



Economic and Social Council

Distr.: General
10 April 2012
English
Original: French

Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Forty-seventh session

Summary record of the first part (public)* of the 43rd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Tuesday, 22 November 2011, at 3 p.m.

Chairperson: Mr. Pillay

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Combined second and third periodic reports of Cameroon (*continued*)

* No summary record was prepared for the second part (closed) of the meeting.

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The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Consideration of reports

(a) Reports submitted by States parties in accordance with articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant (continued)

Combined second and third periodic reports of Cameroon (continued)
(E/C.12/CMR/2-3, E/C.12/CMR/Q/2-3 and Add.1; E.C.12/1/Add.40; HRI/CORE/1/Add.109)

1. *At the invitation of the Chairperson, the delegation of Cameroon took places at the Committee table.*

Articles 13 to 15 of the Covenant (continued)

2. **Mr. Kerdoun** asked what problems had been encountered when the bachelor's, master's and doctorate (*licence, master, doctorat*) degree system had been adopted in Cameroon. Quoting paragraph 596 of the report (E/C.12/CMR/2-3), he said that he would like to know how the implementation of that system in higher education had contributed in practice to the promotion of economic, social and cultural rights and how many young people had dropped out of school and turned to non-formal education programmes. In the light of reports indicating that access to the school system was not the same for boys and girls, for disabled and non-disabled persons, and for minorities and the rest of the population, clarification on that matter would be appreciated. He would also be interested to learn whether Pygmies attended institutions of higher education.

3. **Mr. Dasgupta** said that, despite the progress that Cameroon had made in the field of education, the illiteracy rate was still 30 per cent. He would like to know why a birth certificate was required in order to enrol a child in school, as that was an obstacle to access to education.

4. **Mr. Texier** (Country Rapporteur) asked whether primary education was free, in line with the recommendations made by the Committee in its previous concluding observations (E/C.12/1/Add.40).

5. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) replied that primary and secondary education was free in the State system. The illiteracy rate of 30 per cent cited by Mr. Dasgupta was an exaggeration. The procedure for obtaining a birth certificate so that a child could be enrolled in school was expedited for unregistered children. There was no longer inequality between boys and girls in the school system, and every father had a moral obligation to ensure that his children received a proper education, whatever their gender. In addition, increasing numbers of girls attended educational institutions, and girls tended to get better marks than boys. Pygmies attended school, which was compulsory, and successfully went on to study at university. Some Pygmies and Bororos occupied senior positions. Children with disabilities were also fully integrated into the school system, except in those cases where their disabilities were too severe. Cameroon had opted for the more modern bachelor's, master's and doctorate degree system because it was widely accepted and allowed pupils to transfer easily between the French-language and English-language education systems.

6. **Ms. Atangana Adzaba** (Cameroon) said that the level at which the minimum wage was to be set was discussed and agreed upon within a tripartite framework involving the Government and the representative organizations of employers and workers. The discrepancy between the child labour rate in Cameroon provided by the International Labour Office (40 per cent) and the rate cited in the report (31 per cent) was due to the fact that the International Labour Office considered all economically active children to be workers, whereas the Cameroonian Labour Code stipulated that the term "worker" applied

to anyone who engaged in an occupation, in return for remuneration, under the direction of another person or a public or private entity, with that person or entity being considered as the “employer”. According to that definition, children who worked in the street in Cameroon were not workers. Labour inspectors had not reported any cases of children under the age of 14 in employment.

7. The vulnerability of domestic workers was a major concern for the Government of Cameroon. Even before the adoption of the International Labour Organization (ILO) Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189), at the 100th session of the International Labour Conference in June 2011, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security of Cameroon had been taking action, together with the International Organization for Migration, to protect domestic workers. At a seminar on that issue, which had been attended by domestic workers and their organizations, domestic worker placement services, and representatives of the Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Women’s Empowerment and the Family, recommendations on the integration of provisions concerning domestic workers into the new Labour Code were adopted for presentation to the relevant authorities. The NGO Horizon Femmes played an active part in training domestic workers and helped the Government to apply ILO Convention No. 189 and recommendation No. 201 on domestic workers, which supplemented the Convention and covered the informal sector as well.

8. The newly elected Head of State had set himself the goal of introducing universal social security. An advisory committee on the modernization of the social security system had been established in 2010 in the Ministry of Labour, and two preliminary bills had been drafted, one on social security, and the other on the creation, organization and operation of mutual social security associations. While awaiting passage of the bills, the Government had introduced risk-sharing mechanisms in the health-care system in 2010.

9. **Ms. Boungani Mana Pandjel** (Cameroon) said that every Cameroonian should be able to claim Cameroonian citizenship, which was why a campaign to issue birth certificates for unregistered children, supported by the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) and by civil society, had been carried out.

