



# International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination

Distr.: General

20 April 2022

Original: English

---

## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 106th session

### Summary record of the 2871st meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Wednesday, 13 April 2022, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Shepherd

## Contents

Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee under rule 14 of the rules of procedure (*continued*)

Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention (*continued*)

*Combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Cameroon*

---

This record is subject to correction. Corrections should be set forth in a memorandum and also incorporated in a copy of the record. They should be sent within one week of the date of the present record to the Documents Management Section (DMS-DCM@un.org).

Any corrected records of the public meetings of the Committee at this session will be reissued for technical reasons after the end of the session.



*The meeting was called to order at 3 p.m.*

**Solemn declaration by the newly elected members of the Committee under rule 14 of the rules of procedure** *(continued)*

1. At the invitation of **the Chair, Ms. Tebie**, who had been unable to attend the opening of the session, made the following solemn declaration: “I solemnly declare that I will perform my duties and exercise my powers as a member of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination honourably, faithfully, impartially and conscientiously.”

**Consideration of reports, comments and information submitted by States parties under article 9 of the Convention** *(continued)*

*Combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Cameroon*  
([CERD/C/CMR/22-23](#); [CERD/C/CMR/Q/22-23](#))

2. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Cameroon joined the meeting.*

3. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon), introducing his country’s combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports ([CERD/C/CMR/22-23](#)), which had been submitted in July 2019 and covered the period from 2012 to 2016, said that the Government had worked with the national human rights institution and civil society organizations during the data-collection phase and in the validation of the report. The reporting period had coincided with two security crises: one caused by the terrorism of the Boko Haram group in the north of the country, particularly the Far North region; the other by separatist, corporatist claims in the North-West and South-West regions. Although those crises had considerably disrupted the economic and social life of the country, the Government had taken many steps to restore peace and security.

4. Notwithstanding the constraints it faced, the Government continued to implement the provisions of the Convention and the Committee’s recommendations. It had taken a series of political, strategic, legislative and institutional measures during the reporting period and since the submission of the report. At the political level, the President’s calls for peace and national solidarity had been taken up by parliamentarians, members of the Government, elites and other stakeholders. In 2017, 2018 and 2019, the Head of State had ordered the dropping of charges against hundreds of people who had been prosecuted in the context of the separatist crisis. In terms of strategic measures, the Government had adopted the National Gender Policy, the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Cameroon (2015–2019) and, more recently, the National Development Strategy 2020–2030. The aims of the Strategy were to strengthen the rule of law and the judiciary and to combat insecurity, crime and terrorism. Specifically, it proposed to build the operational capacity of the defence and security forces; curb illicit financial flows and arms trafficking; tackle cyberterrorism, strengthen international cooperation on counter-terrorism and prevent the indoctrination and recruitment of young people; combat smuggling and cross-border crime; control migratory flows; secure the coast and regulate the activities of vigilance committees.

5. In the legislative sphere, Cameroon had ratified the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa, the Organization of African Unity Convention on the Prevention and Combating of Terrorism, and the African Charter on the Values and Principles of Decentralization, Local Governance and Local Development. Furthermore, on 28 December 2021, Cameroon had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and People’s Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa.

6. Several significant domestic laws had been enacted, including Act No. 2013/003 of 18 April 2013, the Cultural Heritage Act; Act No. 2014/028 of 23 December 2014 on the Punishment of Acts of Terrorism; and Act No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the Criminal Code. Between 2016 and 2019, the Criminal Code had been amended to broaden the definition of discrimination, notably by introducing the ground of health status, to criminalize hate speech and insulting a tribe or ethnicity, and to take into account offences committed on social networks.

7. The Government was striving to tackle racial discrimination and other forms of discrimination in all areas of its work. For example, it had identified inclusive regional development as one of the foundations of State policy. Efforts to democratize education had led to the achievement of free universal primary education, the designation of priority education areas and the launch of an inclusive education system. In the electoral sphere, Cameroon had chosen to apply the principle of universal suffrage, so that all eligible citizens were able to participate in elections as candidates or voters. Under Act No. 2012/001 of 19 April 2012 on the Electoral Code, the candidate lists drawn up for legislative, regional and municipal elections must reflect the sociological components of the constituency in question.

