



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

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## Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination 107th session

### Summary record of the 2895th meeting\*

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 9 August 2022, at 3 p.m.

*Chair:* Ms. Shepherd

## Contents

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

*Combined initial and second to ninth periodic reports of Benin*

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\* No summary records were issued for the 2893rd and 2894th meetings.

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

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

*Combined initial and second to ninth periodic reports of Benin (CERD/C/BEN/1-9; CERD/C/BEN/Q/1-9)*

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Benin joined the meeting.*
2. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin), introducing the combined initial and second to ninth periodic reports of Benin (CERD/C/BEN/1-9), said that he welcomed the opportunity for his country to finally fulfil its reporting obligations under the Convention, which it had ratified in 2001. The report, which covered the period from 2002 to 2015, had been drafted using an inclusive and participative approach, with close cooperation from government entities, the national human rights institution and civil society organizations.
3. Benin was home to several sociolinguistic groups who coexisted in harmony and contributed to cultural diversity. Religious diversity was a source of moral and cultural values and helped reinforce peace and national cohesion. Relations between non-nationals and citizens of Benin were excellent. An ongoing decentralization process, initiated to ensure grassroots democracy and respect for human rights, was being consolidated. Combating all forms of discrimination had been made a priority since 1990, when the process of building a State governed by the rule of law where everyone's rights were respected had begun.
4. Benin was a stable democracy where all elections were conducted peacefully. Under the Charter of Political Parties adopted in 2018, all political formations were required to proscribe intolerance, regionalism, ethnocentrism, fanaticism, racism, xenophobia and the incitement or use of violence in their activities.
5. Political reforms undertaken in recent years included a review of the Constitution to introduce term limits for the President and other elected officials, allow for improved representation of women in the National Assembly and recognize the role of traditional leaders as guardians of custom. Other new laws had provided for the public funding of political parties and the introduction of an official status for the leader of the opposition.
6. The political landscape had been streamlined with a reduction in the number of political parties from 250 to 15, which had made it possible to address problems such as personality- and regional-based political parties, hidden funding arrangements and conflict among party leaders. The new status of the opposition had reduced changes in party allegiance and had therefore increased stability. The electoral calendar had been rationalized, putting an end to the situation in which elections were held every year, leading to wasted energies and increased tensions.
7. The Government had aligned its National Development Plan with internationally agreed goals and was implementing it through the Growth Programme for Sustainable Development. In support of the plan, policies on education, school meals and the elimination of the worst forms of child labour had been adopted, while strategic documents on labour policy, anti-trafficking action and internal security were in the process of validation. Benin had acceded to most international and regional human rights instruments, most recently the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Older Persons in Africa, and had taken measures to establish mechanisms for the promotion and protection of human rights and ensure that they functioned in practice.
8. The Constitution provided that the State must ensure equality before the law for all, regardless of origin, race, sex, religion, political opinion or social position, that every Beninese citizen had a duty to respect others without discrimination and to maintain relations facilitating respect, dialogue and mutual tolerance and that foreign nationals enjoyed the same rights and freedoms as Beninese citizens.
9. The new Criminal Code expressly prohibited all forms of discrimination and provided for harsher punishment of related offences. Health status had been introduced as a protected characteristic and hate speech directed against a particular ethnic group or tribe had become

a criminal offence. New provisions took account of the fact that discrimination offences were increasingly perpetrated over social media.

10. New institutions had been established in recent years, including an independent electoral commission, the national human rights institution, which had been granted category A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in 2022, and the Office of the High Commissioner for the Prevention of Corruption. The National Institute for Women, which provided legal aid and assistance for women and girls, was empowered to take legal action against all violations of women's rights, including in cases where the victim did not wish to press charges. Following ratification of the Hague Convention on Protection of Children and Cooperation in respect of Intercountry Adoption, a central authority for international adoption had been set up. The National Education Council, which advised the Government on education policy, was being strengthened. A new integrated system for data on the family, women and children was in place. A commission had been established to promote the settlement of herders, both to prevent conflicts with farmers and to modernize herding as an income-generating activity.

