The Complaints procedure

**Article 26 complaints in practice**

Poland ratified both the Freedom of Association and Protection of the Right to Organise Convention, 1948 (No. 87) and the Right to Organise and Collective Bargaining Convention, 1949 (No. 98) in 1957. When martial law was declared in the country in 1981, the government suspended the activities of the Solidarność trade union and detained or dismissed many of its leaders and members. After the case had been examined by the Committee on Freedom of Association, delegates at the 1982 International Labour Conference filed a complaint under article 26 against Poland. The resulting Commission of Inquiry found grave violations of both conventions. Based on the Commission’s conclusions, the ILO and numerous countries and organizations put pressure on Poland to redress the situation, and in 1989 the Polish government gave Solidarność legal status. Lech Walesa, Solidarność leader and later President of Poland, noted that “the Commission of Inquiry created by the ILO after the imposition of martial law in my country made significant contributions to the changes which brought democracy to Poland.” 45