8. Under Cameroonian law, refugees were accorded the same rights as nationals, including the right to freely practise their religion, the right to own property, freedom of association, the right of recourse to the courts, the rights to work, education, housing, and social welfare and public assistance, the right to free movement, the right to become naturalized, the right to the transfer of assets and the right to obtain identity documents and travel documents. The law prohibited any discrimination against refugees or asylum seekers on the grounds of race, gender, religion or nationality.

9. One historic development since the submission of the report had been the Major National Dialogue, held from 30 September to 4 October 2019. The aim of the gathering had been to consider how to achieve a sustainable solution to the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions. The decisions taken at the event had led to the adoption of Act No. 2019/019 of 24 December 2019 on the Promotion of Official Languages in Cameroon and Act No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 on the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities. The latter enshrined the special status of the North-West and South-West regions and established a framework for the increased participation of local communities in public administration. Institutions established since 2017 included the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, the National Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration Committee, the National Centre for the Coordination of Humanitarian Action, and the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

10. The Government had placed vulnerable groups at the heart of its reform efforts, notably land reform, in order to ensure that rural and indigenous people's rights were taken into account and to provide them with better compensation in the event of eviction. Thus, the Government planned to recognize customary land rights by establishing rural concessions for traditional communities, among other measures.

11. The Government had responded to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic in a non-discriminatory manner. In March 2020, when SARS-Cov-2 had first been detected in Cameroon, the Government had set up an interministerial committee to implement its strategy against the pandemic. As the pandemic had evolved, the Government had taken a number of steps, including the recommendation for the public to observe the hygiene and physical distancing measures advocated by the World Health Organization; the creation of a special national solidarity fund to combat the economic and social consequences of the pandemic; the closure of State and private schools; the upgrading of hospital facilities and equipment and the creation of specialized care centres in all regional capitals; the organization of awareness, screening and vaccination campaigns; and the commutation of sentences to reduce prison overcrowding. As a result, the Government had managed to curb the spread of infection and limit the number of deaths.

12. All government activities were carried out in accordance with the Constitution, whose preamble explicitly stated that the Cameroonian people "proclaim that the human being, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights". Nevertheless, the State had encountered numerous challenges, foremost among which was the security crisis.

13. **Ms. Stavrinaki** (Country Rapporteur), noting that the State party did not take into account racial or ethnic variables when conducting population censuses and that, according to the report, it had been due to conduct its fourth general population and housing census, said that she was interested to know whether that census had in fact been conducted. If so, she would appreciate information on its impact on government policy in relation to racial discrimination. She wished to know how the State party evaluated census indicators in order

to identify needs and how it planned to use the data collected in respect of the indicators of “national language” and “indigenous peoples”. She wondered what tools were used to gather detailed information on intercommunal violence in order to prevent it. The Committee would welcome up-to-date statistics on migrants, refugees and asylum seekers in Cameroon, as well as on people who had been internally displaced by the security crisis.

14. The Committee would be grateful for information on any criminal or administrative proceedings that had been instituted in application of the new Criminal Code, which had been amended in 2019 in respect of hate crimes. It would be interesting to know whether national legislation expressly prohibited acts of racial discrimination committed by the authorities and by individuals, and whether it took into account all forms of racial discrimination, including direct and indirect discrimination. Noting that the amendment of the Labour Code was ongoing, she asked whether the State party had taken any steps, in line with the Committee’s previous concluding observations, to prohibit direct or indirect discrimination on all the grounds enumerated in the Convention, and to identify and remedy cases of intersectional discrimination. Given that the report described a case in which the court had held that the plaintiff had been wrongfully dismissed and replaced “by a person of white race”, she asked to what extent the authorities applied the concept of race in discrimination cases, and whether terms such as “white race” and “non-white race” were typically used. It would also be useful to know whether the State party planned to make the declaration under article 14 of the Convention recognizing the Committee’s competence to receive and consider individual communications.

15. As data were crucial for understanding the extent of racial discrimination in Cameroon and the State party’s response to it, she would be interested to know what measures had been taken in relation to data collection. The Committee would welcome data on complaints, investigations and penalties in connection with incitement to racial discrimination and hate speech committed by individuals or groups, including politicians and other public figures. It would also welcome details concerning any actions that had been taken against those who published press articles disseminating ideas based on racial superiority or hatred or inciting discrimination, so that the Committee might evaluate the proportionality of such actions and their impact on freedom of expression.

