

GABON

Date of admission to UN: 20 September 1960.

TREATIES: RATIFICATIONS AND RESERVATIONS

Land and People: Gabon has submitted a revised core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.65/Rev.1) for use by the treaty bodies. The report prepared by the government contains demographic and statistical data and information on the economy, history and the general political structure, and the general legal framework within which human rights are protected. The preamble of the Constitution affirms the country's commitment to the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms defined in, *inter alia*, the Universal Declaration, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the 1990 National Charter of Freedoms. The Human Rights Department, established in 1987, is entrusted with the mandate of applying government human rights policy and coordinating initiatives derived from the policy. The Ministry of Justice and Human Rights focusses its efforts on the protection and promotion of human rights. Information on, and the dissemination of, international human rights instruments at the national level is central to the promotion of these rights.

Economic, Social and Cultural Rights

Acceded: 21 January 1983.

Gabon's initial report was due 30 June 1990; the second periodic report was due 30 June 1995.

Civil and Political Rights

Acceded: 21 January 1983.

Gabon's second periodic report (CCPR/C/128/Add.1) has been submitted and is not yet scheduled for consideration; the third periodic report is due 31 December 2003.

Racial Discrimination

Signed: 20 September 1966; ratified: 29 February 1980. Gabon's second through ninth periodic reports were submitted as one document (CERD/C/315/Add.1), which was considered at the Committee's August 1998 session; the 10th periodic report is due 30 March 1999.

Discrimination against Women

Signed: 17 July 1980; ratified: 21 January 1983.

Gabon's second through fourth periodic reports were due 20 February 1988, 1992 and 1996 respectively.

Torture

Signed: 21 January 1986.

Rights of the Child

Signed: 26 January 1990; ratified: 9 February 1994.

Gabon's initial report was due 10 March 1996.

REPORTS TO TREATY BODIES

Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination

Gabon's 2nd through 9th periodic reports were submitted as one document (CERD/C/315/Add.1) which was considered by the Committee at its August 1998 session. The brief report prepared by the government states that racial discrimination is not a feature of Gabonese culture and that cultural plurality is a geopolitical fact. Information is provided on, *inter alia*: amendments to the Constitution in 1997 and provisions related to freedom of thought, conscience and religion; the right and duty to work; freedom of association; and education, access to education, and the education policy.

The Committee's concluding observations and comments (CERD/C/304/Add.58) noted that Gabon is in the process of a difficult economic period and that limits on resources available in the public service have hampered the full implementation of the Convention. The Committee welcomed Gabon's accession to the major international human rights instruments, including the 1981 African Charter on Human and People's Rights, incorporation of the Convention into the 1997 Constitution, the establishment of the Ministry for Human Rights and achievements in the field of education, especially the high school attendance rate.

The principal subjects of concern identified by the Committee included, *inter alia*: the insufficiency of the information on the demographic composition of the population, including the composition of the foreign community and indigenous Pygmy groups; the lack of information on the implementation of article 4 of the Convention, especially on how this principle is reflected in domestic legislation (e.g., Penal Code) and applied by judges, lawyers, and civil servants; the lack of information on the existence of available legal mechanisms to lodge complaints in cases of racial discrimination; the possibility that members of the public, judges and lawyers may not be sufficiently aware of the protection against racial discrimination provided by the Convention; and the lack of information on programmes for the training of magistrates, law enforcement officials, teachers, and social workers, aimed at raising their awareness of problems related to racial discrimination.

The Committee recommended that the government, *inter alia*:

- ♦ provide further information on the demographic composition of the population;
- ♦ provide information in the next report on the implementation of article 4 of the Convention — prohibition of organizations and individuals promoting racial hatred, especially on how this principle is reflected in domestic legislation and is applied by judges, lawyers, and civil servants;
- ♦ provide comprehensive information on the realization by all groups of the rights under article 5, in par-