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

#### Summary record of the 41st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Monday, 21 November 2011, at 3 p.m.

*Chairperson:* Mr. Pillay

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*Second and third periodic reports of Cameroon*

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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)*

*Second and third periodic reports of Cameroon (E/C.12/CMR/2-3); core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.109); concluding observations of the Committee on the initial report of Cameroon (E/C.12/1/Add.40); list of issues (E/C.12/CMR/Q/2-3); written replies of the Government of Cameroon to the list of issues (E/C.12/CMR/Q/2-3/Add.1)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Cameroon took places at the Committee table.*
2. **The Chairperson** welcomed the delegation of Cameroon and invited it to present the State party's second and third periodic reports.
3. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that he was pleased that his country had resumed its dialogue with the Committee after 12 years of silence, which had been the result not of any lack of political will on the part of the Cameroonian Government, but of a concatenation of external factors. Civil society and all the competent government bodies had participated in the drafting of the report.
4. Since the submission of its initial report, Cameroon had ratified some important international human rights instruments, including the Worst Forms of Child Labour Convention, 1999, No. 182, of the International Labour Organization (in 2002), the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime (in 2004), as well as the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, especially Women and Children and the Protocol against the Smuggling of Migrants by Land, Sea and Air and the United Nations Convention against Corruption. In 2006 it had also acceded to the Convention on the Protection and Promotion of the Diversity of Cultural Expressions of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). At regional level, it had ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa (Maputo Protocol) in 2009 and the African Youth Charter in 2011.
5. At national level, in 2010, Cameroon had adopted an act amending and supplementing Act No. 2004/016 of 22 July 2004 on the establishment, organization and operation of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms (CNDHL), which had brought the Commission into line with the Paris Principles by giving government representatives a consultative instead of a deliberative vote. Also in 2010 an act had been adopted on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities. Act No. 2009/004 of 14 April 2009 on the organization of legal aid had widened the access of the most disadvantaged sections of the population to justice. Furthermore, in 2006, Cameroon had adopted an act on the disclosure of assets with a view to improving public governance. It had set up a National Anti-Corruption Commission in the same year.
6. Since August 2009, Cameroon had drawn up and adopted a growth and employment strategy designed to bring about a tangible improvement in the population's living conditions, especially those of women and children, by creating jobs. In order to counter the effects of the global financial and economic crisis which had hit the metallurgy, wood, cotton and rubber sectors, the Cameroonian Government had adopted a range of economic and social measures aimed at increasing the population's purchasing power by curbing the rise in the price of fuel and essential foodstuffs, reducing electricity charges by 25 per cent, raising civil servants' basic salary by more than 15 per cent and doubling their housing

allowances. In order to sustain those measures, the Cameroonian Government had decided to increase the guaranteed minimum inter-occupational wage (SMIG), had set up the Task Force to regulate the supply of mass consumption goods (MIRAP) and had put in place a programme to build 10,000 low-cost housing units. It had also adopted budgetary measures to stabilize public finances and had mounted schemes to combat youth unemployment and job insecurity, including a programme launched in February 2011 which had led to the recruitment of 25,000 young people into the civil and public services. In addition, the Government's current public works projects, such as the building of roads, motorways, dams and ports and the rehabilitation of the rail network, should directly or indirectly create some 300,000 jobs.

7. In the sphere of education, the Head of State had introduced free primary schooling in the year 2000 and had made provision for the supply of a "minimum pack" of essential teaching materials to State primary schools. In order to encourage school enrolment, especially in priority education areas, the State had subsidized private schools, set up school canteens, improved buildings and hired more teachers. It had also facilitated pupils' access to textbooks and teachers' access to teaching aids. As far as higher education was concerned, the opening of Bamenda University on 14 December 2010 had brought the number of State universities to eight. The Cameroonian Government gave priority to the school enrolment of persons with disabilities, who were fully or partly exempt from the payment of school fees and who could apply for a scholarship in order to pursue their schooling and their studies in higher education. The State also paid for the tuition of disabled persons with special educational needs.