16. Lastly, the Committee would be interested to know whether the State party’s legislation on the prohibition of racial discrimination protected civil society and human rights defenders and facilitated victims’ access to remedies. It would be useful to know more about the role played by civil society in implementing the Convention. She would be grateful if the delegation could comment on reports that, in January 2017, some members of the Cameroon Anglophone Civil Society Consortium had been arrested following demonstrations, and if it could describe the current situation of the Consortium and its members. While the Committee noted with satisfaction that the Cameroon Human Rights Commission established in 2019 had reportedly shown an open attitude towards civil society, she wondered how civil society might be further encouraged to participate in the implementation of the Convention.

17. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Task Force) said that the Committee would appreciate more information on the Cameroon Human Rights Commission. He asked whether the new Commission had applied for accreditation to the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. It would be helpful to know how many campaigns to raise awareness of the Convention had been led by its predecessor, the National Commission of Human Rights and Freedoms; who had been targeted by those campaigns; whether any such campaigns had benefited the English-speaking population; how many complaints of discrimination had been received by the National Commission and how they had been followed up; and how many complaints of discrimination had been brought before the courts. He asked whether the handbooks referred to in the State party’s report had been distributed in primary, secondary or tertiary education settings. It would be useful to know how the independence of the National Commission had been protected when cooperating with the Government to draft the combined periodic reports. He asked why only 6 of its 10 regional branches were operational and what measures were in place or planned to cover the 4 remaining regions. Given that the assets of its predecessor had been retained by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, he would appreciate learning why the reform had been carried out; whether the new body had

led to an increase in the number of appeals received; and, given that operational costs accounted for the majority of the Commission's budget, how much of the budget was allocated to activities.

18. He wished to receive more information on the activities and achievements of the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, in particular those related to its role in ensuring the application of the Constitution. He wondered how many complaints of discrimination had been received that related to failure to respect the provisions of the Constitution; whether the Commission had adequate human and financial resources to perform its work; and whether any measures had been taken to evaluate its mandate.

19. He asked whether the implementation and achievements of the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Cameroon (2015–2019) had been evaluated, in particular with reference to combating racial discrimination, and if so, whether civil society organizations and human rights defenders had been involved in that evaluation. He would also welcome information on whether a new plan of action to promote and protect human rights would be introduced, and if so, whether that plan would include measures to combat racial discrimination. He invited the delegation to comment on whether racial discrimination was addressed in the National Development Strategy 2020–2030. Information would also be appreciated on the state of investigations into the death of journalist Samuel Wazizi.

20. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator) said that the Committee's concluding observations on the nineteenth to twenty-first periodic reports of Cameroon ([CERD/C/CMR/CO/19-21](#)) had contained a request that the State party should provide follow-up information within one year on special measures, participation in political and public life, the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples, and refugees and asylum seekers – the issues that were addressed in paragraphs 10, 11, 14 and 18 of that document. No follow-up report had been received, however. While information on the issues for follow-up had been included in the combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports, the paragraphs addressing the rights of minorities and indigenous peoples (paragraphs 103–107) had not provided clear answers to the questions set out either in the Committee's concluding observations or in its list of themes in relation to the combined twenty-second and twenty-third periodic reports of Cameroon ([CERD/C/CMR/Q/22-23](#)).

21. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he wished to receive further information on the 667 handbooks on human rights education that had been distributed by the national human rights institution. He wondered who they had been distributed to and for what purpose, and how large the handbook was. Had an adequate number of handbooks been distributed, given the size of the population? The ratification by the State party of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa was welcome.

22. **Ms. Tlakula** asked whether the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism had ever engaged in mediation between the anglophone and francophone communities. It would be helpful if the delegation could confirm whether indigenous peoples were mentioned only in the preamble to the Constitution and not in the body of that text.

23. **Mr. Amir** said that terrorism and the right to self-determination were key issues that had been raised by the head of delegation in his opening statement. Terrorism was a rising problem across the world and in Africa in particular, and Cameroon was no exception. African peoples and States had effectively inherited the borders of their territories, which gave rise to questions around the issue of self-determination.

