



**Economic and Social
Council**

Distr.
GENERAL

E/CN.4/2006/21
6 December 2005

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

COMMISSION ON HUMAN RIGHTS
Sixty-second session
Item 6 (a) of the provisional agenda

**RACISM, RACIAL DISCRIMINATION, XENOPHOBIA
AND ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION:**

**COMPREHENSIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF AND FOLLOW-UP TO
THE DURBAN DECLARATION AND PROGRAMME OF ACTION**

**Report of the Regional Seminar of Member States of the Economic Community of
Central African States on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia
and related intolerance through inclusive involvement in public life**

Libreville, Gabon, 27-29 July 2005

Summary

This document contains the report of the Regional Seminar of Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through inclusive involvement in public life, held in Libreville, Gabon, from 27 to 29 July 2005. The seminar was organized by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in cooperation with the Government of the Republic of Gabon.

Over the past 10 years, Central Africa has been the setting for numerous armed conflicts, most of them centred around dynamics of exclusion and intolerance. The aim of this meeting, which was attended by some 40 participants representing Governments, non-governmental organizations and academic institutions, was to provide a platform for an exchange of views and experiences on ways and means of bringing all population groups into the political process.

The seminar produced 21 recommendations addressed to ECCAS member States and to OHCHR. The recommendations highlight the need for OHCHR to provide education, training and technical cooperation, and request member States, among other things, to work with local communities and traditional leaders to establish grass-roots democracy; guarantee access to the media for all socio-political actors; take measures to institutionalize political opposition; and involve young people in national decision-making bodies.

CONTENTS

| | <i>Paragraphs</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| Introduction | 1 - 8 | 5 |
| A. Context and rationale for the seminar | 1 - 2 | 5 |
| B. Aims of the seminar..... | 3 | 5 |
| C. Participants | 4 | 5 |
| D. Opening of the seminar | 5 - 7 | 5 |
| E. Organization of work | 8 | 6 |
| I. INTRODUCTORY SESSION | 9 - 13 | 6 |
| II. SESSION I - INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNANCE WITH EFFORTS TO COMBAT RACISM | 14 - 26 | 7 |
| A. Overview of traditional political institutions in Africa | 15 - 17 | 7 |
| B. Political involvement in traditional public life | 18 - 26 | 8 |
| III. SESSION II - ENCOURAGING POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL | 27 - 38 | 9 |
| A. The involvement of women and other minorities in public life in Central Africa | 28 | 9 |
| B. The effectiveness of political involvement at the local level | 29 - 32 | 9 |
| C. Diversity and the prevention of discrimination | 33 - 38 | 10 |
| IV. SESSION III - POLITICAL PARTIES AS EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS FOR COMBATING RACISM | 39 - 49 | 11 |
| A. Political parties and efforts to combat the stigmatization of the socially excluded | 40 - 43 | 11 |
| B. The role of political parties in the integration of persons settled in national territory | 44 - 49 | 12 |

CONTENTS (*continued*)

| | <i>Paragraphs</i> | <i>Page</i> |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|
| V. SESSION IV - THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA AS THE VOICE OF THOSE WITH NO VOICE | 50 - 62 | 13 |
| A. The media - the press, television and radio in particular - and efforts to combat discrimination | 51 - 52 | 13 |
| B. The media and the promotion of tolerance | 53 - 62 | 13 |
| VI. SESSION V - THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PROTECTING AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION | 63 - 69 | 15 |
| A. The role of civil society organizations in identifying and publicizing anti-discrimination doctrines | 64 - 65 | 15 |
| B. Young people and efforts to combat discrimination | 66 - 69 | 15 |
| VII. CLOSURE OF THE SEMINAR | 70 - 71 | 16 |
| VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS | 72 | 16 |
| ANNEX I - LIST OF PARTICIPANTS | | 19 |
| ANNEX II - PROGRAMME | | 21 |

Introduction

A. Context and rationale for the seminar

1. Africa displays greater ethnic variation than any other region of the world, with some countries comprising more than 400 ethnic groups. The Central African subregion is one of the most troubled areas of the continent, and in the last 10 years has seen civil wars and inter-ethnic conflicts centred around dynamics of intolerance and exclusion.

2. At the 2001 Regional Conference for Africa in preparation for the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, African ministers responsible for human rights questions expressed their deep concern at the socio-economic development of the continent, which was hampered by endless internal conflicts due, among other causes, to violations of human rights, including discrimination based on ethnic or national origin, and to lack of democratic, inclusive and participatory governance.

B. Aims of the seminar

3. The main aim of the seminar, which was held in Libreville from 27 to 29 July 2005, was to discuss best practice and its potential for implementation within the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). Best practice is a reflection of the means by which States seek to combat discrimination based on race, ethnic origin or religion, and of the measures adopted by Governments to promote equality and non-discrimination within their societies. The seminar provided a platform for a constructive exchange of views on ways in which States might ensure that their political and legal systems best reflect the cultural diversity of their societies.

