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Summary record of the 3152nd meeting

Held at the Palais Wilson, Geneva, on Thursday, 1 May 2025, at 10 a.m.

Chair: Mr. Balcerzak

Contents

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

Tenth periodic report of Gabon (continued)

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The meeting was called to order at 10 a.m.

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

Tenth periodic report of Gabon (continued) ([CERD/C/GAB/10](#); [CERD/C/GAB/Q/10](#); [CERD/C/GAB/QPR/10](#))

1. *At the invitation of the Chair, the delegation of Gabon joined the meeting.*
2. **The Chair**, welcoming the delegation and the Permanent Representative of Gabon to the meeting, explained that some members of the delegation would be participating via video link.
3. **Ms. Esseneme** (Country Rapporteur) said that she would be grateful if the State Party could provide disaggregated statistics on the different ethnic groups who lived in the areas shown on the map under paragraph 25 of the periodic report ([CERD/C/GAB/10](#)). Although the State Party did not recognize the existence of minorities with legal status, she would be interested to know whether any of those groups self-identified as national minorities. She would welcome information on the situation of the Gabonese Hausa following their naturalization in 2015, in the light of reports that naturalized Gabonese, including those of Hausa origin, had encountered difficulties in obtaining passports and other identity documents. As the Gabonese Hausa spoke their own language and practised Islam in a Christian majority country, she wondered whether they constituted a minority within the meaning of the Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities.
4. According to reports, the State Party struggled to provide birth certificates and national identity cards to members of ethnic and Indigenous minorities, many of whom did not perceive the usefulness of those documents. She would therefore like to know what steps had been taken to provide members of ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples, including those living in remote areas, with official documents. She would be interested to know why persons with foreign-sounding surnames had allegedly had their passports taken away by the border authorities when returning from trips abroad and had been obliged to provide additional proof of their Gabonese nationality in order to recover them. It was unclear why the Government was taking such measures, which discriminated against persons who were not of Gabonese origin. She wondered what the Government was doing to ensure social cohesion under the circumstances.
5. The Committee would be interested to know how many Indigenous persons were currently sitting as deputies or senators in the Parliament, including as a proportion of the total number of representatives; how many members of Indigenous communities held positions of responsibility in central and local government; and what steps had been taken to build their political and administrative capacities and to improve their representation.
6. Despite accounting for more than half of the population, women continued to face discrimination. Noting that State Party had strengthened women's political rights through the adoption of Act No. 9/2016 of 5 September 2016, which established quotas for the representation of women and young people in political elections and the representation of women in senior civil service posts, she said she wished to know whether that law was contrary to the Constitution, which prohibited any distinction among citizens on the grounds of sex. She would like to know what proportion of elected offices and civil service posts were held by women, especially Indigenous and Hausa women. She would appreciate more details on how the quota system worked in practice.
7. The Committee noted that the Labour Code contained a satisfactory definition of discrimination in employment. It would nonetheless be grateful for information on the practical application of the Code in order to ensure that the law contributed to de facto equality. It would be useful to know what measures were envisaged to prevent and combat discrimination, abusive practices and exploitation in the world of work, especially against persons belonging to Indigenous Peoples and other minorities, and to improve such persons' access to formal employment and decent working conditions.

8. Following its visit to Gabon in 2014, the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights had recommended that the State Party enact a law on the promotion and protection of the rights of Indigenous Peoples; take all necessary measures to improve the living conditions of Indigenous communities; and introduce basic social services suited to the lifestyle and culture of Indigenous communities. She therefore wished to know what legal and institutional frameworks and specific policies and programmes had been established for the protection of Indigenous Peoples' rights, and what measures had been taken to allow Indigenous Peoples to enjoy genuine equality of opportunity and treatment. She would appreciate information on the population of the Indigenous groups mentioned in paragraph 25 of the report.

9. As there had been a number of projects, including those related to fibre optics, sustainable forest management and forest certification, that had affected the way of life and the environment of Indigenous Peoples, she would be interested to know whether the State Party had put in place a mechanism to carry out consultations, obtain free, prior and informed consent and ensure the participation of Indigenous communities in projects. She wondered whether the State Party had a legislative or regulatory framework for the consultation of Indigenous Peoples and a mechanism for cooperation with Indigenous community leaders and representative organizations.