10. The Ministry of Social Affairs had taken practical steps to implement the recommendations concerning access to education for persons with disabilities that had been developed at the First National Health Forum. In 2010, Cameroon had enacted a law on the protection and advancement of people with disabilities, which replaced a 1983 law, and had developed implementing regulations for that legislation. The law provided for the education of children with disabilities and of children with disabled parents. Awareness-raising campaigns had been carried out in order to change the public’s perception of persons with disabilities and to help them to become more independent. The Cameroonian Government was working on a social map and a statistical yearbook which would provide more reliable data and contribute to more effective action on behalf of vulnerable groups and persons with disabilities.

11. There were measures in place to protect and promote the culture of indigenous peoples. The Ministry of Social Affairs had been responsible for combating the exclusion of minorities since 2005. The Government was taking steps to uphold the civil and political rights of those peoples and encouraged representatives from vulnerable groups to stand in elections, and a number of municipalities had Baka or Bororo mayors. Programmes had been organized in a number of areas to help give indigenous peoples an awareness of their identity as full-fledged citizens of Cameroon. Those in need of a birth or marriage certificate or a national identity card were provided with them. The Government was also protecting the biodiversity of areas inhabited by indigenous peoples.

12. **Ms. Nama** (Cameroon) said that a birth certificate was not required of pupils until they reached their sixth year in school, which was when they obtained their primary

education certificate (CEP). The Government and its partners had also built over 12,000 separate bathrooms for males and females in schools in priority educational areas in 2009 and 2010.

13. The maternal mortality rate remained high, at 639 deaths per 100,000 births per year. Measures had been taken to resolve the problem, such as restarting midwife training, improving technical facilities, introducing a special fund for reproductive health starting in the 2011 budget year, and implementing the Campaign for Accelerated Reduction of Maternal Mortality in Africa (CARMMA).

14. **Ms. Galega** (Cameroon) said that the State party would provide the Committee with the text of the 2008 directive issued by the Prime Minister regarding school expulsions. Paragraph 597 of the periodic report submitted by the State party referred to young persons who felt lost in the formal education system and who were being offered alternative forms of education. Cameroon had kept the English-language and French-language education systems that it had inherited from its colonial past and was of the view that they were compatible, given that all students starting at university could follow the same classes without any problem.

15. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that cultural rights were being upheld. Cameroon was an active member of the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO), and the Ministry of Culture had been created to deal specifically with cultural matters. Organizations responsible for copyright protection had been set up following complaints by professionals of the arts. Before the Ministry of Culture had been created, cultural activities had been funded by other ministries.

16. The Government was particularly concerned about preserving the customs of indigenous peoples. While there were concerns about the despoilment of their land, if the land belonged to the State, then it belonged to each and every Cameroonian citizen, and indigenous peoples therefore retained their ownership rights to their ancestral lands. Indigenous people who had lived on land now used for facilities such as airports, seaports and dams had received monetary compensation from the State. No complaint about current construction work had been submitted to the Human Rights Council.

17. **Ms. Boungani Mana Pandjel** (Cameroon) said that the Environment and Social Capacity-Building Project for the Energy Sector (PReCESSE) was designed to manage the social impact of large energy-sector construction projects and to take the concerns of vulnerable local population groups into special account. The Ministry of Social Affairs and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife had signed a memorandum of understanding regarding the implementation of the Development Plan for the Pygmy Peoples under the Sectoral Forest and Environment Programme. The main objective was to ensure the social and economic integration of Pygmy population groups into the forestry policy framework. Cameroon was also developing an action plan to address the social aspects of all large construction projects with a view to protecting the rights of vulnerable groups.

18. **Ms. Shin** asked what percentage of schools had separate bathrooms for males and females.

19. **Ms. Koukreo** (Cameroon) said that separate bathrooms had been built in schools located in priority educational areas in six departments and bathrooms were being built in other schools as well.

20. **Mr. Dasgupta** asked whether anyone had been prosecuted for violations of article 293 of the Criminal Code, which prohibited slavery, or of Act No. 2005/015 of 2005, which prohibited child slavery, and, if so, whether sentences had been handed down in those cases.

21. **Ms. Galega** (Cameroon) said that the Ministry of Justice had created a database for use in evaluating the enforcement of Act No. 2005/015. Not all of the courts had provided the corresponding figures, however. In 2010, eight cases involving child abduction or trafficking had been documented, but no case relating to child slavery had been registered. All such data were kept on file by the courts, and Cameroon would provide more detailed information on the subject in its next periodic report.

22. **Mr. Nkou** (Cameroon) said that his country was firmly committed to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights, and the Committee's constructive observations were a valuable contribution in that respect. Cameroon would take the Committee's recommendations into account and would report to the Committee on their implementation in due course and would provide additional statistics on the subject at that time. He called upon the international community to support Cameroon in its efforts to achieve its objectives with regard to economic, social and cultural rights.

23. **The Chairperson** said that the Committee was particularly concerned at the lack of significant progress in the application of economic, social and cultural rights in Cameroon. Many of the concerns raised in the Committee's previous concluding observations were still relevant. He would like to thank the Cameroonian delegation and declared the consideration of the State party's combined second and third periodic reports to have been completed.

24. *The Cameroonian delegation withdrew.*

The first part (public) of the meeting rose at 4.10 p.m.