C. Participants

4. Participants included government representatives and other decision makers from the 11 member States of ECCAS with functions relating to the main subject of the seminar. Civil society was represented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and youth associations, priority being given to those whose work most closely relates to the subject of the seminar. Panellists on best practice in the area of democratic governance and democracy prepared and introduced the basic documents on the issues under discussion.

D. Opening of the seminar

5. The opening ceremony, which took place on the morning of 27 July 2005, included addresses by Mr. Pierre Sob, representing the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), and by Mr. Paul Mba Abessole, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Transport, Civil Aviation and Human Rights of the Republic of Gabon.

6. In his opening address, Mr. Sob thanked the Gabonese authorities and the countries of the subregion participating in the Libreville meeting, which he hoped would yield positive and useful outcomes. He explained that the aim of the seminar was to provide a platform for a constructive exchange of views on ways in which States might ensure that their political and legal systems best reflect the cultural diversity of their societies. To that end, States should improve their democratic institutions by making them more participatory and inclusive, and avoid marginalization, exclusion and discrimination against specific sectors of society.

7. The Deputy Prime Minister first welcomed all the participants to Gabon. After having recalled the aims of the seminar, he drew attention to human rights violations in Africa, noting that the media carried daily reports on crimes involving racism, xenophobia and intolerance in the educational, administrative, religious and political spheres of African life, and he urged the member States of ECCAS to take appropriate measures.

E. Organization of work

8. An approach based on active participation was adopted. The seminar was divided into six half-day sessions, preceded by an introductory session. The work was organized as follows:

- Introductory session;
- Session I - Integrating traditional forms of governance with efforts to combat racism;
- Session II - Encouraging political involvement at the community level;
- Session III - Political parties as effective instruments for combating racism;
- Session IV - The role of the media as the voice of those with no voice;
- Session V - The role of civil society and youth organizations in protecting against all forms of discrimination.

I. INTRODUCTORY SESSION

9. Mr. Pierre Sob, introducing the general theme of the seminar, recalled that the States of the Central African subregion have kept up and intensified their economic cooperation for more than 20 years. Once they had become aware that the ongoing conflicts, whether internal or between States, were a consequence of odious acts of discrimination and of the lack of participatory governance, they had taken bold measures in the areas of peacebuilding, strengthening of security and promotion and protection of human rights.

10. In his recent report entitled *In greater freedom: towards development, security and human rights for all*, the United Nations Secretary-General, Mr. Kofi Annan, had noted that recent decades have seen positive democratic developments in Africa. He encouraged African States to continue along that road, while emphasizing the need for the continent to adopt a better approach to dealing with the conflicts constantly being played out upon the African stage.

11. Africa is known for the great diversity of its peoples and if it is not to create the conditions for conflict and intolerance instead of promoting a culture of peaceful coexistence, it needs to ensure inclusive involvement not only in society's institutions but also in the decision-making processes relating to public governance. Involvement may not be a panacea for discrimination, but it does at least help to contain it.

12. The concept of involvement has particular resonance for women. In accordance with general recommendation No. 23 (1997) of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women, on women in political and public life, appropriate measures should be taken to eliminate discrimination against women in political and public life and, in particular, to ensure to women, on equal terms with men, the right to vote, to be elected, to participate in the formulation of government policy and the implementation thereof and to hold public office and perform all public functions at all levels of government, and to participate in non-governmental organizations and associations concerned with the public and political life of the country.

13. The programme for the seminar was then presented and the Presiding Officers introduced: in the Chair, Mr. Domaye Nodjigoto (Chad) and as Rapporteur, Mr. Corentin Hervo-Akendengué (Gabon). Two working groups, one with 19 members and the other with 20, were formed, with the task of: (a) drafting a report on the conduct of the debates; and (b) preparing the recommendations of the seminar.

II. SESSION I - INTEGRATING TRADITIONAL FORMS OF GOVERNANCE WITH EFFORTS TO COMBAT RACISM

14. Session I was chaired by Mr. Zorhino Massamba and considered two topics: (a) an overview of traditional political institutions in Central Africa; and (b) political involvement in traditional public life.

A. Overview of traditional political institutions in Africa

15. Mr. Dimanche Lissou said that, as human beings, we are inclined to generalize, characterize and categorize in order to help us to understand the world and our place in it. However, we may at the same time create stereotypes, which are the basis of prejudices. There is of course nothing wrong with being proud of our tribe, our nation or our culture, but when pride turns to disrespect the cycle of discrimination begins. The prevailing situation in the world and the subregion reflects only too well the resurgence in the kind of non-inclusive and xenophobic behaviour to which the systems of governance now in place lend themselves.

