



# Economic and Social Council

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## Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

### Forty-ninth session

#### Summary record of the first part (public)\* of the 46th meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 22 November 2012, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Pillay

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### Consideration of reports

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

*Consideration of the status of economic, social and cultural rights in Equatorial Guinea in the absence of a report (continued)*

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\* No summary record was prepared for the second part (closed) of the meeting.

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*The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.*

**Consideration of reports**

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

*Consideration of the status of economic, social and cultural rights in Equatorial Guinea in the absence of a report* (continued) (HRI/CORE/1/Add.126; E/C.12/GNQ/Q/1 and Add.1)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Equatorial Guinea took places at the Committee table.*

*Articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant* (continued)

2. **Mr. Nsue Mokuy** (Equatorial Guinea) said that, in response to the Committee's request, his delegation would advise the Government of Equatorial Guinea to examine the issue of polygamy. With regard to the obligation imposed on women to pay back their dowry in the event of divorce, it should be noted that the bride price had a symbolic value and that the amount of money involved was often very low. It was the equivalent, under customary law, of the wedding ring in civil and canonical marriage. Its payment by the fiancé's family or by the tribe sealed the union between the two families and the two tribes, as marriage between members of the same tribe was not possible. By the same token, the return of the bride price signalled the dissolution of the marriage. The bride would also be obliged to return the bride price in the event of her husband's death, provided that the couple had not had children and that the bride had not subsequently married another man from the same tribe. The woman would then have to leave her deceased husband's tribe. The imprisonment of women unable to pay back their dowry was not a current practice.

3. Child labour and forced labour did not exist in Equatorial Guinea. Since the country had begun to develop its oil reserves, it had welcomed a large number of West African immigrants who came with their families. However, some immigrants brought children who were not their own and engaged in human trafficking for the purposes of labour exploitation. Children from Equatorial Guinea, on the other hand, all received schooling. Education was free and obligatory up to the age of 14. Public policies to combat HIV/AIDS, sex education and prevention programmes for adolescents and the establishment of district committees on health and development had helped lower maternal and neonatal mortality. The Directorate-General for Family Health of the Ministry of Public Health strengthened and supervised measures taken under the national reproductive health programme, which targeted a 20 per cent reduction in the maternal mortality rate by 2020. The provision of prenatal care and the training of 1,217 midwives and of 498 community health assistants for work in rural health units ensured that 90 per cent of deliveries were attended by qualified staff. In addition, 392 health posts had also been created in outlying urban communities and rural areas. Prenatal consultation services were available in all hospitals and health centres.

4. Thanks to the preschool education project undertaken between 1990 and 2000, the school enrolment rate had increased and the school failure rate had fallen. A reform of the education system had been carried out between 2001 and 2012 and a national plan on education for all had been implemented; 992 teachers had been trained for that purpose. A large number of private educational establishments had been accredited subject to their continued compliance with the standards laid down by the Ministry of Education. Currently, 86,921 pupils were enrolled in primary education, 42,801 of whom were girls. There were 34,237 pupils in secondary education, 46.4 per cent of whom were boys. The National University of Equatorial Guinea had 7,663 students, 38.2 per cent of whom were

women. The building of schools in municipalities, provinces and districts had improved access to education. Awareness campaigns had been conducted to promote the enrolment of girls in school. More than 2,000 teachers had also been recruited in rural areas. Lastly, contracts had been entered into with private companies to construct infrastructure and supply water. Every community would soon have access to safe drinking water.

5. **Ms. Shin** said that she hoped the delegation of Equatorial Guinea would include women the next time it appeared before the Committee. In the Republic of Korea, it had been impossible for members of the same clan to marry until an appeal was lodged with the Constitutional Court in 1998. She would like to invite the delegation of Equatorial Guinea to review the situation in their country. A study on the use of dowries should be carried out in Equatorial Guinea in order to determine how often bride prices were paid and what their average value was. Clarification would be appreciated on the situation of women, particularly on whether they were subjected to discrimination within the family and society.

6. **Mr. Nsue Mokuy** (Equatorial Guinea) said that he would like to point out that the tribe had a sacred status in Equatorial Guinea and that it was therefore impossible for members of the same tribe to marry or be intimate, thereby excluding any possibility of incest.

*Articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant*

7. **Mr. Kerdoun** asked if it was true that the enrolment rate for primary education was exhibiting a downward trend, particularly in rural areas, and if so, why. He would also appreciate information on the factors hindering the enrolment of girls and wished to know if it was true that a quarter of primary school pupils had to repeat a year, with only 33 per cent of those pupils completing primary education, as had been stated by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). He also wondered why, conversely, the secondary school dropout rate was relatively low (23 per cent for boys and 22 per cent for girls). He would appreciate it if the delegation of Equatorial Guinea could shed light on the reasons why the illiteracy rate in the State party — which, according to UNESCO, stood at 87 per cent in 2000 and 93 per cent in 2008 — was considerably higher than that of other sub-Saharan African countries (62.1 per cent) and could indicate whether the State party intended to take steps to remedy the situation. Lastly, the Committee would appreciate further information on the measures taken to improve access to inclusive education for children with disabilities.

8. **Mr. Nsue Mokuy** (Equatorial Guinea), denying the accuracy of the UNESCO data, stated that the illiteracy rate was no higher than 20 per cent. Furthermore, to overcome the problem, emphasis had been placed on teaching adults under the Education for All Programme. The delegation of Equatorial Guinea would submit data in writing to the Committee on school dropout rates, disaggregated by sex and level of education.

9. **Mr. Siale Bileká** (Equatorial Guinea) said that education was one of the Government's priorities. In fact, article 24 of the Constitution stipulated that primary education was obligatory and free and that any person, private entity or religious association had the right to found a school, provided that they complied with the curriculum established by the State and that they refrained from employing any form of propaganda. Numerous parties provided support to the education sector, including civil society organizations, religious organizations and private companies, including oil companies.

10. In order to promote preschool education, classrooms designed for that level of education had been built in existing schools with the support of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), which had also contributed to the production of school curricula and textbooks.

11. **Mr. Nsue Moku**y (Equatorial Guinea) said that a special group had been set up to assist disabled children and that the Government funded the purchase of school buses to transport these children, who accounted for just 2 per cent of the population. Equatorial Guinea had successfully carried out numerous projects that had directly or indirectly contributed to the promotion and protection of the rights enshrined in the Covenant. The Government of Equatorial Guinea intended to submit a comprehensive report to the Committee, within two years, that would address the concerns raised by the Committee.

12. **The Chairperson** thanked the delegation for its responses while noting that the brief exchange that had taken place could in no way replace the three meetings that were devoted to a dialogue with all States parties as part of the consideration of their initial reports. Moreover, the written replies to the list of issues could not be seen to constitute the initial report of Equatorial Guinea. The Committee therefore requested the State party to submit its initial report as soon as possible and within two years at the latest. The Committee had completed its consideration of the status of economic, social and cultural rights in the State party in the absence of a report.

*The first part (public) of the meeting rose at 4.20 p.m.*