



## Economic and Social Council

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### Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Forty-third session

#### Summary record (partial)\* of the 41st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 10 November 2009, at 10 a.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Marchán Romero

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#### Consideration of reports

- (a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (*continued*)

*Second periodic report of Madagascar (continued)*

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\* No summary record was prepared for the rest of the meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.*

**Consideration of reports:**

**(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant** *(continued)*

*Second periodic report of Madagascar* (continued) (E/C.12/MDG/2; E/C.12/MDG/Q/2 and Add.1; HRI/CORE/1/Add.31/Rev.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Madagascar took places at the Committee table.*

2. **The Chairperson** invited Committee members to put any remaining questions on articles 13–15 to the delegation.

3. **Mr. Kerdoun** asked why teachers' salaries were still low compared to those of other civil servants, despite the fact that teachers perhaps contributed the most to society and were responsible for training the adults of the future. Noting that Malagasy was the national language, he requested clarification as to whether it was also an official language, and asked why French had become the main language of instruction in 1984. He asked whether the students who were granted the foreign scholarships by multilateral and bilateral partners as listed in table 81 of the State party's report were expected to study abroad or in Madagascar.

4. **Ms. Brás Gomes** commented that the fact that half of the total population in the State party were children was a huge asset, since in many other countries life expectancy was increasing and the birth rate falling, but it also entailed special responsibilities for the State. She asked for details about formal and informal preschool education and, noting that a report by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) had commented that there was a shortage of opportunities and facilities for recreational activities for children and young people in the State party, she asked what measures were being taken to provide children with access to extracurricular activities. Noting the State party's comment in its written replies to the list of issues (E/C.12/MDG/Q/2/Add.1, para. 186) that the new Education for All plan contained no special measures for disabled children, 90 per cent of whom were not enrolled in school, she asked whether there were any plans to rectify that situation, which the delegation had acknowledged was the result of such factors as school buildings not having been adapted and the attitudes of teachers and parents, and whether the State party had requested international assistance in that regard.

5. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** asked why there was a disparity in the gender enrolment ratio of girls and that of boys and why the distance between school and home should constitute more of an obstacle to girls' education than to that of boys, as suggested in the State party's report, given that the distance affected both boys and girls. Why, if the schools were publicly run, did the Government not seek to build them closer to the communities which they served? Noting that one component of informal education was civic education, she asked whether informal education also covered human rights and requested further details on the element of civic education component that covered development and environmental education. She asked the State party to clarify its aims in regard to compulsory primary education. Referring to the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.31/Rev.1), she asked how the Ministry of Culture promoted regional cultural heritage and what role the media played in that respect. Noting a remark later in the core document that certain radio or television stations broadcast discriminatory remarks that threatened national unity, she asked whether the media industry had set itself standards or a code of ethics to regulate their actions. She repeated her question of the previous day as to how successful the debates being held by the Ministry of Justice with traditional leaders had been in their aim of persuading members of

the community concerned to accept a culture that fostered equal rights of men and women, and whether there had been any change in their views. Noting that poverty should not impede the State party's ability to ensure the population's right to participate in cultural life, she asked what measures the Government had been taking in that respect, such as building infrastructure and roads in rural areas, in order to remedy the current situation in which certain groups, including those in rural areas and specifically descendants of slaves, tended to be excluded from cultural life.

6. **Mr. Kedzia**, noting that the Internet could provide access to such areas as education, culture and information on health care and employment, requested details of how the Government was planning to extend public Internet access to everyone, especially people in more difficult situations such as migrants and those in remote areas.

7. **The Chairperson**, speaking in a personal capacity, asked whether the State party intended to ratify the International Labour Organization Convention concerning Indigenous and Tribal Peoples in Independent Countries (No. 169) and what its position was with respect to the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

8. He invited the delegation to reply to Committee members' questions on articles 13–15 of the Covenant.

9. **Mr. Rakotoniaina** (Madagascar), in response to the question about the debates held with traditional leaders regarding equality between men and women, said that a road map had been drawn up and signed by all those involved in which the leaders agreed to take specific measures to prohibit marriage between persons under the age of 18. The Ministry of Justice was organizing follow-up visits to the local communities in order to monitor the extent to which such marriages had decreased in number.