11. New courts had been established, including a commercial court and a special court dealing with economic offences and terrorism, which also tried cases of violence against women and girls. Plans had been approved to establish other new courts to facilitate access to justice. The principles of a fair trial were applied in the national courts. The Government had taken measures to speed up the handling of court cases, including through the continuous recruitment of judicial personnel and their deployment in courts throughout the country. A law had been adopted on modernization of the justice system, which provided for the digitization of judicial proceedings. Reforms in other sectors had resulted in improved access to drinking water and a more inclusive education system, with the introduction of sign language.

12. Benin continued to promote respect for the rights of migrant workers and foreign nationals. Efforts were currently under way to regularize the situation of 2,000 stateless persons; a national action plan for the eradication of statelessness had been adopted and a related bill was currently before the National Assembly.

13. The measures taken in response to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic had been sufficient to contain its impact without any discrimination against nationals or non-nationals. Direct State support had been provided to the worst affected economic sectors, such as the tourism industry.

14. Lastly, Benin was aware of the challenges still to be met to combat all forms of racial discrimination and was committed to increasing its efforts to eliminate obstacles to the enjoyment of rights by all citizens without discrimination.

15. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Rapporteur) said that he would appreciate examples of cases in which provisions of the Convention had been invoked and directly applied by the national courts. He wished to have detailed information on efforts to raise awareness of the Convention among judges, lawyers, law enforcement officials and other public servants, as well as among the general population, including the number of campaigns carried out and their target audience. He would like to know about the various remedies, both judicial and non-judicial, available to victims of discrimination. In view of the withdrawal by Benin of its declaration under article 34 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Establishment of an African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights, on the right of individuals to bring cases before the Court, which had removed one potential remedy for victims, he wondered whether the State party was considering making a declaration under article 14 of the Convention to recognize the Committee's competence to consider individual complaints.

16. It would be helpful to have information on measures taken to incorporate into national legislation a definition of racial discrimination compatible with articles 1, 2 and 4 of the Convention, including the concepts of direct and indirect discrimination. He wished to hear more about the introduction into national law of provisions in line with article 4 of the Convention.

17. The Committee would appreciate information on the number of complaints of racial discrimination, racist hate crimes and racist hate speech, including online and in the media, that had been brought before the courts or submitted to bodies such as the Benin Human Rights Commission and the number of investigations, prosecutions and convictions in such cases. He would like to know what measures had been taken to prevent racial profiling by police officers, how cases of racial profiling were investigated and what disciplinary or criminal sanctions were imposed in such cases. He wondered whether there were plans to define racism as an aggravating circumstance and whether the delegation could provide examples of cases where the sentencing had reflected the fact that the offence had been racially motivated.

18. He would be interested to know why there were no representatives of the Benin Human Rights Commission present at the meeting. He would also like to know how the Government planned to implement the recommendations made by the Subcommittee on Accreditation of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions with respect to the independence and financing of the Commission in order to ensure its full compliance with the Paris Principles. He would welcome more information on the Commission's activities to combat racial discrimination. It was unclear why the process of establishing regional branches of the Commission appeared to have stalled. Would those branches be set up before the current members of the Commission reached the end of their term of office?

19. He would appreciate more information on the work carried out by the Office of the Ombudsman to combat racial discrimination and the human and financial resources that were allocated to that institution. He would be interested to know how civil society had contributed to the preparation of the State party's report and how many of the organizations that had been consulted worked in the area of racial discrimination. Lastly, he wondered whether the Government planned to adopt a law on the protection of human rights defenders.

20. **Ms. Tebie** (Country Task Force) said that it would be helpful if the delegation could provide statistics on the number of displaced persons, refugees and asylum-seekers in Benin and information on the types of assistance provided to those persons. She would also appreciate updated information, disaggregated by ethnic origin, sex and age, relating to the socioeconomic indicators mentioned in the State party's report, including information on the situation of minority groups and foreign nationals. She would be interested to know what impact the poverty reduction programmes mentioned in the report had had on vulnerable groups, especially those covered by the Convention.

21. She wondered whether steps had been taken to amend the provisions of the Constitution – or of other relevant laws and regulations – on racial discrimination in order to incorporate all the protected characteristics set out in article 1 of the Convention. She would welcome information on any special measures and concrete action taken to protect certain racial or ethnic groups pursuant to articles 1 (4) and 2 (2) of the Convention.

