The conclusion of a Genocide Convention has been one of the most important achievements of the United Nations in dealing with specific aspects of human rights. As a result of Nazi atrocities, the Convention seeks to make genocide or the destruction of groups of human beings, an international crime. The General Assembly, at its first session in 1946, adopted a resolution condemning genocide "as a crime under international law." Two years later on December 9, 1948, the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. This convention came into force on January 12, 1951. On December 9, 1948, when the General Assembly unanimously adopted the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, the President of the 1948 session of the General Assembly H. V. Evatt called it "an epoch making event."

Article II of the Convention defines genocide as any of the following acts committed with the intent to destroy,

in whole or in part, a national, ethnic, racial or religious group as such:

a. Killing members of the groups;

b. causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

c. Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

d. Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

e. Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group. 1

Not only Genocide itself but also conspiracy or incitement to commit it, as well as attempts to commit genocide and complicity in genocide are punishable acts under the convention. Person involved in genocide must be punished "whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officers or private individuals."

The purpose of the convention is to prevent genocide. States adhering to this convention are required to pass the necessary laws to give effect to it and to grant extradition in cases of genocide. The 'Genocide Convention' is among those, concluded under United Nations auspices that have received the largest number of ratifications.


The parties to the Convention are given the right to call upon the competent organs of the United Nations to take appropriate action under the charter for the prevention and suppression of genocide. The International court of Justice is given jurisdiction with regard to disputes relating to the interpretation, application and fulfilment of the Convention, including the responsibility of the parties for acts of genocide.

B. Slavery and Servitude:

Since 1949, the Economic and Social Council has been studying the problem of slavery. In 1949, it asked the Secretary General to appoint a committee of experts "to survey the field of slavery and other institutions and customs resembling slavery, to assess the nature and extent of these problems and to suggest methods of attacking them."

In 1951, after careful inquiries the four-member committee reported to the United Nations, that, apart from slavery in its crudest form, a number of institutions or practices analogous to slavery or resembling slavery in some of its aspects still existed in some parts of the world. Since many of these institutions or practices were not covered by the League of Nations

Slavery Convention of 1926, the Committee proposed that a supplementary convention be drafted by the United Nations. In 1953, the General Assembly adopted a protocol under which the functions exercised by the League of Nations under the slavery convention of 1926 were transferred to the United Nations.

This Supplementary convention on slavery adopted in 1956, invoked the anti-slavery article of the Universal Declaration. The major purpose of this convention is to bring about the complete abolition of slavery. The convention outlaws certain institutions and practices similar to slavery, such as debt bondage, serfdom, purchase of brides and exploitation of child labour. The convention supplements the 1926 slavery convention adopted by the League of Nations. This convention has been in force since April 30, 1957.

C. Abolition of Forced Labour:

The question of forced labour was first taken up by the Economic and Social Council in 1948 and in the following year the Economic and Social Council requested the Secretary-General to cooperate closely with the I.L.O. in its work on questions concerning forced labour, and also to approach all governments and to inquire in what manner and to what extent they would be


preparing to cooperate in an impartial investigation into the extent of forced labor in their countries, including the reasons for which persons were made to perform forced labor and the treatment accorded to them.

A committee on Forced Labor was established jointly by the United Nations and the I.L.O. The committee, in its report, stated that its inquiry had revealed the existence of facts relating to systems of forced labor of such grave a nature that they seriously threatened fundamental human rights and jeopardized the freedom and status of workers in contravention of the obligations of the United Nations Charter. In 1953, the committee completed its work, and in the same year, General Assembly invited the Economic and Social Council and the I.L.O. to give early consideration to the report of the committee.

After examining the committee’s report, in 1954, both the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly condemned those systems of forced labor and appealed to all governments to re-examine their laws and administrative practices in the matter.

A second report on forced labor was considered by the Economic and Social Council in 1956. This report was prepared


D. Convention on the Status of Refugees and Stateless Persons:

In connection with the work of the United Nations relating to the status of refugees and stateless persons, a conference of plenipotentiaries convened in Geneva in 1951. This conference adopted the convention relating to the status of Refugees. Another conference of Plenipotentiaries convened in New York by the Economic and Social Council in 1954, adopted the convention relating to the status of stateless persons. It came into force on June 6, 1960.

