

602nd meeting

Wednesday, 9 March 1983,  
at 3.15 p.m.

Chairman: Mr. INGLES

CONSIDERATION OF REPORTS, COMMENTS AND INFORMATION SUBMITTED BY STATES PARTIES  
UNDER ARTICLE 9 OF THE CONVENTION (agenda item 4) (continued)

Fifth and sixth periodic reports of the United Republic of Cameroon  
(CERD/C/90/Add.1 and Add.5)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Mpouel Bala (United Republic of Cameroon) took a place at the Committee table.

1. Mr. MPOUEL BALA (United Republic of Cameroon) introduced the fifth and sixth periodic reports of the United Republic of Cameroon (CERD/C/90/Add.1 and Add.5). His country's Constitution, even before the adoption of the Convention, had declared that all citizens shared equal and inalienable rights, without regard to ethnic origin or religion. The Constitution's provisions were in accord with articles 3 and 5 of the Convention, with regard to equal access to public service for all citizens, non-discrimination against aliens, the right to education and training, union freedoms, freedom of expression, freedom of the press and freedom of assembly. In short, all individuals had recognized rights and could turn to State institutions to defend them. The Cameroonian Government had long since taken the steps called for in articles 1, 2 and 4 (c) of the Convention against discrimination on the basis of nationality, colour or religion. Measures in conformity with article 2, paragraph 1 (a) and (b), and article 4 (c) of the Convention were covered in section A.4 on page 5 of document CERD/C/90/Add.5, which discussed the provisions of the Penal Code of the United Republic of Cameroon prohibiting any discriminatory practice. Articles 152, 241 and 242 of the Penal Code punished all acts that would contravene articles 1, 2 and 4 (c) of the Convention. His Government had always been committed under its Constitution as well as its Penal Code and the other texts mentioned in the report to eliminate tribal, religious or social barriers and to prohibit racial discrimination or any racial propaganda.

2. Beyond that, his Government had fostered the national integration of the Cameroonian people. The evolution of State structures and institutions from those of the Federation to those of the United Republic had gone hand in hand with

/...

(Mr. Mpouel Bala, United  
Republic of Cameroon)

social, cultural and economic measures, including activities sponsored periodically throughout the country.

3. The Government had had to deal with a linguistic problem, given the multitude of tribal languages among the 8 million Cameroonians: it had instituted two official languages, English and French and had set up two bilingual secondary schools and a number of bilingual primary schools to overcome what might have been a social handicap. In public activities, citizens could choose either official language and were provided with interpreters when necessary.
4. The basic legal provisions guiding his Government's policies had remained the same. However, the revision of the legal system mentioned in the last report, involving judicial texts and procedures, was well under way.
5. His Government had succeeded in establishing an atmosphere of racial calm in the country, which was indeed an accomplishment in a nation of some 200 ethnic groups which had known three colonial dominations; and it testified to the success with which the provisions of the Convention had been applied.
6. Mr. DECHEZELLES said that the United Republic of Cameroon, which had derived rich benefits from its historical and even colonial experiences, had made institutional and economic advances that were exceptional in Africa, and achieved an uncommon stability, especially in view of its varied geography and its great ethnic complexity. The country had wisely chosen the path of federation in 1961, rather than perpetuating arbitrary colonial administrative divisions and in 1972 had become a united republic. That had allowed the avoidance of tribal strife and was one of its great initial successes. Politically, economically and socially, the United Republic of Cameroon was in a strong position. Its Government recognized in its Constitution all the rights embodied in article 5 of the Convention and had developed extensive legal provisions in certain areas such as labour law.
7. With reference to the rights covered by article 4 of the Convention, articles 152, 241 and others of the Cameroonian Penal Code, discussed on pages 5 and 6 of document CERD/C/90/Add.5 and page 1 of document CERD/C/90/Add.1, punished all infringements of those rights. The various provisions did not correspond exactly to article 4 of the Convention because, although discrimination was condemned, it was not dealt with directly. Undoubtedly article 4 of Act

(Mr. Dechezelles)

No. 67-LF-19, prohibiting certain types of association discussed on page 2 of document CERD/C/90/Add.1, was intended to include racist organizations.

8. Article 242 of the Penal Code, discussed on page 6 of document CERD/C/90/Add.5, governed civil rights corresponding to those proclaimed in article 5 (f) of the Convention.