10. The term "Pygmy", which was used in the report, was considered pejorative and discriminatory, since it alluded to a physical trait. The Committee wished to know which of the country's Indigenous ethnic groups had benefited from the integrated development project undertaken in collaboration with the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF). It would be useful to know what the project's impact had been and the number of beneficiaries.

11. The Committee had observed that the armed forces had established a special contingent composed of members of Indigenous Peoples with a view to protecting the environment. While that was a commendable action, it was unclear whether it was an isolated measure or formed part of a broader institutional approach.

12. The Committee was concerned at reports that entire communities had been forcibly displaced from their traditional lands as a result of mining projects in the vicinity of Bakoumba and had been resettled in undesirable and polluted areas, while the authorities had taken no action to address their complaints. Information on the current situation and on steps taken to guarantee the land rights of Indigenous Peoples would therefore be appreciated.

13. She would be interested to know what tools were available to the Government to promote equal opportunities in education and training for all members of society, including persons belonging to Indigenous Peoples. In that regard, she wondered how the Government had taken into account the special needs and way of life of Indigenous Peoples, and whether pre-primary and primary education included Indigenous languages.

14. As the report indicated that health coverage was unsatisfactory in some parts of the country, she wished to know what steps the State Party had taken to address geographical disparities and ensure that members of Indigenous communities had access to culturally appropriate healthcare. In that regard, it would also be interesting to know how the system of traditional medicine was organized.

15. According to a World Bank report of 2020, more than half of households in Gabon lacked decent housing. She would therefore appreciate information on the current situation in the housing sector, including on the results of the home savings plan administered by the Public Deposit Office. She would be interested to know whether the home savings plan made provision for vulnerable groups such as Indigenous Peoples and migrants. She would also like to know whether poverty among Indigenous Peoples and other minorities had increased or decreased in recent years, and what efforts had been made to reduce poverty and ensure that persons belonging to such groups had access to basic services, including housing, water and sanitation, health and education.

16. Furthermore, she would be interested to know whether Indigenous Peoples that spoke non-Bantu languages could receive education in their own tongue. It would be useful to know what proportion of schoolchildren in each province belonged to Indigenous communities and what progress had been made in their education. She wondered whether the education system

catered for children with special needs, including hard-of-hearing children and children with autism.

17. Lastly, noting that more than 50 languages were spoken in Gabon, she said that she would like to know what languages were used by the broadcast media and whether any programmes were broadcast in Indigenous languages such as Baka and Koya. What steps had been taken to promote the traditions and cultures of different ethnic groups and to preserve Indigenous languages and encourage their use?

18. **A representative of Gabon** said that he was unable to corroborate the reports that certain individuals had had their passports taken away upon arrival in Gabon. However, it was clear that some people had neglected their administrative status, while others had obtained official documents fraudulently. In that context, the Government was taking steps to ascertain who exactly was living in the country and to ensure that all citizens and residents were in a regular situation. The Ministry of the Interior and the Ministry of Justice were working to address the problem, which had implications for national security.

19. **A representative of Gabon** said that the Gabonese Hausa had been treated on an equal basis with other Gabonese citizens. An unfortunate situation had arisen because the decree of 2015 whereby the Hausa had been collectively naturalized had not been issued in the proper legal form. The Directorate General for Documentation and Immigration had identified flagrant irregularities, including cases of persons who had been wrongly named in the decree and subsequently granted citizenship. The Ministry of the Interior was conducting verification work with a view to ensuring that all persons named in the decree could legitimately exercise and enjoy citizenship rights. Persons found to be ineligible for citizenship would have their situation regularized in accordance with the law.