The Preamble of both conventions invoke the Charter and the universal Declaration of Human Rights, which "have affirmed the principle that human beings shall enjoy fundamental rights and freedoms without discrimination."

1. Ibid., p. 364.
Two principles are the basis of both conventions: first, that there should be as little discrimination as possible between nationals, on the one hand, and refugees or stateless persons, on the other; second that there should be no discrimination based on race, religion or country of origin among refugees and among stateless persons.

A stateless person is defined in the Convention as "a person who is not considered as a national by any state under the operation of its law.

E. Freedom of Information:

In 1946, the General Assembly declared that "freedom of information is a fundamental human right and is the touchstone of all the freedoms to which the United Nations is consecrated." In March and April 1948, a special United Nations Conference was held at Geneva, on Freedom of Information. The conference drew up three draft conventions. Two of the three conventions drafted by this conference — the convention dealing with the international transmission of news and the convention on the International right of correction, were subsequently approved by the General Assembly. The convention on the International right of correction came into force on

August 24, 1962. The Assembly approved the convention dealing with the international transmission of news but has not opened it for signature.

The third convention drafted by the 1948 Geneva Conference, the convention on Freedom of Information is still before the Assembly, which is engaged in an article by article revision of it. Its aim is, among other things, to guarantee to everyone, including foreign journalists the right to obtain and divulge information and opinions.

A new version of the draft convention on Freedom of Information was prepared by a Committee established by the Assembly in 1950. On the basis of the work done by that Committee, the Third Committee of the General Assembly at its 1959, 1960, and 1961 sessions approved the preamble and four operative paragraphs of the draft convention.

In 1950, the General Assembly recommended to all Member States that when they were compelled to declare a state of emergency, measures to limit freedom of information and of the press should be taken only in the most exceptional circumstances.

2. Ibid., p. 106.
The General Assembly, in 1958 recommended that governments should open their countries to greater freedom of communication by facilitating access to United Nations information programmes, supporting activities of United Nations information centres and facilitating the free flow of accurate information through all media.

F. Declaration of the rights of Child:

On November 20, 1959, the General Assembly unanimously adopted a Declaration of the rights of child. This declaration elaborates upon human rights provisions of the Charter and those of Universal Declaration of human rights, particularly article 25 of the Universal Declaration. The preamble to the Declaration specifically states that "the child, by reason of his physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, before as well as after birth."

In the form of ten principles, the Declaration sets forth, a code for the well being of every child without any exception. It declares that every child shall be entitled to the rights set forth in the Declaration without distinction or discrimination on account of race, colour, sex, language or

religion, national or social origin, property, birth or other
status, whether of himself or his family.

The Declaration proclaims that the child is entitled
to receive education which will be free and compulsory at
least in the elementary stages, and which will promote his
general culture and enable him to develop his abilities and
his sense of moral and social responsibility and to become
a useful member of society. Parents, individuals, voluntary
organizations, local authorities and governments are all called
upon to recognize the rights and freedoms set forth and to
strive for their observance by legislative and other measures.

G. Draft Declaration on the Right of Asylum:

A Draft declaration on the right of asylum adopted by
the commission on human rights has been before the Assembly
since 1960. The Third Committee adopted the Preamble and
Article I at the 1962 Assembly session. However, due to the
Committee's crowded agenda, the draft was later allocated for
consideration to the Assembly's legal (sixth) committee.
During the 1966 session the legal committee established a

1. The United Nations and Human Rights, p. 34.
2. Ibid., p. 34.
working group to preparation/amended text. The text submitted by this working group to the committee during the 1966 session was re-entitled "Draft Declaration on Territorial Asylum" and consisted of a Preamble and 4 Articles.

H. Declaration on the Granting of Independence to Colonial countries and peoples:

In 1960, the General Assembly adopted 'The Declaration on the Granting of Independence, to colonial countries and peoples'. This declaration is closely connected with human rights. But in resolution adopted in 1966, the General Assembly noted with deep regret that six years after the adoption of the declaration, many territories were still under colonial domination, and deplored the negative attitude of certain colonial powers which refused to recognize the right of colonial peoples to self-determination and independence.