10. Government efforts with respect to Internet access were currently being launched. Internet coverage did not yet extend to rural areas, meaning that access for residents of those areas remained limited, but there were plans to rectify that situation in the future.

11. In response to the question about ensuring the right to participate in cultural life in rural areas, he said that every year, especially during the celebrations of independence, local artistic troupes regularly participated in cultural shows staged in all village, hamlet and other communities, enabling people to participate in cultural life at the local level. Many artistic creations, especially songs, were drawn from the traditional culture of each locality, and renowned traditional artists had the opportunity to express themselves and their cultures at the national level.

12. He explained that primary education was compulsory from the age of 6, and that the Government's objective was to make it compulsory for a period of seven years, in order to keep children in school for as long as possible and combat the problem of pupils dropping out early.

13. **Mr. Randrianandrasana** (Madagascar) said that, in order to overcome the problem of the long distances between home and school, plans for education reform included a project for building schools nearer to villages and hamlets in particularly remote areas that were not served by roads. The problem of distance did not affect girls' access to schools in particular, since there was no significant disparity between female and male primary school attendance. A total of 80 per cent of privileged children completed primary education, compared with only 15 per cent of underprivileged children. The majority of underprivileged children lived at least half an hour away from school. In the context of the Education for All movement, the national education reform gave priority to the construction of schools in remote areas, in order to bring schools closer to children. Regarding poverty, measures were in place to provide financial assistance to poor parents to ensure the education of their children. School dropout rates were high, owing to a shortage of teaching

staff, which was being redressed through a recruitment drive that would continue until 2012. The Government was taking measures to monitor the attendance of teachers and pupils in order to discourage absenteeism among staff and students alike. Dropout rates were also affected by parents' lack of interest in education. Efforts were therefore being made to revise curricula with a view to providing education that was more pertinent to everyday life and work.

14. Turning to the issue of pay and lodging for teachers, he explained that several divisions of the public service were regulated by specific statutes, which set forth pay conditions and other aspects of remuneration, such as housing provisions. The statute governing teaching was currently under revision. On the question of language policy, he said that Malagasy was the national language of Madagascar. There were three official languages: Malagasy, French and English. From 1975 to 1984 Malagasy had been introduced as the official language for education. The implications of that change had not been studied properly beforehand, and the measure had been considered a failure, which had led French to be reinstituted as the main language used in schools. Recent studies had shown that the use of French had a detrimental effect on Malagasy education, and under the current educational reforms Malagasy would be introduced as the language of instruction in the first five years of primary education. In the sixth and seventh years of primary education Malagasy would be used for teaching social subjects, and French would be used in the teaching of sciences. French and English would also be taught in schools.

15. On the issue of funding for students, he said that grants awarded to Malagasy students by foreign authorities were for study in those foreign countries. Preschool education was one of the least developed areas of the national education programme, since very few parents were in a position to send their children to specialized preschool educational institutions. In the academic year 2007–2008 only 2,680 schools had had preschool facilities. Since 2007, preschool education had been incorporated into the formal education system, and a department for preschool education had been set up in the Ministry of Education, with a view to increasing the number of preschool education facilities and providing preschool education for 30 per cent of children aged 3 to 5 by 2012.

16. Responding to the questions on education for children with disabilities, he said that measures had been taken to revise the Education for All policy to take account of the needs of children with disabilities. International assistance would be used to improve access to schools for children with disabilities. Madagascar had received Education for All Fast-Track Initiative credit for the period 2009–2011, which would be used to implement reforms in the education system. Children and teenagers with disabilities received mainstream education in mainstream schools. Education in specialist institutions could be provided for children with severe disabilities. Furthermore, during State examinations the use of Braille or typing aids was authorized for children with disabilities. In collaboration with Handicap International and UNICEF, the Ministry of Education was developing measures to ensure that children with disabilities could be educated in mainstream classes. Madagascar had 11 centres for specialized education for children with disabilities.

17. On the issue of the education gap between boys and girls, he said that the notable differences between male and female school attendance occurred at the secondary education level, rather than the primary level. In some regions girls were underrepresented in schools, whereas in other regions boys tended to drop out of schools to herd cattle. Cattle herding was considered one of the worst forms of child labour in Madagascar, and was prohibited for children under the age of 18. Regarding informal education, he said that the Ministry of Education worked with a number of centres for children who were outside the education system, such as street children, to provide them with academic and vocational education and reinsertion into the mainstream education system or into the labour market, depending on their age. Those programmes included education on human rights.

