



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

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COMMITTEE ON THE ELIMINATION OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION

Seventieth session

SUMMARY RECORD OF THE FIRST PART (PUBLIC)\*  
OF THE 1803rd MEETING

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva,  
on Thursday, 1 March 2007, at 10 a.m.

Chairperson: Mr. de GOUTTES

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\* The summary record of the second part (closed) of the meeting appears as document CERD/C/SR.1803/Add.1.

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*The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.*

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION  
SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE  
CONVENTION (agenda item 5) (*continued*)

Initial to ninth periodic reports of Antigua and Barbuda [CERD/C/ATG/9; list of issues and written replies of the State party (document without symbol distributed in the Committee room, in English only)] (*continued*)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the members of the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda took places at the Committee table.*
2. The CHAIRPERSON invited the delegation to continue to respond to the questions put at the previous meeting.
3. Ms. FREITAS-RAIT (Antigua and Barbuda) said that the Muslim population represented less than one per cent of the total population. There were a large number of Lebanese and Syrians in Antigua and Barbuda, most of whom were Christian.
4. The earliest inhabitants of the island had included Arawaks and Caribs. The Arawaks had died out in the fifteenth century as a result of wars, famine and new diseases imported by settlers. As for the Caribs, a number of them still lived on the neighbouring island of Dominica.
5. Freedom of the press was a reality in Antigua and Barbuda. Through radio programmes broadcast by both public and private stations, including stations run by members of the various ethnic groups in the country, people were regularly informed of their rights and participated in the life of society by expressing their views on current affairs and Government policy. Many newspapers had a "readers' letters" column, which allowed citizens to air their complaints and Government representatives to answer. Rights did not exist only on paper; they were actually exercised by all the population.
6. Tourists were protected by law in the same way as citizens of Antigua and Barbuda. The country depended greatly on tourism, which was booming, thus attesting to the quality of the welcome extended to tourists and the respect shown for their rights.
7. Equality of treatment among all citizens of Antigua and Barbuda was also true in the judicial field. It was not uncommon that persons belonging to an ethnic minority or who did not speak English lodged complaints with the courts for violation of their rights. Since the language barrier could prevent non-English-speakers from knowing their rights, ministerial services took care to hire Spanish-speaking personnel and radio stations and other Spanish language local newspapers broadcast or published information in Spanish. In addition, the Ombudsman was accessible to everyone and followed up on all complaints communicated to her, regardless of the race or ethnic origin of the petitioner.
8. There was absolutely no segregation in Antigua and Barbuda. The use of that term in her country's report to the Committee on the Rights of the Child referred solely to the voluntary association of persons belonging to the same minority group, which was the most natural reflex for members of the same community in a foreign country. She stressed that the Government did not have any segregation policy and that there was no discrimination in the matter of housing.

9. Her country was not currently considering withdrawing the reservation to article 4 which it had entered on acceding to the Convention.

10. The Freedom of Information Act did not criminalize or prohibit the dissemination in the media of incitements to racial hatred, as it might previously have been understood; it was, rather, a law enabling citizens to have access to public archives and providing them with remedies if their requests were not met within a reasonable period of time.

11. It was possible to obtain Antigua and Barbuda nationality by marriage, after at least three years of marriage with a citizen of Antigua and Barbuda, irrespective of the country where the couple had resided during those three years.

12. Ethnic minorities and women were well represented in the different political parties and many rose to high posts, like that of Ombudsman, for example, currently held by a woman. The delegation would send subsequently to the Committee further information and statistics on the rate of representation of ethnic minorities in political parties.

13. It was true that the Constitution provided for the possibility of restricting freedom of movement in exceptional circumstances, but that clause had never been applied. Nevertheless, if the authorities were to avail themselves of that possibility, it would be solely in the event of criminal activity, and the origin of the person concerned would not be a consideration. Lastly, a magistrate could refuse bail to anyone at risk of leaving the country to escape justice.

14. There was total freedom of the press in Antigua and Barbuda and all the population were fully informed of their rights. As a State party to the Treaty of Chaguaramas establishing the Caribbean Community (CARICOM) and Common Market, Antigua and Barbuda allowed freedom of movement to all CARICOM nationals in the country.

15. She said that she would transmit to her Government the recommendations made by several Committee members that Antigua and Barbuda should make the declaration under article 14 and ratify the amendment to article 8.6 of the Convention, while making the provisions of that instrument better known. In response to a question put by Mr. Sicilianos, she said that there was in the country an industrial court for all labour law disputes. Composed of representatives of various professional fields, it was chaired by a lawyer.