20. **A representative of Gabon** said that the decree in question had been intended to grant citizenship to about 100 people, but had been doctored to include more than 1,000. It had since been discovered that some of the Hausa named in the decree were living in other countries – there were Hausa communities in several African countries, notably those of the Sahel. In taking a closer look at the decree, the Government did not seek to target or blame a particular community, but merely to regularize the administrative situation of the persons concerned. Verification activities were being undertaken not only in respect of the Hausa but also other communities and Gabonese persons with foreign parents. The Government's aim was to strengthen national security by ensuring that everybody in the country had a regular administrative situation.

21. While women indeed formed the statistical majority in Gabon, comparatively few had been elected to public office. Act No. 9/2016, far from being unconstitutional, established quotas that were designed to increase women's participation in political life, in a framework of positive discrimination. Despite the quota, the number of women standing as candidates in elections remained too low, and the Government wished to see women better represented at the local and national levels.

22. **A representative of Gabon** said that the new Electoral Code reflected the Government's approach of promoting women's participation in political life and public affairs. Legally recognized political parties wishing to participate in elections were required to meet a 30 per cent quota, referring to the percentage of female candidates on the party list. The establishment of quotas – including those for young people and for persons with disabilities – was in no way discriminatory, but sought to encourage engagement and participation among underrepresented groups. In that sense, the country's electoral laws were consistent with the principle of equality enshrined in the Constitution, and should be seen as benefiting all citizens, regardless of their sex.

23. **A representative of Gabon** said that the Government was unable to provide statistics on Indigenous communities, including in respect of indicators such as population size and number of children enrolled in school. However, some data had been collected during the implementation of social protection policies. For example, under the Citizenship and Social Protection Project, launched in 2021, 15,000 stateless persons, mostly from Indigenous communities, had been identified and issued with birth certificates. That project was supported by continued awareness-raising efforts in the country's interior, including in areas inhabited by Indigenous communities. Persons belonging to Indigenous communities were

systematically enrolled in the National Health Insurance and Social Protection Fund. The Indigenous groups that had benefited from the integrated development project undertaken with the support of UNICEF were the Baka, Babongo, Bakoya, Baghame, Barimba, Akoula and Akwoa peoples. The Government had observed a high level of participation in the project and a strong positive impact, particularly in terms of school enrolment and retention.

24. The Ministry of Health delivered a range of health programmes, including immunization and sexual and reproductive health programmes, throughout the country. It also provided mobile services in areas inhabited by Indigenous populations. In 2023, a centre for children with autism and Down syndrome had opened in Libreville; there was also a centre for hard-of-hearing children. Uneven access to healthcare was a problem in all parts of the country, especially rural areas, and was not limited to Indigenous communities.

25. **A representative of Gabon** said that the Equal Opportunities Programme had been launched in 2016 with the objective of combating all forms of discrimination in areas such as access to education and training, employment and quality healthcare. It encompassed all population groups, including Indigenous Peoples, women and persons with disabilities. In 2019, the Inequality Observatory had conducted a nationwide field study to assess the situation of Indigenous Peoples in Gabon, and an action plan had been developed to ensure that public policies addressed their specific needs. Outreach and awareness-raising initiatives had been implemented to bring public services closer to all communities. Efforts to reach remote areas would continue so that the greatest number of Indigenous Peoples could benefit from those services. The Government recognized the importance of reducing inequality, in line with its obligations under Sustainable Development Goal 10, and was working to enhance social inclusion and promote equal opportunities for all vulnerable persons, including Indigenous Peoples, persons with disabilities and women.

26. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would be grateful for a response to certain questions that had been raised during the previous meeting, including those concerning the prohibition of racial profiling under the Act on the Protection of Personal Data, the promotion of Indigenous languages and cultures through community radio stations and the right of Indigenous Peoples, ethnic minorities and non-nationals to freedom of assembly. She would also welcome a response to her questions regarding the forced relocation of Indigenous communities to make way for mining operations at Bakoumba, and the organization of traditional medicine.

27. Furthermore, she would like to know what approach was taken to dealing with candidate lists that did not meet the minimum gender quota. Given the reported problems in connection with the decree granting collective naturalization, she wondered whether the State Party would in the future adopt individual acts for the naturalization of members of the Hausa community.

28. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she would like to know whether the Government had identified particular health risks affecting Indigenous Peoples and, if so, whether it tailored its health programmes and budgets with a view to preventing those risks. She was curious to know whether the State Party had taken any steps to promote the participation of Indigenous women in public affairs and the governance of their communities.

29. **Ms. Boker-Wilson** said that she would be grateful if the delegation could clarify the assertion that the State Party did not recognize the existence of minorities with legal status. While the Committee welcomed the 30 per cent quota, she would like to know whether policies were in place to facilitate women's political participation in practice, for example, through the provision of childcare and social welfare.

30. **Ms. Tebie** said that it would be of interest to know what barriers prevented women from standing for election and what measures were being taken, beyond the gender quota, to encourage women's participation in political life.

31. **Mr. Sibande** said that he would like to know whether the Constitution of 2024 was an update of the previous Constitution, last revised in 2011. He wondered whether the State Party planned to ratify the Convention against Discrimination in Education and whether legal frameworks had been developed to address discrimination against children with disabilities.

32. **A representative of Gabon** said that the naturalization of members of the Hausa community would henceforth be conducted in a regular manner on an individual basis. While

the previous Constitution had been revised multiple times, the 2024 Constitution was an entirely new document that had transformed the political system of Gabon.

33. **A representative of Gabon** said that article 75 of the Act on the Protection of Personal Data prohibited the collection or processing of data that directly or indirectly revealed racial or ethnic origins, political, philosophical or religious opinions or trade union membership, biometric or genetic data or data related to health and sexuality. There were certain exceptions to that prohibition, such as data processing for reasons of public safety or for the investigation of criminal offences. When conducting checks of private vehicles or public transport, the police and the gendarmerie asked to see the identity documents of all passengers without distinction, and they did not target foreign nationals.

34. **A representative of Gabon** said that article 15 of the Constitution guaranteed equal access for men and women to electoral mandates and to political and professional responsibilities. The Electoral Code applied an incentivizing approach in order to promote gender balance, rather than imposing penalties. Article 83 of the Code provided for the alternation of male and female candidates in order to ensure that the gender quota was met.

35. **A representative of Gabon** said that women faced cultural barriers to participation in politics, as they were not traditionally encouraged to take on leadership roles or speak in front of men. Social expectations and the responsibilities placed upon women as mothers and homemakers created additional obstacles to their political engagement. The Government was working to overcome taboos and social norms to increase women's involvement in political parties, particularly in leadership roles.

36. Traditional medicine and pharmacopoeia had been integrated into the most recent national health policy. A programme had been launched to develop facilities for the provision of traditional healthcare, particularly for Indigenous populations.

37. **A representative of Gabon** said that significant measures had been taken to address discrimination in education, in particular through Act No. 19/95 on Social Protection for Persons with Disabilities, which made education compulsory for all children with disabilities. In 2019, a forum had been organized on the introduction of inclusive education, and advocacy had since continued at the national level. The Government was working towards the full inclusion of children with disabilities, particularly by incorporating accessibility standards into the education sector plan. All new schools and other public buildings were built in compliance with accessibility standards.

38. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she would appreciate a response to her question regarding the relocation of Indigenous communities from Bakoumba. It would also be helpful to learn more about the promotion or use in the media of languages spoken by Indigenous Peoples, especially the Baka and Koya languages.

39. **A representative of Gabon** said that he would be interested to know the source of the Committee's information regarding the Bakoumba case. Gold mining operations in the area had indeed required the relocation of some inhabitants, and in such cases relocated persons were generally rehoused. The individuals in question might be unhappy about their relocation, but there was no evidence that they had been sent to polluted areas. It was the sovereign right of the State to grant permission for the production of natural resources for the benefit of the country's development. Regarding the promotion of languages, public radio stations broadcasted programmes in the languages spoken in the provinces of Woleu-Ntem, Haut Ogooué, Ogooué Maritime, Ngounié and Ogooué Ivindo.

The meeting was suspended at 11.30 a.m. and resumed at 11.45 a.m.

40. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she wished to remind the delegation that, in accordance with the procedures of the human rights treaty bodies, its role was to respond to questions concerning any reports the Committee had received from alternative sources, and not to question the credibility of those sources. In that respect, she wished to point out that the Committee had not received any shadow reports from Gabonese civil society organizations. State sovereignty over the use of natural resources should benefit the Gabonese people, including Indigenous populations, and should not be used to justify actions against their interests. Furthermore, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples

provided that no relocation of Indigenous Peoples might take place without their free, prior and informed consent.

41. She would be grateful for information on action taken, including any special measures, to combat inequalities and multiple forms of discrimination experienced by ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples such as the Baka, Babongo, Bakoya, Baghame, Barimba, Akoula and Akwoa peoples and to ensure the effective enjoyment of their rights. She would like to know how the specific needs of Indigenous women and girls had been taken into account in the National Strategy to Combat Gender-based Violence and Act No. 6/2021 of 6 September 2021 on the Elimination of Violence against Women. It would be useful to receive information on measures taken to address the multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination faced by women belonging to ethnic minorities and Indigenous Peoples, as well as migrant, asylum-seeking, refugee and stateless women, in particular regarding their access to education, employment and healthcare services.

42. **Mr. Diaby** (Country Task Force) said that he would like to hear about measures taken by the State Party to harmonize national legislation, including Act No. 5/86 on the Entry and Stay of Foreign Nationals, with international obligations and standards with a view to the decriminalization of irregular migration. He would welcome information on measures taken to prevent and combat racial discrimination and xenophobia against migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons; to facilitate the integration of non-citizens; and to ensure that migrants, asylum-seekers, refugees and stateless persons had access, in law and in practice, to health services, education and the labour market. In the light of concerns raised by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, he wished to learn about any steps taken to ensure that the practical application of the “Gabonization” policy in employment did not lead to discrimination in recruitment processes or dismissal on the basis of race, colour, descent or national or ethnic origin. Noting that the Refugees Act (No. 5/98) enshrined the principle of family reunification, he said he would be grateful if the delegation could describe the characteristics of refugees and their families living in the State Party. Information on the legal status and integration of refugees, including long-term refugees of Chadian origin, would be appreciated. While Gabonese law provided for refugee status to be extended to asylum-seekers’ family members, it was unclear whether the children of refugees continued to benefit from that status once they reached the age of majority. He would welcome information on measures taken to adopt and apply standard operating procedures for refugee status determination, including clear procedures for identifying persons in need of international protection at the border, and on measures taken to strengthen the National Commission for Refugees, including the allocation of sufficient human, technical and financial resources for the effective fulfilment of its mandate. Information on steps taken to extend primary healthcare coverage to asylum-seekers awaiting a final decision on refugee status would also be appreciated.

43. As Gabon was not a party to the statelessness conventions and had not established a procedure for determining statelessness or a comprehensive legal framework for the protection of stateless persons, and the Government had not provided information on the size or characteristics of the stateless population, he wished to know how the State Party intended to remedy those shortcomings. Had the Government established a mechanism to prevent the risk of statelessness among the children of undocumented migrants?

44. The Committee would like to know what had been done to halt the practice of requiring non-nationals to add “Gabonese” surnames to their names, which discouraged some parents of children born in Gabon from finalizing the administrative procedures whereby their children would acquire Gabonese citizenship or obtain identity documents.

45. Further information on victims of trafficking in persons, disaggregated by sex, nationality and age, would be welcome, as would information on the proportion of trafficking victims who were Gabonese nationals, the main forms of trafficking in persons observed in Gabon, and the impact on victims. He wished to know whether the definition of forced labour in Gabon included domestic servitude, commercial exploitation and sexual exploitation and how the Government addressed the problem of child begging. He would also appreciate information on the perpetrators of trafficking in persons, including their gender and nationality; the number of people who had been prosecuted and convicted of trafficking offences; and the measures taken to provide redress and rehabilitation to victims. It would be

useful to hear about any measures that had been taken to prevent and combat trafficking in persons and to improve the identification of victims and provide them with appropriate protection and assistance. He wondered whether the National Commission to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons had been allocated sufficient human, technical and financial resources to carry out its mandate effectively.