22. In the light of reports that a candidate standing in the 2016 presidential election had faced xenophobic hate speech and discrimination on account of his dual nationality, she would appreciate more information on the case in question and on the measures taken by the State party to prevent such situations and to protect persons of mixed race and foreign nationals from hate speech and xenophobia. Lastly, she would like to know how the action plans against racial discrimination, xenophobia and intolerance had been implemented, whether their implementation had been evaluated and, if so, what the outcomes of that evaluation had been.

23. **Mr. Kut** (Follow-up Coordinator), after explaining the procedure for follow-up on concluding observations, said that the Committee attached great importance to the procedure, which allowed it to maintain an ongoing dialogue with States parties. The punctual submission of follow-up information was greatly appreciated.

24. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** asked whether the children of migrants and stateless persons were allowed to attend public schools at all levels of education free of charge and what measures were taken to help migrants and stateless persons to learn the French language and to support their integration. She asked what proportion of students in higher education and at other levels of education were women, to what extent women participated in the labour market and what proportion of senior government positions were held by women.

25. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would like clarification as to whether the National Institute for Women could initiate criminal proceedings without the consent of the victim in cases of violence against women, as the Committee had received conflicting information on that point. If the Institute could indeed take action in that way, she would welcome specific examples of cases in which it had done so. She would also appreciate more information on the special court that had been established to deal with cases of gender-based violence.

26. **Mr. Rayess** said that it was not enough for a State to take various legislative and institutional measures to be considered a democracy. The sign of a real democracy was that the citizens lived a life free from hunger, ignorance and injustice and were able to exercise their rights and freedoms. Adopting the necessary laws was only the first step. For those laws to have a real impact, judges and prosecutors must be properly trained and monitored and the Government must be led by people with integrity who were committed to establishing a true democracy.

27. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he would like to know more about the school meals programme. He would also appreciate information on the steps being taken to increase access to justice, the number of judges recently appointed and the total number of judges in Benin.

28. **Mr. Guissé** said that he would like to know more about the reform of the political party system that had forced several parties and movements to merge. He would appreciate clarification as to how the legal provision cited in paragraph 76 of the State party's report related to racial discrimination. Lastly, he would welcome information on the situation of persons with albinism.

29. **Ms. Esseneme** asked how the leader of the opposition was appointed, what functions that person performed and how the existence of such a role was compatible with the principles of democracy.

30. **The Chair** said that she would be interested to know what training on self-executing treaties and compliance with international obligations had been or would be provided to judges, lawyers and police officers. She wondered how the State party ensured equal access to legal aid for nationals and foreign nationals. She would also like to know how the State party ensured that the Benin Human Rights Commission had the power and financial resources to conduct independent reviews.

*The meeting was suspended at 4.10 p.m. and resumed at 4.30 p.m.*

31. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin) said that, as Minister of Justice, he had a total of around 310 judges under his command, but that number was still insufficient, despite a recruitment drive that had been organized each year for the previous four years. Although the aim had been to recruit an additional 100 judges per year, the number of appointments had not exceeded 70 per year, on account of the rigorous selection criteria. A total of 85 judges had been appointed at the start of 2022 and a second round of recruitment would be organized before the end of the year.

32. A special division for gender-based offences had been established within the court dealing with economic offences and terrorism. The president of the division had been appointed the previous week and the division would be operational as from 15 October 2022. By law, the National Institute for Women could initiate criminal proceedings without the consent of the victim in cases of violence against women. In cases where the victim had initiated proceedings, the Institute could join the proceedings and could arrange for the victim to receive legal assistance and psychological support. There had been one emblematic case involving the sexual harassment of female students at a national university. The President of the Republic himself had taken steps to ensure that the case was duly prosecuted, thus demonstrating the Government's commitment to eradicating all violence against women.

33. The Government had withdrawn its declaration under article 34 of the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on Establishment of an African Court on Human and People's Rights because of concerns about the Court's competence in respect of individual complaints. It had made proposals on a reform of the Court to the Secretary-General of the African Union, and it would acknowledge the Court's competence to hear individual cases once such a reform had been carried out. The Government would be prepared

to examine the possibility of making the declaration provided for in paragraph 1 of article 14 of the Convention.