18. Turning to questions on Internet access, he explained that Internet coverage was developing rapidly in Madagascar, and a number of mobile communications providers were active across the State. All but two particularly remote regions had Internet connections. Information technology had been incorporated into the primary, secondary and higher education curricula. A project was under way to develop an intranet system, which would link the Ministry of Education with the decentralized education bureaux around the country.

19. **Ms. Razanamahasoa** (Madagascar) said that the Ministry for Youth and Leisure had been established to ensure the promotion of youth issues and children's issues. Discrimination in media reporting was very rare, since journalists were obliged to adhere to a code of professional ethics.

20. **Ms. Andrianaivo** (Madagascar) said that, as well as the media, which were instrumental in disseminating cultural information in Madagascar, the Government's partnership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) played an important part in promoting cultural heritage. Madagascar contained three UNESCO world heritage sites, and UNESCO played a crucial role in promoting tourism and strengthening conservation efforts in respect of those sites.

21. Responding to questions concerning the effects of poverty on the enjoyment of cultural rights, she said that poverty constituted an obstacle to the realization of all rights, including cultural rights. The Government was undertaking strategies to overcome poverty and was working in cooperation with the United Nations Development Programme to ensure access to health care and education, and to organize programmes for cultural activities such as dance, music and arts for young people, including those from particularly poor and remote communities.

22. **Ms. Rasoarinjafy** (Madagascar) added that in 2005 a cultural policy had been adopted, which included the involvement of several government ministries and international associations and organizations, including UNESCO and the International Organization of la Francophonie. In the context of that policy and in cooperation with UNESCO, a project was currently under way to establish reading centres in all regions of the country by 2012.

23. **Ms. Bonoan-Dandan** asked what the content of the books in the reading centres was, and what language they were written in, since many international literacy programmes used books in French or English, which could be inaccessible to members of the population who only spoke the local language.

24. **Ms. Barahona Riera** (Country Rapporteur) asked why there had been a change in the official language for teaching, and what the impact of that had been.

25. **Mr. Sadi** enquired whether efforts to increase the use of the Malagasy language were intended to promote and protect a mainstream culture for the country, given the large number of nationalities and ethnic groups comprising the population.

26. **Mr. Randrianandrasana** (Madagascar) explained that books in the reading centres were in French, Malagasy and English, which were the three official languages of Madagascar. The books included novels, didactic manuals and pedagogical materials to help children in remote areas to improve their reading ability and general education. Madagascar did not have a law on linguistic policy in education, but had changed the language of education to Malagasy in response to a recommendation made by UNESCO. Since only 1 per cent of teachers in Malagasy primary schools had a good command of French, the use of Malagasy was crucial to ensuring quality primary education. While the Malagasy language varied slightly between regions, it was understood by all, and using it as the language of education therefore eliminated linguistic barriers. The majority of children spoke Malagasy at home.

27. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee's dialogue with the State party had come to an end. He invited the delegation of Madagascar to present its concluding remarks.

28. **Mr. Rajemison** (Madagascar) said that Madagascar was working within a specific framework of international cooperation, with precise indicators and a well-structured programme of activities. The conditions set by donors were used to set targets for development. Madagascar had received international recognition for its efforts in respect of health care, in particular its vaccination programmes and its measures to reduce malaria. The Government had recently concluded an agreement with the World Intellectual Property Organization to conduct an audit of Madagascar's cultural heritage in order for targeted requests for assistance to be made. Madagascar was a pilot country for Africa in respect of the use of meteorological technology in the development of agriculture, transport and infrastructure.

29. **Ms. Razanamahasoa** (Madagascar) said her delegation had endeavoured to supply as much information as possible for the Committee's consideration, and would provide written replies to questions that it had been unable to answer during the debate. Her Government would take account of all the issues raised during the discussion with the Committee, and would endeavour, with the support of its partners, to improve the realization of economic, social and cultural rights throughout the State party.

30. The delegation of Madagascar withdrew.

*The discussion covered in the summary record ended at 11.25 a.m.*