8. In the health sector, the Cameroonian Government had not only adopted outline legislation and defined a sectoral public health policy, it had also pushed ahead with the implementation of an expanded vaccination programme to provide general immunization against hepatitis B, whooping cough, diphtheria, tetanus and poliomyelitis. It had set up 60 units offering care to persons suffering from HIV/AIDS and opportunistic diseases and had introduced free treatment for tuberculosis in hospitals and free anti-malaria treatment for children under the age of five. A gynaecological, obstetric and paediatric hospital had been built in Yaoundé. A similar hospital was under construction in Douala, as were numerous health centres throughout the country, many of which specialized in the care of persons living with HIV/AIDS. Antiretroviral treatment had been available free of charge since 2007 and the State financed some of the costs of diagnosing HIV, leaving the user to bear about US\$ 6 of the price.

9. Access to high-quality, low-cost food was a constant concern of the Cameroonian Government. It had tackled the high cost of living and promoted the quality of consumer goods by setting up the Standards and Quality Agency (ANOR). To that end, it had introduced price controls on mass consumption products, organized the sale of essential goods at a discount and opened retail shops selling goods at wholesale prices. In 2012, Cameroon would receive the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Food.

10. **Mr. Texier** (Rapporteur for Cameroon), basing his comments on the concluding observations made by the Committee after it had considered the State party's initial report in 1999, outlined the various concerns which would undoubtedly be raised during the examination of the State party's second and third periodic reports, namely the Convention's status in the domestic legal system, the degree of independence of the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms, the legal status of women who suffered from discrimination and inequality, in law and in fact, sexual harassment and violence, female genital mutilation, the fate of workers on rural plantations, the high unemployment rate which, coupled with the escalating cost of living, was likely to jeopardize social peace and stability, the effects of the crisis on the national economy despite the anticipated creation of 300,000 jobs, discrimination against certain population groups such as the Baka Pygmies

and corruption. It would also look at the matter of forced evictions in the administrative capital Yaoundé and economic capital Douala, where thousands of people had been turned out of their homes, without being rehoused, as part of an urban renovation and slum clearance drive.

*Articles 1 to 5 of the Covenant*

11. **Mr. Tirado Mejía** asked whether the State party had applied for technical assistance from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and from United Nations specialized agencies when drawing up the report under consideration. Like many countries, Cameroon really stood to benefit from international aid and cooperation, especially in the area of health.

12. He requested additional information on the situation of the Baka Pygmies, who suffered from discrimination and whose standard of living was far below that of the rest of the population. He invited the Cameroonian delegation to say more about women's right to own property, which was still denied in some regions of the country and among some population groups, owing to ancient traditions that still lingered on. Were any public awareness campaigns being mounted on that issue?

13. He asked whether the draft civil code setting the marriageable age at 18 had entered into force and, if it had not, whether the State party was contemplating the adoption of legislation to bring the marriageable age in the State party into line with the relevant international instruments. He wished to know whether any large-scale campaigns were under way to counter the old tradition of giving girls in marriage as from the age of 12. He asked whether female genital mutilation was banned in the State party and, if so, what legal penalties existed. Had any campaigns been conducted to alert the public to the harmful nature of that practice and to advertise the fact that it was prohibited under international law?

14. **Ms. Shin** said that corruption was the main reason why the situation had deteriorated in the State party since it had presented its initial report. After the universal periodic review of the State party in 2009, the latter had accepted the recommendations regarding corruption and had undertaken to combat it. She therefore wished to know what mechanisms had been put in place to ensure that anyone who was corrupt, or who paid bribes, was duly punished and how many people had already been convicted of that offence.

15. She asked whether economic, social and cultural rights fell within the terms of reference of the new National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms and whether persons who thought that their right to housing had been breached, or that they had been unfairly evicted, could put their case before the Commission and, if so, how many complaints had been received by that institution in 2010 and on what grounds. It would also be interesting to know whether the Commission's powers were of a purely advisory nature and limited to making recommendations, or whether it could take corrective action and, lastly, whether its budget was sufficient for it to be able to function fully.

16. She would be grateful if the Cameroonian delegation would indicate what government body was responsible for securing gender equality and combating de jure and de facto discrimination against women. If customary law and positive law conflicted, or if positive law itself contradicted the provisions of the Covenant, which took precedence?

17. **Mr. Schrijver** asked what strategy the State party was following to halt the unlawful expropriation of land and illegal logging. Were those practices the work of international or national companies? He also queried the Covenant's status in the domestic legal system and the status of human rights in general under Cameroonian law. Since 40 per cent of the population was under the age of 15, he was worried by the fact that life

expectancy in Cameroon was between 50 and 51 years of age. Was the Cameroonian Government intending to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Covenant?

18. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão** requested the Cameroonian delegation to clarify the sentence in paragraph 11 of the report under consideration which read, “The rights stipulated in the Covenant are part of human rights, by virtue of the indivisibility of which their enjoyment is also guaranteed by other international and national instruments.”

19. **Ms. Barahona Riera** commented that corruption was a central problem infecting the whole of society. She wished to know to what extent civil society participated in political dialogue and decision-taking aimed at combating that scourge. She wondered if the Constitutional Council, which would offer a means of securing the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, had been set up. She was uncertain about the independence of the judiciary and of the nature of possible links between the Ministry of Justice and the Attorney General. What progress had been made on the numerous bills (on the new Family Code, the Children’s Protection Code, the establishment of a social security system, violence, discrimination and sexual harassment at the workplace) which had been drafted in response to the recommendations contained in the Committee’s concluding observations on the State party’s initial report. She was worried about women’s legal status and discriminatory practices against them. She deplored the absence of specific legislation to protect women. She stressed how important it was to swiftly adopt bills on achieving gender equality and prohibiting sex discrimination.

20. **Mr. Abdel-Moneim** said that as the report under consideration dated from 2008, the updated information provided by the delegation was extremely important. He welcomed the manner in which the report had been drafted and the State party’s recognition of the harmful impact on the enjoyment of economic, social and cultural rights of the Government’s economic reform programme for the 1998/99 budgetary year, which had been introduced in order to give effect to the structural adjustment programme approved by the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the World Bank and the Caisse française de développement. The fact that Cameroon was a party to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights and the Cultural Charter for Africa demonstrated its commitment at the subregional and regional level. He welcomed the establishment of the Special Police Oversight Division which was a logical development, given that the United Nations Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa was located in Cameroon.

21. The Government should regulate economic, social and cultural rights better. While the privatization of CAMAIR and CAMTEL had been beneficial, the high cost of privatizing SNEC, the drinking water utility, was deplorable. In addition to the repercussions of the economic and financial crisis, the four factors which might hamper the implementation of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) were worsening terms of trade, a contraction in projected external resources, further difficulties in absorbing resources and the unpredictable nature of official development aid.

22. **Mr. Sadi** asked why the presentation of the report under consideration had been delayed for 12 years. He wondered if there might be a link between corruption and privatization. He requested clarification of the phrase “the other party implements” contained in article 45 of the Constitution, which read, “Duly approved or ratified treaties and international agreements shall, following their publication, override national laws, provided the other party implements the said treaty or agreement.” He wished to know what role the Covenant played, over and above its legal implications, in the formulation of policy on economic and social rights. The country needed basic standard-setting legislation banning discrimination, which echoed the Covenant’s provisions. He was worried by increasing deforestation and feared that Cameroon might be in the process of destroying its heritage. Export companies shared responsibility for illegal logging.

23. **Mr. Riedel** said that he was specifically interested in the measures taken to contend with the root causes of corruption, for example by boosting income so that parents no longer had to turn to corruption to meet their families' needs.

24. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) commented that corruption existed in all societies, but the Cameroonian Government had done battle with that scourge by establishing institutions such as the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC), whose 2011 report would be made available to Committee members. The anti-corruption units which had been set up in all administrative authorities and in the National Agency for Financial Investigation also played a leading role. Despite limited financial resources, corruption had been widely suppressed, in accordance with existing legislation, as could be seen from numerous articles in the press. The international community's support in that battle was vital. Transparency International had recently hailed Cameroon's efforts and given the country a better rating. Judges were independent because their high salaries shielded them from any temptation.

25. He was aware that the forest was of value not only for the country, but for the whole of humanity. The deforestation statistics which had been quoted were unreliable. He wished to reassure the Committee members that only 4 of the 22 million hectares of the country's forest were worked. The National Agency for Forest Development (ANAFOR) was responsible for monitoring the Cameroonian forest and for reforestation.

26. As privatization schemes had not proved to be as successful as expected, public-private partnerships had been set up to supply electricity nationwide and projects to build dams (at Lom Pangar and Menvelle) and power stations (at Kribi and Douala) had been launched. The Government was likewise doing all it could to ensure that the whole population had access to water.

27. Measures had been taken to mitigate the effects of the world crisis. Statistics from international organizations such as the IMF and the World Bank showed that life expectancy in Cameroon was 59 years of age for men and 61 for women, and not 50 to 51.

