VII REVIEW OF LEGISLATION

73. The year 2002 witnessed a spate of legislation relating to human rights. The most important was the Sex Discrimination Act 2002 which creates a Sex Discrimination Division within the National Human Rights Commission. The Division will deal with allegations of gender discrimination within the public and the private sectors and also with complaints of sexual harassment.

74. The Prevention of Terrorism Act 2002 gave rise to a debate about the wide powers given to the police under that legislation. In the fight against terrorism which is threatening democracy, is it justifiable to reduce the scope of our traditional civil liberties in order to protect democracy? Where Parliament deems it fit to restrict certain liberties, this must nonetheless be done within the parameters of the Constitution. The NHRC is closely monitoring the situation and has not seen any cause for alarm so far.

75. Under the Rodrigues (Regional Assembly) Act 2002 some degree of autonomy has been granted to the Island of Rodrigues to make the inhabitants more conscious of their responsibilities and to participate more fully in decisions affecting their island.
76. In Chapter IV on Prisons reference was made to the Community Service Act 2002 which will enable the Courts to make alternative orders to imprisonment. The NHRC welcomes this legislation which gives a chance of rehabilitation to minor offenders.

77. The year 2002 also saw the liberalisation of sound broadcasting with the coming into being of two independent radio stations. Although the stations are monitored by the Independent Broadcasting Authority, freedom of expression was enhanced by this move. Through these radios people are given an additional opportunity to air their grievances against the police and the authorities. These are signs of a healthy democracy where human rights thrive.