9. The Government of the United Republic of Cameroon should ideally, when revising its legal and institutional provisions, review the Convention closely so as to bring its own enactments into line with article 4. In its next report it should tell the Committee more about its judicial organization and court procedures, and provide the relevant texts. The main basis for the country's legal system was French law, but it had taken from British law the system of the Attorney-General; it could be very interesting to know how that synthesis of two legal systems had been effected. Also, it would be desirable to have information on what means of recourse were available to citizens when their rights were violated by racist or discriminatory actions.

10. The remarkable successes achieved in the United Republic of Cameroon stood as an example to all Africa.

11. Mr. SHERIFIS said that, although the United Republic of Cameroon had submitted its fifth periodic report only recently in conjunction with the sixth periodic report, the document before the Committee was a good one and showed that the country had a distinguished record in the world-wide struggle for the elimination of discrimination. He associated himself with the tribute paid by Mr. Dechezelles to the United Republic of Cameroon.

12. He welcomed the information given on page 7 of document CERD/C/90/Add.5 regarding national action taken by the Government to combat discrimination through education and information. As part of its international action against racial discrimination, that document mentioned on page 8 the humane efforts made by the Government on behalf of African refugees. He wondered whether the United Republic of Cameroon had in any way been affected by the unfortunate recent movement of populations in West Africa.

13. Regarding the great geographical and cultural heterogeneity of the country mentioned on page 2 of that same document, it would be useful to have more detailed information on the demographic and ethnic composition of the population.

/...

14. Mrs. SADIQ ALI said that the informative introductory remarks by the representative of the United Republic of Cameroon had painted a clear picture of the problems the country had inherited and how it was trying to overcome them. The success of its Government was exemplary and could be a model for other ethnically diverse States. The Government had been able to overcome the major problem of ethnic animosities, so prevalent in other parts of Africa. It was a tribute to its former President that it had achieved that stability and level of coexistence, particularly after a difficult period marked by ethnic divisions in the 1960s.

15. It would, however, have been better if its reports had been more regularly received. The two reports now before the Committee did furnish as the Committee had requested earlier, the text of article 152 of the Cameroonian Penal Code, but the Committee would need to know what were the exceptions provided for in article 306, in order to be able to evaluate the conformity of article 152 with article 4 of the Convention.

16. Page 2 of document CERD/C/90/Add.1 referred to the guarantee of various civil rights in the preamble of the Constitution. It would be helpful if in the next report the texts of the relevant articles of the Constitution were furnished so that the extent to which it complied with article 5 of the Convention could be judged. The next report should also expressly refer to all the rights laid down in article 5, and in general should furnish the texts of all the articles of the Constitution that reflected the provisions of the Convention.

17. Regarding the provision discussed on page 2 of document CERD/C/90/Add.1 that associations having an exclusively tribal or clannish character were null and void, it had not been made absolutely clear under what norms the members and leaders of such organizations could be punished; information should also be provided on whether any penalties had been imposed if any such organizations had been discovered. Regarding the foreign associations mentioned on page 3 of the document, were aliens allowed to form their own cultural associations?

18. Mr. Sherifis had already asked for further information on the demographic composition of the population, and that would indeed be particularly interesting in view of its rich ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity. An ethnic breakdown and other detailed information would be necessary for an appreciation of the complex situation in a republic encompassing Muslims and Christians and French-speaking and English-speaking ethnic groups in various parts of the country.

/...

(Mrs. Sadiq Ali)

19. In connection with article 2 of the Convention, more information was needed regarding the Government's socio-economic policies, including details of how it had used its oil wealth to develop the country and to what extent that had been a factor in maintaining the regional, ethnic and cultural balance. The Committee should also know how the various ethnic groups were being brought into the national mainstream, what steps were being taken to protect the more backward ethnic groups and what was being done to lessen disparities between the regions.
20. Given the fact that the United Republic of Cameroon shared borders with other African countries, the Committee should know whether refugees from such other countries constituted a major problem and, if so, how the problem was being tackled. More information could have been supplied regarding aliens in the category of migrant workers. Were there any agreements with other countries concerning such workers to protect foreign workers in the reporting country or to protect Cameroonians working abroad?
21. With regard to article 7, more information should be provided concerning cultural and educational activities to combat racial prejudice. The Committee had been informed that English and French were used in schools, universities, the courts and public places. It would be interesting to know what was the situation with regard to the different dialects spoken by the various groups. Were they encouraged? What place did they have in government policy so far as schools were concerned in the various regions? More information was also needed regarding access to primary education and the percentage of children enrolled in primary schools. Was that percentage fairly uniform or were there any regions in which some ethnic groups were somewhat neglected?
22. Information should also be provided concerning measures being taken to promote public awareness of the provisions of the Convention, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Charter of the United Nations. What was the Government doing to disseminate information concerning other countries and civilizations and what role did the media play in those efforts? Had the United Republic of Cameroon signed cultural co-operation agreements with other countries? Was it encouraging UNESCO clubs or United Nations associations? Did it have a campaign against apartheid and were events designated by the United Nations recognized in the country? Did the Government intend to establish a human rights commission as other countries in the region were planning to do?