16. The Constitution provided that all accused persons must be brought before a judge within 48 hours of their arrest and must be informed in a language they understood of the charges against them within a reasonable period of time at the discretion of the courts.

17. All children could go to school, even though many classes were indeed overcrowded. A school principal who practiced discrimination when a pupil was being enrolled would incur a disciplinary sanction. To address the problem of overcrowded classes, the Ministry of Education had developed several school building projects.

18. Antigua and Barbuda had implemented a programme to combat violence against women and an HIV/AIDS information programme with a special focus on women. Overall, women participated fully in the life of society and held high posts in both the public and the private sectors.

19. She reiterated that she did not have statistics disaggregated by race or ethnic origin as Antigua and Barbuda had never felt the need to collect them. It was inaccurate to say that none of the minorities was English-speaking whereas the majority group was. Some minorities from other Caribbean countries were indeed English-speaking. In any case, the State party had decided to give greater attention to the social integration of Spanish-speaking communities. Furthermore, the majority black population was no better off than some minorities. Thus, minorities of Lebanese and Syrian origin, who had been in the country for decades, enjoyed an excellent standard of living and were very active in business. Antigua and Barbuda would endeavour to provide more detailed information on the various ethnic communities in its next periodic report, particularly with regard to article 5 of the Convention.

20. The Office of the Ombudsman was allotted an annual budget in an amount set by Parliament. The Office of the Ombudsman reported every year to Parliament on its activities, but was not required to provide explanations as to how it used the resources allocated to it.

21. Mr. SICILIANOS said that the fact of entering reservations to certain articles of United Nations conventions was important for the Committee, as it was also somehow a way of calling into question the integrity of the international human rights treaty bodies. The declaration made by the Government of Antigua and Barbuda concerning article 4 of the Convention, as contained in paragraph 38 of the periodic report under consideration (CERD/C/ATG/9), gave the impression that the State party was not really determined to take all the measures required by the Convention to combat racial discrimination. Noting that the country was intending to enact a Broadcast Act and a Freedom of Information Act, which would address the issue of the dissemination of ideas based on racial superiority or racial hatred, he expressed the hope that the reservations expressed regarding article 4 could be withdrawn once they had ceased to be relevant.

22. Mr. PILLAI wished to have data on per capita income disaggregated by race. He also wished to know whether the figures put forward by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica* in 2000 were accurate and whether 82 per cent of the population of the country were indeed black and 18 per cent white.

23. Mr. EWOMSAN wondered whether the respect shown towards foreign tourists, which was a form of xenophilia, might not turn into xenophobia because of a feeling of frustration among the population of the country towards foreign tourists.

24. Mr. ABOUL-NASR said that, under public international law, all States were free to enter reservations to particular articles of the instruments to which they were parties.

25. The CHAIRPERSON, speaking as a member of the Committee, expressed surprise that Rastafarians were considered by the State party to be members of a religious minority.

26. Ms. FREITAS-RAIT (Antigua and Barbuda) said that she understood the concerns of the Committee about the reservations expressed by her country in regard to article 4 and said that those concerns would be conveyed to the highest authorities of the State. To dispel any misunderstanding, she said that no bill on freedom of the press was under consideration and that the 2004 Freedom of Information Act did not cover racial violence.

27. In response to the question of Mr. Pillai, she said that she did not know the source of the figures cited in the 2000 edition of the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*. Mr. Ewomsan's question concerning the existence of a xenophilia that could actually turn into a rejection of foreigners was an interesting one. As for the Rastafarians, they were regarded as a religious minority by the authorities since that was how they defined themselves.

28. Mr. VALENCIA RODRIQUEZ, Country Rapporteur, said that he hoped that the dialogue begun with the delegation of Antigua and Barbuda would continue in the future. He expressed satisfaction with the oral explanations given by the delegation on all the questions raised during the discussion and with the written information submitted by the State party concerning the practical implementation of the Convention in the country.

29. He stressed, however, that the State party was required to implement article 4 of the Convention, which contained essential provisions for the elimination of racial discrimination, and accordingly to withdraw the declaration made regarding that article.

30. The CHAIRPERSON said that the Committee had completed consideration of the periodic report of Antigua and Barbuda.

31. *The delegation of Antigua and Barbuda withdrew.*

*The first part (public) of the meeting rose at 12.20 p.m.*