24. **Mr. Guissé** said that information provided by civil society organizations had indicated that, despite the establishment in the Constitution of the equality of English and French, there was an imbalance in their use for communication that favoured French. Information on the measures taken to correct that perceived imbalance would be appreciated.

*The meeting was suspended at 4 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.*

25. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that his country had 250 official ethnic groups. Since independence, his Government had followed a policy of non-discrimination and equality between all races and ethnicities, with all considered equal and no discrimination based on ethnicity or language. The members of his delegation, for example, were each from different ethnic groups and spoke their own languages but used the official languages of French and English to communicate with each other.

26. Data from the fourth general population and housing census, which had included information on language and on indigenous peoples, would be made available to the Committee. The census had also taken into account migratory data, because Cameroon was a transit country for migrants. Foreigners enjoyed equality of treatment with nationals and no discrimination was practised in any area of State intervention. Data on internally displaced persons were available and would be provided to the Committee. Owing to its long-standing stability, Cameroon was a major recipient and host of refugees, despite the difficulties it faced in terms of terrorism perpetrated by the Boko Haram group and resulting from the social crises in the North-West and South-West regions. Those social crises should be considered in the context of the history of the country, initially as a German protectorate, then, following the Second World War, as two separate territories administered under British and French mandates, and finally as a reunified State since 1961.

27. The Criminal Code contained provisions based on civil law, since a large part of the country had been administered by the French authorities, and provisions based on common law, since another part had been administered by the British authorities. Action was being taken to merge the two systems. The two official languages, French and English, were accorded equal status although they were not languages of national origin. Bilingualism was officially guaranteed as a progressive and dynamic feature of the education system. Children began to learn both languages in primary school. Cameroon was a country based on diverse cultural foundations, and bilingualism was recognized as a major advantage that should be preserved.

28. Unemployment was prevalent in developing countries such as Cameroon. Furthermore, young people accounted for more than 60 per cent of the population and there was a low level of industrialization. However, the Labour Code provisions that were aimed at protecting the national labour market did not discriminate against foreigners. His country had ratified many international instruments guaranteeing labour-related rights, including equal treatment of nationals and foreigners and non-discrimination on grounds of a person's race or origin. Foreign nationals often possessed certain skills that were required by a developing country, but if persons seeking employment were equally qualified, priority was accorded to protection of the national labour market. While discrimination might occur in certain cases, corrective action was speedily taken in accordance with International Labour Organization conventions and other legislation. The principle of non-discrimination was actually enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution.

29. Data concerning discrimination based on complaints filed with the police or the gendarmerie were compiled by the courts and placed in their records. There had in fact been virtually no complaints of discrimination.

30. It had proved extremely difficult to control the dissemination of hate speech based on discrimination since the spread of social media throughout the world. During the recent social crisis in Cameroon, only a tiny percentage of the population had resorted to such hate speech. They had frequently been activists or bigoted politicians who lacked rational arguments but sought to rally the population to their cause. He stressed that no group had ever been targeted with calls for genocide. The authorities sought to build a nation in which all ethnic groups were united.

31. On 1 April 2022, Cameroon had voted in favour of Human Rights Council resolution [A/HRC/49/L.9](#) recognizing the contribution of human rights defenders to the enjoyment and realization of human rights. Mr. Samuel Wazizi had not been a human rights defender but a terrorist who had been arrested for sending information to separatists. The investigation had confirmed the accuracy of the charges levelled against him. The Committee should assist States parties in defining the concept of a human rights defender with a view to incorporating it in their domestic legislation.

32. Cameroonian civil society actively assisted the public authorities in achieving the State's goals of protecting the law and guaranteeing fundamental freedoms. Thousands of civil society associations had been established pursuant to Act No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 on freedom of association.