/...

(Mrs. Sadiq Ali)

23. What was the Government doing to tackle the ethnic tensions - which must inevitably exist, since there were so many different ethnic groups - at the grass-root, municipal and even State level?

24. Finally, recalling that in its previous report the Cameroonian Government had said that it was in the process of unifying the political, administrative and legislative structures and would therefore submit the texts of decrees and laws enacted to implement the provisions of the Convention at a later date, she said that it might be appropriate to remind the Government of that promise so that it could fill the remaining gaps in its next report. That was particularly relevant in view of the statement (CERD/C/90/Add.1, p. 5) that there were numerous other regulations serving to prevent racial or tribal discrimination in all sectors of national life.

25. Mr. LAMPTEY said that the report gave some information regarding articles 3 and 7. Although it dealt extensively with article 5 - explaining many of the requirements of and meeting many of the conditions set forth in that article - article 5 was not entirely covered nor were the conditions of article 4 satisfied. The text of article 152 of the Penal Code did not fully cover the requirements of article 4 for, even if defamation, insult and threats could be said to relate to racial discrimination and therefore to cover some aspects of article 4, there were many other aspects which were not covered. Moreover, article 241 of the Penal Code, which provided penalties for "any person who commits an offence as defined in article 152, against a race or religion to which some citizens or residents belong", was very restrictive in relation to article 4, which related not to groups but to individuals. It would be in the interest of the United Republic of Cameroon to model its own legislation on that enacted by other countries to conform to article 4.

26. Recalling that the second periodic report had cited a number of political cases which were covered by the Penal Code because of the provision regarding the equality of all before the law, he said it would be useful to know the exact nature of those cases and whether those claiming injury on the basis of racial discrimination had recourse to the courts and could seek compensation. Finally, he pointed out that much confusion could have been avoided had the report been drafted along the lines suggested in the guidelines prepared by the Committee.

/...

27. Mr. SHAHI said that it would be helpful to have a demographic breakdown of the population of over 8 million and to know what was the level of representation of the different ethnic groups at the local and national levels. Information should also be provided concerning the different linguistic groups, the facilities given to ethnic groups to maintain their cultural integrity and the extent to which the efforts to mould groups into a cohesive entity were proving successful.

28. He associated himself with the remarks made by previous speakers, particularly Mr. Lamptey, concerning the format of the report and the need to conform to the guidelines prepared by the Committee so as to enable the Committee to focus on whether the requirements of the Convention were being squarely met. As was clear from the final paragraph of document CERD/C/90/Add.5, the Government had set itself a massive task in undertaking to revise all juridical texts and institutions. However, the Committee could not do justice to its mandate in respect of the United Republic of Cameroon until it had the revised laws before it. That might not be for several years. In any event, it was clear that the Committee must be more understanding when dealing with nations of great ethnic diversity.

29. Mr. PARTSCH said that the report before the Committee was a great improvement over the earlier ones and would seem to indicate that the Committee's reminders had had an effect. He noted with interest the final paragraph of document CERD/C/90/Add.5, which referred to the immense task undertaken by the United Republic of Cameroon to revise juridical texts and noted, in particular, that a full report would be submitted to the Committee as soon as the work was completed.

30. One area in which improvements could be made was that of the principle of equality before the law which, following old French tradition, was expressed only in the preamble to the Constitution, raising again the question whether that principle should be regarded as a political programme or as a legal norm. It was significant that, for many years, guarantees of human rights had been regarded in France not just as a political programme but as norms of positive law. It would be more appropriate therefore to follow current French practice. That would mean that the principle of equality before the law should be stated in the operative part of the Constitution, along with the other main guarantees of human rights. The current major revision of juridical texts and institutions might provide a good opportunity to bring the Constitution into line with the general trend of international law.