28. International standards were incorporated in domestic legislation subject to ratification by the National Assembly and promulgation by the Head of State. The President of the Republic had ordered the convening of the Constitutional Council and the Senate as soon as possible. The State-financed National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms was one of the few African commissions whose conformity with the Paris Principles had been recognized. Cameroonian civil society, which comprised a host of political parties, non-governmental organizations (NGOs), trade unions and the media, was extremely active and there was a continuous dialogue with it.

29. Cameroon was doing everything possible to achieve gender equality, in particular by striving to educate girls and women in order that they would know their rights. Notwithstanding the weight of custom, numerous court decisions had found in favour of women, with the result that they could inherit land on an equal footing with men. Similarly, there was equal access to positions of responsibility. There was no sex discrimination in Cameroon. The incidence of breast ironing was extremely low in Cameroon. Education was one means of combating that kind of practice which, like female genital mutilation, was punished severely under the Criminal Code. The issue of indigenous peoples like the Pygmies and the Mbororo was sensitive, because they shunned the modern world, but awareness campaigns had been conducted to encourage their integration.

30. **Ms. Galega** (Cameroon) explained that, under article 45 of the Cameroonian Constitution, any international instrument which had been ratified in due and proper form was at the top of the hierarchy of norms. That was true of the Covenant. Although its provisions were rarely cited in court, judges were increasingly well informed about its contents.

31. The report before the Committee was a synthesis of reports on the human rights situation in Cameroon which had been drawn up after 2005 with the assistance of NGOs. They and other stakeholders had been invited to express their opinion on the first version of the report during a seminar held for that purpose. Civil society had therefore participated actively in the drafting of the periodic report.

32. The Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa worked in close cooperation with the Cameroonian Government to protect and promote human rights. Much had been done to raise the awareness and build the capacity of all concerned (judges, journalists and other partners) in the human rights sphere. Capacity building would enable many associations which were unfamiliar with Cameroonian legislation to work closely with the Government in order to bring information about problems such as violence against women to the fore of public attention.

33. **Ms. Nama** (Cameroon) said that the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms, which had started life as a committee, had been given A status by the International Coordinating Committee of National Institutions for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights. The Commission was present in 10 regions of the country and was involved in all matters relating to human rights. Hence it had drawn up the national human rights plan along with the plan and syllabus for human rights instruction. It advised the Government in its dealing with treaty-monitoring bodies and was responsible for agreeing on a timetable of activities with civil society in preparation for the universal periodic review of Cameroon. The Commission's financial resources did not always match its aspirations, but partnerships with the European Union, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa and the United Nations Development Programme enabled it to conduct many advocacy activities.

34. While it was true that Cameroon did not have a law specifically suppressing and punishing violence against women, the Family Code did contain several provisions on that subject. Opinion leaders in tribal areas had been sensitized to the issue and young women had been informed of their rights in order that they could seek remedies when those rights had been violated.

35. As far as indigenous population groups were concerned, Cameroon had conducted a study with a view to defining the notion "indigenous people", for which approval would be sought in the near future from United Nations bodies and the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, in order that that vulnerable section of the population could be protected more efficiently.

36. Civil society was associated with government action, but many of its organizations needed to build their capacity, for example in legal matters, because some Cameroonian associations had a poor knowledge of domestic law. The Government would like to establish a true partnership with civil society as a means of receiving its continuous input on problems such as violence against women.

37. **Mr. Bidima** (Cameroon) said that his country, which was a party to numerous treaties, was not opposed to the ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Covenant. That possibility was currently under review.

38. As for the population's purchasing power, Cameroon had taken a series of measures to improve its inhabitants' standard of living within the limited resources available to it. Civil servants' basic salary had gone up by over 15 per cent and their housing allowance had been increased by 20 per cent. Cameroon would pursue its efforts in that area when its finances permitted.

39. The Government was endeavouring to further the integration of indigenous population groups and to find lasting solutions to their difficulties. A development plan had

been adopted for the Pygmies. It encompassed specific financial, organizational and cultural measures. The inclusion of the Pygmies in the decision-making process had been facilitated, scholarships had been awarded to them, programmes promoting their access to employment had been introduced and they received a share of forestry revenue.

40. **Ms. Galega** (Cameroon) said that the bills mentioned in the periodic report, such as the draft family code or the bill on violence against women had been examined and the final touches had been put to their wording. The provisions of the bill on violence against women would be incorporated into the new Criminal Code.