46. **A representative of Gabon** said that, following the adoption in 2018 of the National Strategy to Combat Gender-based Violence, guidelines had been developed on addressing different forms of violence, including sexual violence. Measures had been taken to raise public awareness of the various forms of gender-based violence and to build capacity in all sectors to tackle the problem.

47. The Inequality Observatory had developed a catalogue of indicators and would soon begin collecting data that would allow it to monitor progress in the struggle against inequality. Measures to tackle violence and inequality were inclusive of all groups living in Gabon and did not specifically target Indigenous Peoples or minorities.

48. **A representative of Gabon** said that Indigenous Peoples affected by inequalities benefited from support designed to meet their specific needs. For instance, during the project carried out with UNICEF, teachers had received assistance in adapting their teaching methods to ensure that Indigenous children who travelled with their families during the hunting season would not be disadvantaged in terms of their schooling. During Gabonese Women's Decade (2015–2025), efforts had been made to meet the different needs of all women, including Indigenous women and women with disabilities. All policies of the Ministry of Women and Child Protection and other public policies concerning women were inclusive of migrant, refugee and asylum-seeking women.

49. Refugees and asylum-seekers were eligible for social protection support. Anybody in Gabon who fell ill, including persons in irregular situations, was able to receive healthcare – a policy that recognized the common interest in preventing disease outbreaks. Migrants in an irregular situation could receive support from social services units at hospitals, through the community and from their embassies. Migrants who were entitled to work were referred to employers in accordance with quotas for the recruitment of foreign labour in each sector.

50. **A representative of Gabon** said that the first national policy on immigration had been adopted in the 1960s in response to the need for foreign labour in the construction industry. Following the economic recession of the 1980s, the Act on the Entry and Stay of Foreign Nationals had been adopted in order to combat illegal immigration and standardize the conditions of entry and stay. The Act was somewhat outdated and work was under way to revise it. In recent years, fewer and fewer people had been imprisoned for illegal immigration offences. Rather than arresting and imprisoning undocumented foreign nationals, the Government encouraged them to regularize their status, and regularization campaigns were frequently held.

51. **A representative of Gabon** said that the Government was engaged in a cross-sectoral effort to combat trafficking in persons with the support of the International Organization for Migration (IOM), UNICEF and other agencies. Standard operating procedures had been adopted in December 2023 to facilitate the identification of potential trafficking victims in the context of mixed migration movements. In March 2024, in partnership with the IOM and other organizations, the Government had conducted a data collection exercise that had revealed that trafficking in persons was largely driven by irregular migration from other West African countries and sustained by transnational organized crime networks. The data showed that trafficking particularly affected women and children, who were often subjected to labour exploitation or were forced into begging or servitude.

52. The Government continued to pursue joint efforts with Benin to combat trafficking in persons under the 2018 cooperation agreement on combating trafficking in children, the scope of which had since been extended. The Government was also working with Togo to implement a migration multi-partner trust fund project for the period 2024–2026, through which the two Governments were exploring practical solutions for mutual legal assistance and police cooperation.

The meeting was suspended at 12.20 p.m. and resumed at 12.25 p.m.

53. **A representative of Gabon** said that traffickers tended to be members of transnational criminal networks based in countries of origin or transit. The National Commission to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons operated under the auspices of the Ministry of Justice.

54. **A representative of Gabon** said that, under the Constitution, all people in Gabon were equal before the law without distinction on the basis of ethnic origin, race or gender, and there was no way to interpret those provisions to the detriment of Indigenous Peoples. Regarding the right to freedom of association, Indigenous persons wishing to form an association were required to follow the same administrative procedure as other citizens and to submit an application with the relevant authorities, following which they would receive the requisite support and guidance.