31. Mr. BRIN MARTINEZ said that, although the United Republic of Cameroon had in fact done a great deal to meet its obligations under the Convention, that was not as clear as it might have been, because the report did not follow the guidelines prepared by the Committee. While agreeing that it was necessary to have constitutional, legal and administrative norms recognizing the equality of all before the law, he pointed out that, in order to ensure the complete absence of discrimination, developing countries must focus their efforts on the eradication of discrimination in the economic and social fields. In failing to comment on social and economic activities designed to lessen social and economic differences in the country, the report of the United Republic of Cameroon had made a major omission. What good were all the legal guarantees in the world if children did not have access to the schools where they could obtain the same education as was available to other economic and social groups and the nationals of other more prosperous countries?

32. The Government surely had a programme for reorganizing the land tenure system and that should have been reflected in the report. The Committee should be informed whether the peasants were able to ensure the economic and social well-being of their families, what steps had been taken to reduce unemployment, what was the current unemployment level and what steps were being taken to promote industrialization with particular reference to small-scale industries.

33. He would also like to know of any measures being taken to improve the status of farmers, such as the promotion of co-operatives or peasant settlements, and whether the Government guaranteed the proper marketing of agricultural output, since developing countries should pay attention to agricultural markets throughout the world. There was also nothing in the report about housing, which was mentioned in article 5 of the Convention. It was also important to have information about the literacy rate, since discrimination could not be eliminated if people did not understand the opportunities open to them. As far as health and social security were concerned, he would like more information on the Government's efforts to make health centres generally available, especially in remote areas, and on the provision of pensions or retirement funds for the elderly. Information about per capita income should also be included.

34. MR. APIOU said that the report of the United Republic of Cameroon raised the question of the implementation of the Convention in former colonies, where historical inequality had resulted in widespread underdevelopment. Those countries recognized that, unless economic, social and cultural rights were protected, the enjoyment of civil and political rights was impossible. Despite the lack of illustration in the report, it was clear that the Government was making efforts in the field of economic, social and cultural rights to allow for better enjoyment of civil and political rights. In the field of employment, the right to work was a fundamental freedom for developing countries. Since the freedom to choose one's profession presupposed the absence of any discrimination, the Convention stressed that countries should guarantee equality in the exercise of that right and equal protection against unemployment. The efforts made by the Government of the United Republic of Cameroon in that field were indeed remarkable. Noting that trade union rights were guaranteed and that workers were protected against all discrimination that might jeopardize the freedom of trade unions, he asked how that right was put into practice.

35. With regard to freedom of expression, he stressed the need to balance national unity and the right of all to express themselves freely and to receive information, given the importance of information in the development process. The report should state how the freedom of the press, guaranteed by the Constitution, was implemented.

36. With regard to the comments made by Mr. Partsch, he said that the preamble to the Constitution of most French-speaking countries was an integral part of the Constitution and could be invoked in a court of law.

37. Mr. DEVETAK was gratified that, in spite of its lack of resources, the United Republic of Cameroon was making great efforts to implement strictly the principles and the provisions of the Convention. Noting the description of the country as a microcosm of Africa, he said that he would like more information about its different ethnic groups. Noting also that the Constitution declared that the human being, without distinction as to race, possessed inalienable and sacred rights, he would like to know the exact connotation of the term "race", since the Constitution seemed to omit the reference to national or ethnic origin which appeared in article 1 of the Convention. Drawing attention to the Statement on page 3 of document CERD/C/90/Add.5 that Cameroonians had access, without any distinction as

(Mr. Devetak)

to origin or sex, to high executive posts in the civil service, subject to certain conditions of physical and intellectual aptitude, he asked whether the expression "origin" covered all the terms used in the Convention or simply descent, and whether the different ethnic groups in the country had the educational opportunities necessary to obtain the intellectual aptitude required. He would also like further information on general development programmes, in particular any special programmes for the less-developed regions, including educational scholarships. Finally, he wondered whether the public posts which were open to all, aliens and Cameroonians [p. 4], included military and high political posts.

38. Mr. KARASIMEONOV said that he had been highly impressed by the statement by the representative of the United Republic of Cameroon and, in particular, by his willingness to be critical about the report. Although great progress had been made, there was still work to be done to ensure the full implementation of the Convention in the reporting country. The report gave the impression that, like other new nations, the United Republic of Cameroon had inherited specific problems which must be overcome in order to implement the Convention, including the manifestation of racial discrimination in the form of tribalism. The Government, however, had made great efforts to eradicate tribalism along with racial discrimination in its purest form. He had therefore been deeply impressed by the law which prohibited associations having an exclusively tribal or clannish character and by the statement that, while freedom of the press was guaranteed, the population was protected against defects which might transpire in the press, including particularly incitement to tribalism and racism. He would like to know about other legislative measures to combat such forms of racial discrimination.

