mali	X	(17)	1953 Protocol amending the 1926 Convention
Malta	X	(18)	Slavery Convention of 1926 as amended
Mauritania	X	(19)	Supplementary Convention on the Abolition of Slavery, the Slave Trade, and Institutions and Practices Similar to Slavery
Mauritius	X	(20)	Convention for the Suppression of the Traffic in Persons and of the Exploitation of the Prostitution of others
Mexico	X	(21)	Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness
Monaco	X	(22)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
Mongolia	X	(23)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
Morocco	X	(24)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
Mozambique	X	(25)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families
Myanmar	X		
Namibia	X		
Nauru	X		
Nepal	X		
Netherlands	X		
New Zealand	X		
Nicaragua	X		
Niger	X		
Nigeria	X		
Norway	X		
Oman	X		
Pakistan	X		
Panama	X		
Papua New Guinea	X		
Paraguay	X		
Peru	X		
Philippines	X		
Poland	X		

States	(11)	International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights
Portugal	X	
Qatar	X	
Republic of Korea	X	
Romania	Xa	
Rwanda	X	
Saint Kitts and Nevis	X	
Saint Lucia	X	
Saint Vincent & Grenadines	X	
Samoa	X	
San Marino	X	
Sao Tome and Principe	X	
Saudi Arabia	Xa	
Senegal	X	
Seychelles	Xb	
Sierra Leone	X	
Singapore	X	
Solomon Islands	X	
Somalia	X	
South Africa	X	
Spain	X	
Sri Lanka	Xa	
Sudan	X	
Suriname	X	
Swaziland	X	
Sweden	Xa	
Switzerland	X	
Syrian Arab Rep.	X	
Thailand	X	
Togo	X	
Tonga	X	
(2)	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	
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(9)	Convention on the Non-Applicability of Statutory Limitations to War Crimes and Crimes against Humanity	
(10)	Convention on the Rights of the Child	
(11)	Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women	
(12)	Convention on the Political Rights of Women	

(13)	Convention on the Nationality of Married Women
(14)	Convention on Consent to Marriage, Minimum Age for Marriage and Registration of Marriages
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(22)	Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons
(23)	Convention relating to the Status of Refugees
(24)	Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees
(25)	Convention on the rights of migrant workers and the members of their families
States	
Portugal	X
Qatar	Xc
Republic of Korea	X
Romania	X
Rwanda	X
Saint Kitts and Nevis	X
Saint Lucia	X
Saint Vincent & Grenadines	X
Samoa	X
San Marino	X
Sao Tome and Principe	X
Saudi Arabia	X
Senegal	X
Seychelles	X
Sierra Leone	X
Singapore	X
Solomon Islands	X
Somalia	X
South Africa	X
Spain	X
Sri Lanka	Xc
Sudan	X
Suriname	X
Swaziland	X
Sweden	X
Switzerland	X
Syrian Arab Rep.	X
Thailand	X
Togo	X
Tonga	X

States	(11)	(12)	(13)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(110)	(111)	(112)
Trinidad and Tobago	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tunisia	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Turkey					s					s	X	X
Tuvalu											X	X
Uganda	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ukraine	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Union of Soviet Socialist Rep.	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Arab Emirates	X	Xa			Xb	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Republic of Tanzania	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States of America	X	X			Xb	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uruguay	X	X									X	X
Vanuatu	X	X	X							s	X	X
Venezuela	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Viet Nam	X	X			X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yemen	X	X			X	X**	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yugoslavia	X	X			X	X**	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zaire	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zambia	X	X	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zimbabwe	X	Xa	X		X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TOTAL NUMBER OF STATES PARTIES	104	100	61	12	130	92	54	103	32	108	111	96
Signatures not followed by ratification	3	4	5	9	6	2	28	3	1	35	12	4

x Ratification, accession, approval, notification or succession, acceptance or definitive signature.
 y Signature not yet followed by ratification.
 * Ratification, accession, approval, notification or succession, acceptance or definitive signature which have been given only by the former German Democratic Republic before the reunification.
 ** Ratification, accession, approval, notification or succession, acceptance or definitive signature which have been given only by the former Republic of Yemen.

States	(131)	(14)	(15)	(16)	(17)	(18)	(19)	(20)	(21)	(22)	(23)	(24)	(25)
Trinidad and Tobago	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tunisia	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Turkey	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Tuvalu	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uganda	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Ukraine	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Union of Soviet Socialist Rep.	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Arab Emirates	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United Republic of Tanzania	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
United States of America	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Uruguay	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Vanuatu	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Venezuela	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Viet Nam	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yemen	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Yugoslavia	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zaire	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zambia	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
Zimbabwe	X	X	Xc	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X	X
TOTAL NUMBER OF STATES PARTIES	57	36	64	69	64	87	104	61	16	36	107	108	
Signatures not followed by ratification	8	8	15	6	0	0	3	5	3	8	0	0	3

a Declaration recognizing the competence of the Human Rights Committee under article 41 of the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights.
 b Declaration recognizing the competence of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination under article 14 of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.
 c Declarations recognizing the competence of the Committee against Torture under articles 21 and 22 of the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment.
 d Declaration under article 21 only.