55. **A representative of Gabon** said that a policy on preventing and combating trafficking in persons had been in place since 1990s, although its scope had originally been limited to trafficking in children. Cognizant of its obligations under the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime and the Protocol to Prevent, Suppress and Punish Trafficking in Persons, Especially Women and Children, the Government was working to align national policy with international standards and ensure that it also addressed trafficking in adults, in particular women. The National Commission to Prevent and Combat Trafficking in Persons had been established by Decree No. 133/PR/MJGS of 27 March 2024, which also provided for the establishment of provincial monitoring subcommissions under the authority of the provincial governors. The Commission reported to the Prime Minister but in practice was chaired by the Minister of Justice. A national strategy and action plan to combat trafficking in persons had been drawn up and costed with the support of development partners.

56. Gabon was a State Party to the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees, the Protocol relating to the Status of Refugees and the Organization of African Unity Convention Governing the Specific Aspects of Refugee Problems in Africa. The country's policy on asylum had been established through the Refugees Act and its three implementing decrees establishing, respectively, the Subcommittee on Eligibility, which was responsible for refugee status determination; an appeals board; and the National Commission for Refugees. There were no refugee camps in Gabon, meaning that refugees lived alongside Gabonese nationals and shared the same spaces, including hospitals and schools. Under article 7 of Ordinance No. 0022/PR/2007 instituting a compulsory health insurance and social guarantee system, refugees could obtain access to healthcare on the same terms as Gabonese nationals, and could even receive treatment abroad if necessary. Refugee identity cards had a similar design to national identity cards. An ad hoc commission had been set up to harmonize domestic legislation with international refugee law.

57. While there was no evidence that any stateless persons – as defined under the Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons – were living in Gabon, there were persons at risk of statelessness, including those who lacked legal identity documents such as birth certificates.

58. **Mr. Diaby** said that Gabonese nationals were among the individuals who lacked access to documents and were at risk of statelessness. He encouraged the State Party to ratify the relevant conventions and establish mechanisms to address statelessness.

59. **Mr. Guissé** said he understood that, in recent years, Gabon had experienced migration from all over the African continent and had witnessed a rise in isolationist, nationalist and xenophobic attitudes. He wondered how, in the new political context, the Government might address those challenges. In addition, he would like to know whether the State Party planned to ratify the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families.

60. **Ms. Shepherd** said that she wished to know whether history lessons were compulsory at all levels of the national education system and whether citizens and non-citizens were educated about the legacies of colonialism. She was also keen to know whether the State Party supported the position of the African Union on reparatory justice or was of the view that justice and equity could be achieved through the use of national resources. She invited

the delegation to comment on reports that some countries, including Gabon, paid a “colonial tax” to the Government of France.

61. **Ms. Stavrinaki** said that she would welcome information on measures taken to combat malaria among migrants and asylum-seekers, and among children in particular.

62. **Ms. Tebie** said that she would like to know how the State Party met the housing needs of refugees, particularly upon arrival in Gabon, given that there were no refugee camps in the country.

63. **Mr. Yeung Sik Yuen** said that he welcomed the progress that had been made in relation to the education of children with disabilities. He wished to know whether the State Party had ratified the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa.

64. **Mr. Tlemçani** said that he would be interested to hear about the State Party’s efforts to ensure equitable access to education for all, including migrants, refugees and asylum-seekers.

65. **A representative of Gabon** said that the history curriculum taught in State-run schools, which had been developed by the National Pedagogical Institute, covered the country’s history following independence and therefore did not address colonialism. The delegation did not have any information on the payment either of reparations or of “colonial tax”. Gabon was a sovereign country that enjoyed harmonious relations with France and other foreign Powers.

66. **Ms. Esseneme** said that she wished to congratulate the State Party on its comprehensive responses, covering multiple sectors, in what had been a productive dialogue.

67. **A representative of Gabon** said that the delegation had appreciated the constructive and respectful tenor of the dialogue, which had provided an opportunity to present an honest and realistic overview of the progress made and the challenges the country faced. His Government attached great importance to cooperation with human rights mechanisms and would work with all stakeholders to ensure the full implementation of the Convention. His delegation would respond promptly in writing to the outstanding questions and looked forward to continuing its collaboration with the Committee.

The meeting rose at 1 p.m.