39. Mr. MPOUEL BALA (United Republic of Cameroon), replying to comments made by members of the Committee, said that his country had indeed inherited many problems from the colonial era but they were now being successfully tackled, largely as a result of the personality of its President. As mentioned in the report, the Government was currently revising its legal system, which reflected the dual English and French colonial heritage: as soon as the work was completed, the results would be communicated to the Committee. In reply to a point raised by one member of the Committee, he apologized for his Government's submission of its fifth and sixth periodic reports at the same time.

(Mr. Mpouel Bala, United Republic  
of Cameroon)

40. Enlarging on the idea of his country being a microcosm of Africa, he said that it included a wide range of geographical, climatic and cultural variations, and had been the crossroads for many migrations throughout the years. It contained many different ethnic groups, including Bantus, pygmies, Fulani and Peulh, and the major religions were Islam in the north and Christianity in the south.

41. In reply to Mrs. Sadiq Ali, he said that, in preparing its next report, his Government would endeavour to follow the Committee's general guidelines and would provide extensive quotations from the articles of the Penal Code relating to various restrictions.

42. He said that his country had indeed experienced refugee problems but, with the help of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees and the Red Cross, those problems had been overcome. As far as refugees from Guinea were concerned, some had decided to stay in his country, while, with the help of UNHCR, the majority had been repatriated. Again with the assistance of the afore-mentioned organizations, the refugees from Chad who wished to return to their country could do so. With respect to agreements concerning migrant workers, he said that there was such an agreement between his country and Gabon but could not say with any certainty whether similar arrangements existed with other countries. More extensive information on that subject would be provided in the next periodic report.

43. In the field of education, his Government was endeavouring to eradicate prejudices by teaching both French and English and by providing educational and information programmes in both languages on the radio. It also attempted to strike a balance between radio broadcasts in English and in French. A similar effort was being made in the universities, where students could choose their language of instruction. Those efforts had helped to eliminate prejudice and discrimination.

44. Each year the Government sponsored a week-long cultural festival which was organized at local and national levels. Competitions were held in such aspects of tribal culture as wrestling, dance and sports. The best groups were given opportunities to perform nationally as a means of displaying to the people the essence of their culture. The promotion of local languages, of which there were many, was conducted largely through the mass media. Each province had its own radio station, and all programmes except for national news were broadcast in local languages. Efforts to promote traditional culture, while intended for everyone,

/...

(Mr. Mpouel Bala, United Republic  
of Cameroon)

were directed especially towards young people so that they might keep in touch with that culture.

45. In the matter of access to primary education, he could safely say that, with the exception of private religious schools, education at all primary and secondary schools in the United Republic of Cameroon was provided free of charge.

Furthermore, roughly one out of every three villages in the country had its own school.

46. The Cameroonian Government conducted a number of activities to inform citizens about racial discrimination. Each year, prior to Human Rights Day, provincial radio stations broadcast programmes prepared by the Ministry of Information and Culture which dealt with the situation in South Africa.

47. In answer to a question regarding the relative influence of various groups within the population on socio-economic development policy, he said that the Government was working to provide encouragement for village farmers. Every four years an agricultural fair was held in individual villages; those events were of national and even international significance, since people from other countries were customarily invited to the fairs.

48. The report stated that justice was free for all in the United Republic of Cameroon. In fact, citizens who could not afford to obtain legal counsel were entitled to support from the Government in doing so. He would ask his Government to explain the procedure in detail in its next report to the Committee.

49. He was unable to furnish any quantitative data with regard to the distribution of ethnic and linguistic groups at the local level. However, his Government was working to achieve a balanced development of all regions and to ensure that the rights of all groups within each region were protected. The revision of the juridical texts mentioned on page 8 of the report was in progress. It should be noted that a basic problem facing the Cameroonian Government in developing its legislation was the need to harmonize the French and English legal systems inherited from the colonial period, while making additions to them from Cameroonian customary law. He had taken note of the suggestions made by Mr. Partsch regarding the possible restructuring of the Cameroonian Constitution but noted that the preamble did in fact constitute an integral part of the Constitution.

(Mr. Mpouel Bala, United Republic  
of Cameroon)

50. Mr. Devetak had asked for clarification of the term "race"; in the United Republic of Cameroon, the term connotated ethnic group as well as race per se. The ethnic distinction was applied within the United Republic of Cameroon, where the overwhelming majority of all citizens belonged to the same racial group but different ethnic groups. The term "origin" applied not only to ethnic background but also to geographic origin. In that sense, it referred primarily to the two States which had been federally joined since 1961, and represented an effort on the part of the Government to prevent discrimination based on an individual's use of the French or English language.