34. The Benin Human Rights Commission was afforded a sufficient budget to fulfil its mandate, which had enabled it to be granted category A status by the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. The calls for reform of the Commission's membership would be heeded, but it would be up to the parliament to vote on whether deputies should be prohibited from joining it.

35. With regard to the 2016 presidential candidate who had allegedly been subject to xenophobic treatment, the situation had been sensationalized by the press, which had spread misunderstanding by focusing on the fact that the candidate had dual nationality and had lived abroad for many years. It was actually the candidate's familiarity with specific issues in Benin that had been questioned.

36. The Government undertook to ensure that its legislation was brought into line with the Convention, particularly the definition of racial discrimination set out in article 1 of the Convention. A unit under the Ministry of Justice provided human rights training to judges, other staff of the judicial system and prison staff, with discrete training modules delivered on individual international instruments, including the Convention. Efforts had been made to ensure that lawyers and police officers also received such training. Information sessions and workshops were held across the country to disseminate information on international human rights instruments, including the Convention.

37. **A representative of Benin** said that the country's school meals policy, which had been launched in 2016 with the support of the World Food Programme, had won international recognition. The existing budget exceeded that of certain ministries, with two hot meals being provided to some 2 million pupils, regardless of their nationality, in both rural and urban areas.

38. **A representative of Benin** said that the Convention had been transposed into national legislation through various laws. Act No. 2017-06 of 29 September 2017 establishing protection and promotion of the rights of persons with disabilities was often invoked by judicial authorities in cases of discrimination, as it established the right of all persons, particularly members of vulnerable groups, not to be discriminated against. Following the reform of the Civil Code, the mention of ethnicity had been removed from identity cards.

39. Additional regional offices of the National Human Rights Commission had been set up, bringing their number to 12. In 2018, 11 members had finally been appointed to the Commission, in line with the Paris Principles.

40. With respect to social security, the Insurance for the Strengthening of Human Capital was one of the main mechanisms providing protection for the most vulnerable sectors, namely the agricultural, livestock, transport and artisan sectors. The State fully or partially subsidized health insurance for persons living in poverty. Health insurance was soon to be made mandatory for all residents of Benin.

41. The Ministry of Justice held annual human rights education and awareness sessions and discussion panels, some of which were intended specifically for women and children. A development plan for the period 2018–2030 provided for inclusive and equitable education for all pupils over the age of 15 years. The provision of sex education had been improved and it had been incorporated, in an age-appropriate format, into basic education from kindergarten level since 2015. Some 2,000 teachers had been specially trained in sexual and reproductive health education, in several regional departments.

42. Pursuant to Act No. 2018-16 of 28 December 2018 establishing the Criminal Code, all trafficking in persons, including of children, was defined as an offence, and appropriate penalties were provided for. Agreements had been signed with neighbouring countries to coordinate efforts to combat trafficking in persons, and measures had been developed to address the issue of child labour.

43. Under Act No. 90-32 of 11 December 1990 establishing the Constitution of the Republic of Benin, a literacy campaign had been launched in most of the country and, from

September 2002, it had been extended to the two remaining departments, thereby ensuring nationwide coverage and creating conditions to ensure literacy and prevent discrimination.

44. **A representative of Benin** said that national statistics on refugees and stateless persons could be made available to the Committee. Under the 1951 Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1969 Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa, the Government hosted refugees of various nationalities and provided them with the necessary assistance. Registration of refugees and asylum-seekers was carried out by the permanent secretariat of the National Commission for Refugees, which maintained a database for that purpose and transferred the data to the ProGres v4 registration system of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). The largest ethnic group among refugees in the country, representing around 17 per cent of the refugee population, was from Burkina Faso; they were mostly integrated into local society and worked as farmers. Women represented around 45 per cent of refugees, stateless persons and asylum-seekers; most of them were engaged in income-generating activities, with the financial support of UNHCR. Men accounted for around 55 per cent of refugees, stateless persons and asylum-seekers and around a third were children.