41. The Government was taking a number of steps to improve youth employment. Some 28,000 young people were currently employed in the civil and public services. The strong support which the Ministry of Small and Medium-sized Enterprises gave to the expansion of such businesses should promote job creation.

42. **Ms. Nama** (Cameroon) referring to the 300,000 job openings which had been mentioned, said, that during the previous 15 years, many vacancies had not been filled. The purpose of recruiting 25,000 entrants into the civil and public services was to fill some of those posts and resume activities which had been abandoned owing to a staff shortage.

43. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) explained that the 300,000 jobs which had been announced would be financed by investments in infrastructure projects as from January 2012. He refuted allegations that senior positions were assigned in exchange for bribes by saying that since the first Cameroonian Government had taken office in 1957, there had been a succession of incumbents in ministerial posts, but very few of their children had become ministers. The most senior posts were held by people from modest backgrounds. If corruption had really existed in Cameroon, only the children of the well-off would have had access to such positions, which was not the case.

44. In response to the questions concerning land seizure, he explained that the land belonged to the indigenous peoples and to the State. There had been no arbitrary expropriation of land. The transfer of land ownership took place within a partnership between the purchaser, the Government and indigenous peoples.

45. Poverty did exist in Cameroon but, according to IMF and World Bank statistics, 60 per cent of Cameroonians lived above the poverty threshold. The Government took care to ensure that their living standard rose steadily.

46. **Mr. Texier** (Rapporteur for Cameroon) pointed out that the Committee had asked the same questions about sexual mutilation 11 years earlier. He wished to know what practical steps had been taken to stop that practice. How prevalent was it? What was the trend? The matter would be handled effectively if women were put in charge of dealing with it.

47. **Ms. Cong** said that, while the programmes which had been adopted to end corruption, poverty and female genital mutilation were interesting, it was vital to know how they were being implemented. She hoped that the Act on the suppression of sexual violence and discrimination would be adopted in the near future, for the existence of such a legal framework would make it easier to give effect to those programmes. Lastly, she asked whether the target set in the National Plan for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, i.e. to reduce the proportion of little girls, adolescents and women who were the victim of any form of genital mutilation by 60 per cent by 2010, had been achieved.

48. **Ms. Shin** asked when the amended version of the Criminal Code, which encompassed various forms of violence against women, would take effect and if domestic violence or sexual harassment would also be covered by the amendment.



49. **Mr. Sadi** asked if it was true that no one had ever been charged with, or convicted of practising female genital mutilation. It was necessary to have specific laws suppressing that practice and the other forms of violence which had been mentioned and providing for the very severe punishment of those who engaged in them.

50. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that female genital mutilation was a new fringe practice which had been imported into Cameroon. The country had taken in 5 million refugees from Chad and the Central African Republic. Those people brought their customs with them. The Cameroonian authorities asked them to desist from the practice of female genital mutilation, but it was very difficult to take action in the absence of complaints and evidence.

51. **Ms. Nama** (Cameroon) said that genital mutilation was an offence under the draft criminal code. Under current criminal law, that practice was deemed to constitute serious injury and perpetrators faced 10 to 20 years' imprisonment. No complaint concerning female genital mutilation had ever been filed in Cameroon, because the victims regarded it not as an offence, but as a rite of passage.

52. **Mr. Sadi** said that female genital mutilation, which could be diagnosed by a simple medical examination, was intrinsic proof. The absence of a complaint was not a reason for inertia, because when a crime had been committed the Government could itself take legal action.

53. **Ms. Shin** asked how many complaints had been received by the National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms with regard to economic, social and cultural rights and for what form of discrimination.

54. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) stressed that the current Criminal Code criminalized female genital mutilation and that Cameroon was conducting advocacy activities to encourage victims of that practice to lodge complaints.

55. **Ms. Galega** (Cameroon) said that the procedure for passing the new Criminal Code, which incorporated the provisions of international instruments ratified by Cameroon, especially those concerning violence against women, had been speeded up in order that it could be implemented as soon as possible. The National Commission for Human Rights and Freedoms was an independent body with jurisdiction over civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. It published an annual report.

56. **Ms. Shin** urged Cameroon to begin to study the incidence of violence against women without waiting for victims to report instances thereof.