51. The educational system in the United Republic of Cameroon was designed to help all citizens attain their career goals. As a result of a literacy campaign some 70 per cent of the population was literate, a remarkable achievement in view of the Government's limited resources. Secondary education was directed towards enabling students to earn a living. The orientation of university education had recently been modified. Whereas during the 1960s and 1970s higher education had been very general in scope, various schools were currently being established to provide vocational training. They included a national polytechnic institute and a national agricultural school. The latter had been conceived as a means of giving agriculture its proper emphasis. The Government wished to convince young people that farming was not a profession of the uneducated and to pursue advanced training in that area. The right of foreigners to serve in the Cameroonian civil service included the right to serve in the Cameroonian army.

52. With regard to government programmes or policies for balanced regional development, he noted that the Government officially encouraged citizens from provinces having a low level of educational attainment. Those were the northern and eastern provinces, which historically had been furthest removed from the educational centres established by the colonial Powers. Fellowships were awarded to inhabitants of those provinces under somewhat less rigorous conditions than was normally the case; for example, age requirements might be waived for individuals from those provinces.

53. The observations made by Committee members were a source of encouragement for the Cameroonian Government; his Government would include the texts which the Committee had requested in its next report.

54. The CHAIRMAN stressed that the next report of the United Republic of Cameroon should follow the Committee's guidelines and should provide information regarding legislation enacted by the Cameroonian Government in observance of articles 4, 6 and 7 of the Convention.

Mr. Mpouel Bala (United Republic of Cameroon) withdrew.

Sixth periodic report of Morocco (CERD/C/90/Add.6)

At the invitation of the Chairman, Mr. Lahlou (Morocco) took a place at the Committee table.

55. Mr. LAHLOU (Morocco), introducing the sixth periodic report of Morocco, said that the care taken at many levels of Government in drafting the report demonstrated his country's interest in the work of the Committee. Morocco was committed to that work by virtue of its total commitment to human dignity and its tradition of struggle against all forms of racial discrimination, whether on Moroccan territory prior to independence or in other countries following independence. The struggle against racism was also a fundamental tenet of Islam, which had always defended Moroccan society from the ills of discrimination and had taught tolerance, justice and respect for the physical and moral integrity of the person. He wished to stress that idea because certain parties had wrongly ascribed the unfortunate events which had recently taken place in certain Islamic countries to Islam itself.

56. The sixth periodic report of Morocco provided answers to questions which had been asked by Committee members. Information was given on the status of refugees in Morocco. A detailed explanation of Moroccan legislation pertaining to the implementation of the Geneva Convention on that subject was contained in the report. Information was also provided on the acquisition of Moroccan citizenship and the relevant legislation. The report discussed the situation of aliens in Morocco. Aliens enjoyed individual and collective freedoms and the same rights and protection accorded to nationals, so long as they refrained from interfering in internal political affairs. While certain restrictions on the exercise by aliens in Morocco of certain rights and freedoms were determined by the exigencies of economic and social development, those restrictions tended to rectify the situation in which preferential treatment had been accorded to aliens during the period of colonial administration.

(Mr. Lahlou, Morocco)

57. The nature of relationships between various groups of the population was discussed, in response to questions asked by the Committee on the subject of Moroccan Jews. He wished to point out that, while Jews in Morocco were governed internally by certain Sephardic laws, they had never been subject to any special regulation; such control would have run counter to the constitutional principle of equality of all citizens before the law. Although it was true that, for reasons independent of the will of the State, a number of Moroccan Jews had voluntarily left the country to take up residence in certain foreign countries, many of them had heeded the appeal of the King of Morocco to return to their homeland.

58. Finally, the Committee had been provided with comprehensive answers to its questions on the regions affected by development efforts. To assist the Committee in gaining a thorough understanding of the various segments of Moroccan society, an account of the secular historical trends which had brought about the unity of the Moroccan people was provided. Morocco did not claim to have arrived at a perfect society, which in fact existed only in the imagination of those who professed totalitarian socio-political ideas. Instead, the Moroccan experience was a democratic one marked by simplicity, collective effort and the enthusiasm of its people. Regional development was part of national development plans, but was based on local administrative structures having financial autonomy.

The meeting rose at 6 p.m.