33. The Cameroon Human Rights Commission also had the status of a national preventive mechanism for the elimination of torture. Its 15 members were appointed but were required to perform their duties in an independent manner. The Chairperson of the Commission did not represent the Government, the Parliament or the judiciary. According to the Act establishing the Commission, the term of office of members could end solely on the normal date of expiry or in the event of their death or resignation. Section 2 of the Act accorded the Commission legal status and financial autonomy. Its duties included the independent and transparent monitoring of the implementation of the Convention and dissemination of information concerning its provisions to ensure that all stakeholders were aware of its content. It also promoted sound practices and incorporation of human rights tuition in the education system and vocational training centres. The resulting human rights culture guaranteed the stability of the State and popular unity. The Commission endeavoured to combat impunity for violators of the provisions of the Convention and monitored compliance with the decisions and recommendations of national, regional and international human rights bodies. It also monitored action in response to complaints of human rights violations and delivered opinions aimed at ensuring better protection from such violations.

34. **Mr. Bosse** (Cameroon) said that the 600 handbooks distributed by the National Commission of Human Rights and Freedoms in secondary schools and universities constituted a pilot project that had been assessed in 2021; some adjustments to the project were currently being developed.

35. The plan of action of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission provided for a new toll-free hotline for persons wishing to contact it. If a public authority wished to contact the Commission, it was required to do so by means of a written communication, and the Commission also responded in writing; that procedure guaranteed the Commission's independence. The Commission had 15 permanent members, while the previous National Commission of Human Rights and Freedoms had had only 2 permanent members and had not acquired the status of a national preventive mechanism.

36. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism established by Decree No. 2017/13 of 23 January 2017 was an advisory body subject to the authority of the President of the Republic and was financially independent. Its goal was to preserve peace, national unity and cohabitation.

37. Cameroon was a multicultural country composed of more than 250 ethnic groups. A large proportion of the population spoke French as a result of the colonial heritage, but English was more widely spoken among the younger generation. The National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism submitted reports to the President of the Republic and the Government on studies and research aimed at ensuring that English and French were recognized as official languages on an equal footing and at preventing discrimination. The Commission also conducted investigations concerning petitions regarding non-compliance with the relevant provisions of the Constitution, although it had not received many to date. It checked, for example, whether tests in schools and universities were conducted in both English and French, and whether English and French translators and interpreters were available in judicial proceedings.

38. The 17 Sustainable Development Goals constituted the cornerstone of the National Development Strategy 2020–2030. The Government aspired to enhance the country's development status in economic, cultural, legal and other terms.

39. In response to the concerns voiced by Mr. Kut, he said that his Government had always presented its reports under the Convention. Still, the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic had affected the pace of work of government institutions; any outstanding information would be submitted as soon as possible. Cameroon had an arsenal of laws affording protection to indigenous peoples and minorities, as well as institutions entrusted with the promotion and protection of their rights. The rights of minorities were set forth in the preamble of the 1996 Constitution, and specific legislation protected indigenous peoples'

right to land and to free, prior and informed consultation, among others. He would be glad to provide additional details in writing.

40. His country's ratification of the protocols to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights illustrated the importance that the Government attached to older persons and persons with disabilities. In Africa, the deep reverence for older persons had socio-anthropological dimensions well beyond the scope of the law. The notion of homes for the elderly was inconceivable; old persons remained within their families and were respected as keepers and transmitters of knowledge, culture and tradition. That attitude was encapsulated in the famous African proverb. "when an old man dies, a library burns to the ground".

41. The National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism had been established rather quickly, in 2017, as part of the Government's response to the escalating crisis in the North-West and South-West regions resulting from tensions between the anglophone and francophone communities. Despite its novelty, the Commission had already delivered important results. It was tasked with monitoring compliance with bilingualism in government institutions, judicial proceedings, legislation, law enforcement and business. In case of violations, the Commission ordered remedial measures and oversaw their implementation. Measures were also taken to ensure equality between the official languages in primary, secondary and tertiary education. Although the main body of the Constitution might not include a specific reference to indigenous peoples, their rights came under the umbrella of minority rights. While the concept of "indigenous peoples" was rather new, the constitutional protection of minority rights dated back to independence.

42. He was grateful for and touched by Mr. Amir's passionate comments about the challenges posed by terrorism and his defence of African countries' right to self-determination. While he could certainly see the connection between those issues and racial discrimination, he felt ill placed to engage on such matters, which were suitably and ably addressed in other forums.