45. In line with international law, asylum applications were considered irrespective of the applicant's race, gender or age. Accredited interpreters were designated to assist non-francophone asylum-seekers, applicants could request male or female interviewers and children of applicants were systematically included in their parents' or guardians' applications. Unaccompanied child migrants followed the same procedure in applying for asylum, if that was in their best interests. Under national legislation, asylum-seekers were treated on an equal footing with nationals in terms of access to education, grants, work and social benefits. With the support of UNHCR, school kits, sanitary supplies, training and education grants and housing support were provided to refugees.

46. **A representative of Benin** said that both judicial and non-judicial remedies existed for persons filing cases of racial discrimination. Under Act No. 2001-31 of 27 August 2002 establishing the organization of the judiciary, several of the country's courts had jurisdiction to hear such cases. The Constitutional Court was competent to hear cases relating to the principle of equality and non-discrimination and had already taken decisions in such cases. The Office of the Ombudsman was also competent to receive complaints from individuals and groups and published the relevant statistics in its report, which could be made available to the Committee.

47. A bill on legal aid had been prepared and was pending adoption. Support and guidance on the operation of the judicial system were currently provided for complainants involved in proceedings. Legal assistance was provided for women by the National Institute for the Advancement of Women, the Association of Women Jurists of Benin and the Association of Women Lawyers of Benin.

48. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin) said that, from 2023, all employers would be obliged to register their employees for health insurance and make contributions on their behalf, rather than deducting them from their salaries.

49. Legislation relating to the status of the opposition provided for the designation of the leader of the opposition party that had the most elected representatives as the head of the opposition; it was thus the electorate, and not the Government, that decided that appointment. The head of the opposition served as an interlocutor for the Government on various issues, and even took part in official visits abroad.

50. Political parties had not been compelled to merge in order to reduce their number, but had been incited or encouraged to do so. The 250 political parties that had existed prior to the reform of the system had not been genuine parties, owing to their lack of national coverage – they had been confined to specific regions or districts and many had only between 5 and 10 members. As nationwide coverage was essential for a party that wished to exercise public authority, the Charter of Political Parties required each party to have at least 15 members in each commune. As a result, the number of political parties had been reduced to 15. Any party that was unable to participate in two elections was deprived of State funding and deleted from the list of political parties.

51. **Mr. Diaby** said that he welcomed the State party's intention to consider making the declaration under article 14 of the Convention and its commitment to review Act No. 2012-36 establishing the Benin Human Rights Commission. Noting that regional branches of the Commission had been established in at least half the regions of the State party, he asked whether more might be established in the near future to cover the entire country. It would be useful to know how many workshops and seminars on the Convention had been held, as well as the number and categories of participants. He also wished to know how the State party planned to incorporate the definition of racial discrimination and other provisions of the Convention into its domestic legislation.

52. He would be interested to hear the delegation's comments on reports received by the Committee that a number of human rights defenders had left the State party on account of the lack of legal safeguards. He wished to know whether the National Institute for the Advancement of Women provided legal aid to women who had reportedly been deprived of their rights for offences of opinion. Information would also be welcome on the action taken by the Institute on behalf of a female politician who had been abducted by armed persons on Porto-Novo bridge.

53. The Committee had been informed that minorities were underrepresented in political parties and that, during a recent electoral campaign, a senior official had made unacceptable remarks regarding the concentration of power for many years among southern ethnic groups. He wished to know whether the case had been investigated. He would also like to know whether the court that dealt with economic offences and terrorism had a single level of jurisdiction.

54. Lastly, he wished to know how many cases of racial discrimination had been referred to the State party's courts for prosecution. He would also be interested to hear about non-judicial remedies, for instance any that involved the Benin Human Rights Commission.

55. **Ms. Tebie**, noting that the 2018 Criminal Code criminalized trafficking in human beings, said that she wished to know how many perpetrators had been arrested, whether they had been convicted and what action had been taken on behalf of the victims.

56. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin) said that the President of the Benin Human Rights Commission had been invited to attend the current interactive dialogue, but had unfortunately been unable to do so. The Commission had published a white paper the previous month on its activities, including the number of complaints that it had received and their outcome. He would endeavour to provide the relevant data at the next meeting.