YROUE-FORUM

WOMEN'S FORUM

Women's rights: what are we doing about it?

Lynette Steenkamp interviews the Minister of Justice.

"MORE women for CODE-SA."

"Women must have a say in writing the new constitution."

"We need a separate Charter of Women's Rights."

"Affirmative action must redress historical backlogs due to discrimination against women."

It is enough to make any right-thinking feminist want to get in there and burn her bra.

The ANC has been quick to jump onto the bandwagon of women's rights and is exploiting its emotional potential to the full. Nationalist took the question to Mr Kobie Coetsee, the Minister of Justice: What are WE doing about it?

It did not take long to realise that actually a great deal has been done about it, particularly during the ten years that Minister Coetsee has been in the hot seat. One by one discriminatory laws have been amended or repealed to make way for better laws.

Remember the days?

Remember the days when a woman teacher automatically lost her permanent post if she got married?

Remember when a divorce almost inevitably meant a raw economical deal for the woman?

Remember when women married in community of property could not sign contracts?

These are only a few examples. The reforms that have taken place have also not been confined to laws pertaining to Whites. A Black woman married under civil law enjoys exactly the same rights as any other.

Stumbling blocks

What about customary law? The injustices done to black women under this law are still glaring, but concept legislation is in the pipeline. The hitch, however, is the TBVC states.

Mr Coetsee explains that it is in the best interests of all that reforms along these lines be as uniform as possible throughout South Africa.

There's a neighbouring government or two, it would seem, that are not quite as keen to emancipate their women as they are to lobby for human rights.

So it is, in fact, Black governments that are delaying improvements to the Black women and not the much-maligned South African government.

As far as remaining statutory discrimination is concerned, the Law Commission has been fine-combing the books and has just come up with recommendations for removing any last vestiges.

Level playing field

It would certainly appear, then, that the government has done and is doing its utmost to level the playing fields as far as women are concerned. Yet the perception certainly exists and is cultivated by the ANC that discrimination against women is alive and well in the RSA.

How now, Mr Minister?

"Legislation alone cannot change the way society works. Centuries of male chauvinist thinking created a society where women were perceived to be inferior. Prejudices thus formed solidified into norms and values. Only education can, in time, eradicate society's way of thinking about women."

First, Third World

"The first world part of South Africa has benefitted from the general emancipation

of women to such an extent that should a woman from that milieu choose to fight discrimination she would have the media with her to rally public opinion and probably win.

"However, it's another story for the third world woman in our country. She remains caught up in such a strongly chauvinistic society that she would simply not be capable of seeking redress even if customary law were not in place. The slow education process must first take its course."

Logical explanation

The ANC connection?

Mr Coetsee comes up with a surprisingly logical explanation:

When the ANC were banned, its leaders (men) were nearly all imprisoned or out of the country. The women like Winnie Mandela and Albertina Sisulu took over the reins of the struggle. When the men came back, out went the women.

Now, when influential women are hurting from that kind of treatment, and millions of women followers are hurting from the inherent inequalities of customary law and polygamy what better tactic than to champion women's rights, offering that (feigned?) concern as a sop and slyly connecting perceived past racial prejudices of a white government with present prejudice against women?

Clever.

The loudest call at present is for a Charter of Women's Rights - a bulky conglomerate of laws, private and public designed to advance the case for affirmative action.

This charter would be in addition to a Charter of Fundamental Rights.

The minister shakes his head. He almost pleads. Women must not make the mistake of refusing to be a person anymore. It took a long struggle for her to overcome the prejudices of centuries and attain that status. By applying a type of separate sexism, she could end up destroying much that has been achieved in the delicate area of breaking down prejudices.

Equality guaranteed

He adds quickly, though, that the equality of women must be guaranteed, but within the proposed Bill of Fundamental Rights - not exclusively.

Such a bill would do much to address specific problems of discrimination not yet covered by existing laws.

In addition the government is very carefully considering becoming a signatory to the international UN Convention on Women's Rights. This will give women's rights in South Africa still more of an even keel for the future.

A thinker, this minister reflect as I leave the interview. And a reformer too.

Maybe it will not be necessary to burn the bra after all.



YROUEKLUB WORD VEERTIG: Van links is mevv. Gerda Bekker (voorsitter van die Nasionale Vroueklub), Martina Botha (genooide spreker) en Milda Swanepoel (perskakel die viering van die Nasionale Vroueklub se veertigste verjaardag).