43. **Ms. Stavrinaki**, recalling the definition of racial discrimination in article 1 of the Convention, said that elements other than race could be racialized and thus subject to the Committee's scrutiny. A sound understanding of those concepts was essential for courts to rule in the spirit of the Convention, and it would be useful to learn more about the way in which they were interpreted in the State party. It was common knowledge that the absence of complaints was no proof of the absence of discrimination. What measures had been taken by the State to disseminate the provisions criminalizing hate speech and to inform potential victims of their right to legal recourse and effective remedy?

44. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that State action focused on prevention through education. The text of the Convention was disseminated widely in schools and government institutions, and awareness-raising campaigns were conducted regularly in both public and private entities, with the participation of civil society.

45. The concepts of race, ethnicity and tribe were not always clearly distinguished. "Race" was commonly understood as relating to skin colour, while "ethnicity" described shared culture, practices, language and values; the notion of "tribe" was associated with ethnicity. There was no discrimination, whether based on race, ethnicity or tribe, in the justice system or elsewhere.

46. **Mr. Diaby** said that additional information was needed on the resources available to the Cameroon Human Rights Commission; the delegation might wish to indicate whether a set portion of the budget was earmarked to enable the fulfilment of the Commission's mandate. Information was also needed on plans and a timeline for the establishment of the outstanding four regional branches of the Commission provided for in Act No. 2019/014. He wondered whether the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism was competent to receive complaints and, if so, how many complaints had been lodged since its inception. Did the Commission have the resources to handle complaints submitted in English on a par with those submitted in French?

47. Given the apparent difficulty in distinguishing human rights defenders from persons associated with Boko Haram or the separatist movement, the development of national legislation on human rights defenders might help clarify those issues. The Committee would



welcome additional information on the results achieved through the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Cameroon (2015–2019), as well as on objectives that had not been met. Additional information was also needed on the Government's response to allegations of human rights violations committed by the State party's security forces in the fight against separatists. Had the perpetrators been prosecuted and punished, and had the security forces received further training on human rights, including rights protected under the Convention?

48. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that all members of the security forces were trained in human rights and humanitarian law. Although theory did not equal practice, there had never been any large-scale human rights violations, mass killings or genocide perpetrated by the security forces. Social media allegations to the contrary were baseless. There had been isolated incidents, but each time the perpetrators had been brought to justice.

49. The main purpose of the National Plan of Action for the Promotion and Protection of Human Rights in Cameroon (2015–2019) had been to establish a legal and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights; one of the key achievements had been the creation of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission.

50. While the development of legislation for the protection of human rights defenders would certainly be useful, such an endeavour could only be successful if the Committee lent its support. The concept as such was rather vague and open to abuse.

51. Although he was unable to provide statistics on the number of complaints received by the National Commission on Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, he knew from personal experience that such complaints were made. The Commission was not entitled to institute legal proceedings, as it was not a judicial body.

52. Although a portion of the budget was allocated to the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, funding shortages resulting from the many challenges facing the country in recent years had, of course, also affected the functioning of the Commission. The Government was firmly committed to work towards full implementation of Act No. 2019/014, including the establishment of the outstanding regional branches, as and when resources became available.

53. **Mr. Kut** said that his reference to the State party's failure to provide a follow-up report in 2015, which could hardly be attributed to the COVID-19 pandemic, had merely been intended as a reminder of the Committee's expectations regarding follow-up on certain concluding observations.

54. With regard to the Committee's request for special measures to achieve equality in law and in practice for indigenous peoples, the State party should provide updated information on the status of the National Solidarity Policy Paper; on the work of the Intersector Committee for Programmes and Projects involving Indigenous Peoples; on the study to identify populations in Cameroon that could be considered indigenous; and on progress made towards the adoption of a bill on the rights of indigenous people.

55. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that the United Nations defined human rights defenders as "people who, individually or with others, act to promote or protect human rights in a peaceful manner". For the purposes of the Convention, it included persons acting for the protection of persons from racial discrimination as defined in article 1. She would be curious to hear the State party's views of that definition.

56. The delegation should also provide information on measures taken to promote the participation of women from ethnic minorities in the State party's institutions.

57. **Mr. Eheth** (Cameroon) said that the definition would be difficult to apply in practice, since any person who did not use weapons could call himself or herself a human rights defender, even if he or she collaborated with terrorists. The concept would have to be further explored, in order to arrive at a definition that could serve as a basis for the development of national legislation.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*