57. When the court dealing with economic offences and terrorism had been established in 2018, it consisted of a single level of jurisdiction, which meant that appeals could be lodged only with the Supreme Court. However, the system had since been reformed and the Court now had an appeal chamber.

58. There were no political detainees in the country. Politicians could be detained and imprisoned for the commission of offences, but not for the expression of their political views. Offences committed during an electoral period included manipulation of electoral lists and acts aimed at preventing citizens from exercising their right to vote or at corrupting the outcome. The female politician who had been arrested on Porto-Novo bridge had been interrogated pursuant to the Code of Criminal Procedure. When an offence was committed, the perpetrator was arrested and charged, regardless of his or her status. For instance, the mayor of the commune of Abomey-Calavi had been charged with the embezzlement of public funds. He had been convicted and sentenced to a term of imprisonment. However, he had avoided serving his sentence on the grounds of ill-health.

59. Human rights defenders and whistle-blowers were already protected by existing legislation. However, if it appeared that they required greater protection, the Government would consider enacting a law for that purpose.

60. **A representative of Benin** said that his country was a member of the Human Rights Council and had voted in April 2022 in favour of resolution 49/18 recognizing the contribution of human rights defenders, including women human rights defenders, in conflict and post-conflict situations, to the enjoyment and realization of human rights. In September 2013, Benin had voted in favour of resolution 24/26 on a global call for concrete action



against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance. It had also voted in April 2022 in favour of resolution 49/31 on combating intolerance, negative stereotyping and stigmatization of, and discrimination, incitement to violence and violence against persons based on religion or belief.

61. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin) said that Benin was divided into 12 departments and 77 communes. As there had previously been only 6 departments, some of the current 12 departments still shared certain institutions. The Government was not involved in the countrywide expansion of the Benin Human Rights Commission. However, if it required financial and human resources to perform its functions throughout the country, the Government was quite prepared to provide support.

62. **Ms. Ali Al-Misnad** said that, although education had been provided free of charge since 2007, it appeared that the education of girls and women remained a major challenge. According to data from 2017, less than half of the country's girls attended school. In addition, the literacy rate for women was just 30 per cent, compared with 55 per cent for men. She would like to hear what the State party was doing to encourage the enrolment of girls.

63. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that, since the judiciary should be independent, she would like to understand why the head of the delegation, the Minister of Justice, had said that there were about 300 judges under his command.

64. **Mr. Quenum** (Benin) said that he was in fact the supervisory authority for about 310 judges. The principle of the separation of powers was respected, including for the judiciary. He never issued any orders to the judiciary, but he needed to ensure that the courts throughout the country had access to an adequate number of judges.

65. Laws prohibiting child marriage and forced marriage, as well as rape and sexual assault on minors, had recently been enacted. Action was being taken to promote the school enrolment of girls and to provide them with protection. Romantic, sexual and marital relations between teachers and students were prohibited. Any such relations in schools or universities were viewed as sexual harassment and were prosecuted. Teachers or professors who engaged in such relations were required to resign. Girls had access to education free of charge until the age of 16, whereas boys had free access only until the end of primary education. Vigorous action was being taken to increase the number of women in the political and socioeconomic environment.

66. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen**, welcoming the effectiveness of the school-meal programme, said that, in contrast, when he had visited Cotonou Central Prison in his capacity as a member of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, he had been shocked to hear that inmates received only one meal per day. Although he had recommended in his report that more meals should be provided, when a Beninese delegation had subsequently appeared before the Commission, it had confirmed that the situation remained the same and had promised that inmates would in future receive two meals per day. He would like to know what the current situation was.

67. He had also found that Cotonou Central Prison was seriously overcrowded. The maximum capacity was about 900, but, at the time of his visit, there were about 3,000 inmates and insufficient staff. Some of the inmates were even serving as staff, which was entirely unacceptable. He wished to know whether any progress had been made in that respect.

68. **Ms. Tebie**, noting that indigenous communities were frequently opposed to girls' education owing to their traditional culture, said that she wished to know what action was being taken to persuade them to enrol indigenous girls in school.

*The meeting rose at 5.55 p.m.*