1. Elimination of Racial Discrimination:

Since the inception of the United Nations, the problem of eliminating racial discrimination has preoccupied the General Assembly. The system of "Apartheid" prevailing in south Africa is the most blatant manifestation of discriminatory practices in the postwar world.

1. World Mark Encyclopaedia of the Nations, p. 106.
The policies and practices of 'Apartheid' represent the most flagrant and glaring violations of human rights. Actually 'Apartheid' is a form of genocide as it is intended to destroy racial and ethnic groups of the indigenous population in South Africa. On 12th September, 1962, thirteen delegates from Afro-Asian states requested the Secretary General to include in the agenda of the forthcoming session of the General Assembly, the item entitled "The question of race conflicts in South Africa resulting from the policies of Apartheid of the government of the Union of South Africa."

The matter had become so grave in 1960 that the Security Council had to be called into session. The Security Council passed a strongly-worded resolution calling upon the Union government to modify its policies in conformity with the purposes of the United Nations Charter. The Union government refused to abide by the United Nations resolution. The Union government termed the United Nations action as an intervention in her internal affairs prohibited by Article 2 (7) of the Charter.

With the entry of so many newly independent African and Asian nations into the U.N., the Assembly's efforts to

mount a frontal attack on the over-all problem of racial discrimination received a new impetus. As a consequence, the Assembly in 1962 adopted a resolution, sponsored by nine African states, requesting the commission on Human Rights to prepare a Draft Declaration and a Draft Convention on the Elimination of All forms of racial discrimination.

Three reasons are advanced for Apartheid, political, economical and biological.

The political reason is that Whites are afraid that they would lose their political control over the country if whites and blacks are treated alike. The economic reason for Apartheid is equally clear. The South African Whites enjoy one of the highest standards of living in the world. They are not prepared to give it up. The biological reason is equally clear. Many whites have developed strong antipathy towards sexual relationship between whites and Blacks.

Apart from these facts, there is the sentiment and the psychological reason, the superiority complex and the desire to rule.

The United Nations Declaration on the Elimination of all forms of racial discrimination was proclaimed by the

2. Ibid.
General Assembly on 23rd November 1963. In this declaration, the Assembly affirmed that "discrimination between human beings on the grounds of race, colour or ethnic origin is an offense to human dignity, a denial of the principles of the Charter, a violation of the rights proclaimed in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and an obstacle to friendly and peaceful relations among nations, capable of disturbing peace and security among peoples." The Declaration sets forth principles for the elimination of discrimination.

The convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination was adopted unanimously by the General Assembly in 1965, two years after the declaration. This convention incorporated the principles of the 1963 declaration. This convention was the most important and comprehensive international instrument in the field of human rights prior to the adoption by the Assembly of the two covenants on Human Rights in December 1966.

This was the first completed U.N. Convention to include implementation measures. Comprehensive measures of implementation are provided for in the convention, including the establishment of a committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination and of ad hoc conciliation commissions. On January 4,

1969, the International convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination entered into force.

The convention contains a long list of rights and freedoms in the enjoyment of which racial discrimination shall be prohibited and eliminated.

But in spite of the persistent efforts by the United Nations, the freedom loving and civilized world as well as the pleadings of humanitarian organizations, the South African Government is showing no signs of abrogating or even reasonably amending her wicked apartheid policy.

At every stage of the deliberations, the representatives of the Union of South Africa have argued that since Article 2 (7) forbids intervention in the internal affairs of Member States, the United Nations has no right to have discussions and pass resolutions on South African policy of apartheid. The South African government and some of its supporters have consistently argued that the records of the San Francisco Conference make it clear that the matters pertaining to the domestic jurisdiction of a state are by their very nature outside the purview of the United Nations.

1. The United Nations and Human Rights, p. 44.
2. Evening News (Accra) 20th January 1968.
But this argument of the South African government is based on fallacious reasoning. The events in South Africa because of their nature and their origin have gone far beyond the point of being an internal affair. They are now a matter of grave concern for the whole world and for the United Nations. Though the Assembly in dealing with this particular situation is able to proceed on the basis of a strong majority consensus, its action has been ineffective in altering South African policy.