#### *Articles 6 to 9 of the Covenant*

57. **Mr. Texier** (Rapporteur for Cameroon) drew attention to the recommendations on forced labour in prisons which the Committee of Experts on the Application of Conventions and Recommendations of the International Labour Organization (ILO) had made to Cameroon in its 2009 and 2010 reports. Detainees had to give their consent before any work could be done for the benefit of private entities and persons who had been sentenced to imprisonment for opposition to the political system could not be subjected to forced labour.

58. With reference to paragraph 320 of the report, he wished to know whether, when creating jobs, priority went to the civil and public services or to the private sector. He asked for details of any new projects which would be launched on or after 1 January 2012. What measures had the Cameroonian Government taken to reduce unemployment? He also asked what was being done to find new jobs for the young people who had lost their more or less informal small jobs between 2008 and 2010 on account of various urban renovation

projects. He wished to know if some husbands still forbade their wives from engaging in certain occupations.

59. What was the level of the SMIG? Was it regularly adjusted? Was it high enough to enable a worker to live in dignity and maintain a family? How much did workers earn? He also wished to know how many women were employed as domestic and agricultural workers, without a contract or social security, for a monthly wage of between 20,000 and 25,000 CFA francs. Were children also employed in such jobs? While he welcomed the protection given to trade union freedom in Cameroon, he wondered to what extent the right to strike and the right to join a trade union were exercised in practice. Did trade union pluralism exist? Were strikers punished?

60. **Ms. Shin** said that she hoped that the delegation would explain what steps the Government intended to take to end the substantial amount of child labour in agricultural plantations. She was also curious to know if sexual harassment at the workplace was a criminal offence and, if so, what the Government was doing to stamp out such behaviour. How many people had been convicted of that offence?

61. **Mr. Riedel** drew attention to the fact that the Government's written replies to the list of issues had to be more precise, especially with regard to the implementation of article 9, in order to show what progress had been made on the ground. He asked Cameroon to include in its next periodic report hard data on the implementation of plans and figures disaggregated by year. He was also keen to hear more about procedures for providing welfare for workers in the informal sector, the unemployed and persons who had never been employed, because there was no universal coverage in Cameroon.

62. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that the poverty which was hitting Cameroon and the crisis which had befallen the country in the year 2000 meant that the Government was facing difficult choices, because everything had become a priority. The social security bill, which would give everyone social security coverage funded by contributions from Cameroonians, the Government and legal persons, had received the approval of the Director-General of the International Labour Office. The National Social Security Fund was functioning correctly. The minimum wage was a decent wage according to the ILO definition.

#### *Articles 10 to 12 of the Covenant*

63. **Mr. Tirado Mejía** emphasized that too few households had access to drinking water and he asked whether the Cameroonian Government had adopted a policy of connecting the population to a supply at an affordable price. He enquired about measures to reduce smoking, for many health problems were tobacco-related. Since some people suffered from leprosy, he drew the Cameroonian Government's attention to the fact that it could request the assistance of specialized international organizations in order to devise joint programmes to address various health problems without jeopardizing its national sovereignty. He also wished to know if multinationals rented land in Cameroon in order to grab wood and agricultural resources and whether there was a risk of deforestation in Cameroon.

64. **Ms. Shin** pointed out that many laws discriminated against women because they allowed polygamy and early marriage, made the man the head of the family and deprived women of all inheritance rights in some regions and because the Criminal Code absolved a rapist who agreed to marry his victim. Studies showed, however, that in the latter case such violence continued after marriage. She asked when the draft family code would be adopted and whether the delegation realized that single-sex school lavatories increased the number of rape cases and consequently the incidence of school dropout.

65. **Mr. Schrijver** said that he wished to know what measures Cameroon intended to take to reduce the number of child workers. In view of the alarming level of poverty in the

country and its position on the Global Hunger Index, he enquired about advances towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals, especially those related to poverty reduction, access to education and lowering the illiteracy rate. He also asked about measures to end the expulsion of agricultural workers who were unable to register their title to a plot of land and the eviction of people living in the two main towns of the country.

66. **Mr. Ribeiro Leão** asked if the creation of free testing centres for HIV/AIDS mentioned in paragraph 384 of the report under consideration also meant that there was free antiretroviral treatment and if Cameroon was a member of international cooperation programmes enabling it to obtain certain drugs free of charge. He also wished to know what measures had been taken to reduce the persistent pockets of food insecurity to which reference was made in paragraph 438 of the report.

*The meeting rose at 6 p.m.*