J. Declaration on Youth:

At its 1965 session, the General Assembly adopted a Declaration on the promotion among youth of the ideals of peace, mutual respect and understanding between peoples.

K. Status of Women:

The measures taken by the United Nations to advance the status of women have been inspired by the Charter, which sets forth, in its Preamble, the principle of "the dignity and worth of the human person" and of "equal rights of men and women." A commission on the status of women was established in 1946. Since its establishment the commission has

dealt with a wide range of questions related to women's political, economic, civil, social and educational rights. Among the commission's earliest achievements was the drafting of the Convention on the political right of women, adopted by the General Assembly in 1952, and the Convention on the nationality of married women adopted in 1956.

**POLITICAL RIGHTS OF WOMEN:**

The General Assembly in 1946, recommended that all Member States which had not already done so, adopt measures necessary to fulfil the aims of the Charter by granting to women the same political rights as to men.

The commission on the Status of Women, in 1950 requested the Secretary-General to prepare a draft convention on the granting to women of equal political rights with men. In 1961, the Commission considered the Secretary-General's draft and presented its own draft to the Economic and Social Council in August of that Year. The council in 1962, forwarded that draft to the General Assembly which, on 20th December 1962, adopted the convention on the political rights of women. It provides that "women shall be entitled on equal terms with men without discrimination to vote in all elections; to hold

1. Ibid., p. 109.
2. The United Nations and Human Rights, p. 56.
public office and to exercise all public functions." Almost all the nations that became independent in recent years have, by means of clauses entrenched in their constitutions, granted to women equal political rights with men. This convention is the first instrument of international law aimed at the granting and the protection of women's rights on a worldwide basis. The convention was opened for signature in March 1953 and entered into force on July 7, 1954.

ECONOMIC RIGHTS OF WOMEN:

The goal of the Commission on the Status of women, over the years, in the field of economic rights, is the removal of discrimination against women in the economic field and the achievement of equal rights of men and women in respect of employment and occupation. Collaboration between I.L.O. and the United Nations resulted in an I.L.O. convention and a Recommendation on Equal Remuneration for work of Equal value for men and women workers, which were adopted in 1951.

EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITIES:

The commission on the Status of Women has also been deeply concerned with the question of the access of women to

education. The provision of equal educational opportunities for men and women at all levels has been repeatedly urged by the Economic and Social Council. The Commission has always expressed interest in those programmes of UNESCO which are of special importance to women, such as the various projects aimed at increasing the access of girls and women to education, particularly in the developing countries. In cooperation with UNESCO and I.L.O., the commission on Human Rights has promoted the access of girls and women to education at all levels, to the teaching profession and technical and professional training.

NATIONALITY OF MARRIED WOMEN:

Since its inception in 1946, the commission on the Status of Women has been concerned with the problem of the nationality of married women. The efforts of the Commission in this field resulted in the preparation of the convention on the Nationality of Married Women. This convention was adopted in 1957 as a result of factual situations of numerous instances of great suffering and hardship imposed on women married to men of a different nationality from her own. The convention seeks to avoid the automatic loss of nationality by a woman on her marriage to an alien. She may keep her

1. Ibid., p. 323.

nationality unless she desires to acquire her husband's nationality. However, the hardship and suffering caused by this conflict of laws continues to exist in some parts of the world and women married to aliens continue to be the victims. The Convention on the 'Nationality of Married Women', which was adopted in January 1957 by the General Assembly, opened for signature in February 1957 and came into force on August 11, 1958.

DECLARATION ON THE ELIMINATION OF DISCRIMINATION AGAINST WOMEN:

The work of the United Nations in helping to assure equal rights for women resulted in the adoption by the General Assembly in 1967 of the "Declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against women. On November 7, 1967 the General Assembly Unanimously adopted a draft declaration on the Elimination of Discrimination against women, which declares that such discrimination is fundamentally unjust and constitutes an offence against human dignity.

From the very beginning, after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights in 1948, the United Nations has taken interest in adopting treaties and declarations on a number of specific rights; mentioned earlier. These treaties on conventions are in effect between the states which have become parties to them.

2. The United Nations and Human Rights, p. 70.