16. The political systems to be found in Africa in the past were sufficiently dynamic and diverse to allow population groups to be controlled and social cohesion maintained, while promoting the values of solidarity, sharing and tolerance. In addressing social issues, whether within State organizations where power was centralized, or among segmented or clan-based communities in which it was more diffuse, the approach adopted in exercising authority was one that favoured collective actors and group behaviour. There were also several ways in which decisions taken at the chief's level could be modified, thus ensuring an outlet for all the various aspirations of the people, while the social, administrative and economic arrangements made it possible for all sectors of society to take part in public governance.

17. In more recent times, however, traditional political systems have gone into decline, and this has given rise to divisive behaviour. This decline is reflected partly in the erosion of socio-political structures and thus an easing of social control, and partly in the gradual disappearance of the cultures upon which those structures were based.

B. Political involvement in traditional public life

18. Mr. André Tchoussi said that, as the natural framework for human development, society is constantly compelled to adapt to the changes that take place in its environment. Its efforts to accommodate and come to terms with disruption are a source of misunderstandings, difficulties and even conflict.

19. In Central Africa the context is particularly variable and differs from State to State, and there is now an urgent need to look at potential new forms of social administration. In the speaker's view this seminar was clearly part of that process of self-examination: the peoples of Central Africa have had enough of imposed models that have originated elsewhere and it is time for them to take other world views on board. This he saw as the overarching theme of his paper: the integration of traditional forms of governance with efforts to combat racism through political involvement in traditional public life. In what way might a revival of traditional forms of governance help combat racial discrimination?

20. The speaker looked at this question from two standpoints: (a) the traditional exercise of political power and the treatment of foreigners; and (b) traditional forms of economic and social organization.

21. With regard to the exercise of political power, he said the majority of societies in the subregion had had - and still retained - traditional chiefdoms governed by chiefs elected by members of the ruling families or appointed by their predecessor. Other societies did not have chiefs but instead had councils of the wise whose task it was to reflect on problems arising in their communities.

22. On the second point, the speaker said the family in Africa was considered to include all blood relations, whether close or distant. In addition, economic systems were based on solidarity, sharing and cooperation in the common interest.

23. In conclusion he said that if these once widespread models could now be properly rethought they might help combat racism as defined in the international instruments on the protection and promotion of human rights.

24. These presentations were followed by a lively debate. Participants found the speakers' papers to be detailed and to the point; they had particularly emphasized the positive aspects of traditional African society. However, participants noted that they had made no mention of the problems of human rights violations and discrimination. They also pointed to the failure of current legislation in States in the subregion to take account of customary law; and the somewhat imprecise time frames applied in the papers (pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial). They also wondered what evidence there was for the assertion that earlier African political systems had helped maintain social cohesion.

25. Responding to these points, the panellists said the approach adopted in their papers had been intended to meet the concerns of the seminar organizers, who had wished to highlight those aspects of traditional African institutions that might be of use in combating all forms of discrimination.

26. As to the time frames applied in their papers, they said they had followed a historical approach which required points of reference that were sufficiently widely known.

III. SESSION II - ENCOURAGING POLITICAL INVOLVEMENT AT THE COMMUNITY LEVEL

27. This session was chaired by Ms. Angela de Barros Lima and addressed three topics: (a) the involvement of women and other minorities in public life in Central Africa; (b) the effectiveness of political involvement at the local level; and (c) diversity and the prevention of discrimination.

A. The involvement of women and other minorities in public life in Central Africa

28. Ms. Aurélie Ndoumba, introducing the topic, presented this issue in the form of questions designed to stimulate discussion: to what extent are women and minorities involved in political life in each State? She explained that the issue is not the extent to which women and/or minorities are represented at the highest political levels. The question to ask is whether they are involved in political life at the local, district, arrondissement or departmental levels. Specifically, are there any women or members of minority groups who are village or district chiefs, or sub-prefects or prefects? If so, how do they do it?

B. The effectiveness of political involvement at the local level

29. Mr. Alain Didier Olinga said an assessment of the effectiveness of involvement at the local level in the context of inclusive involvement in public life required an evaluation of the extent to which, and in what ways, citizens and communities at the grass roots or on the outer margins of the State were part of a collective socio-political process and not excluded from or opting out of the common civic and community project. His assessment and evaluation fell into three parts: (a) conceptual clarifications; (b) a description of the institutional arrangements for political involvement at the local level; and (c) criteria for effective political involvement at the local level.

30. In the first part, the speaker highlighted and tried to disentangle the complex concept of political involvement, which is a matter more of learned behaviour than of spontaneous impulse, an inclination that springs from group culture, from practices that have been institutionalized and established over time. Its effectiveness can only be relative and depends on the resources available to those involved and the conditions set by the political, legal, cultural, economic and religious environment. As to the term “local”, another complex notion, this was presented primarily as referring to geographical spaces defined by law, whose function is to facilitate political and administrative investment.

31. On the second point, the speaker said political involvement took different forms depending on whether it was expressed electorally or not. While the fact of elections cannot be disputed, it is nonetheless true that many factors - including the makeup of the electorate, the

rules governing election candidature and the ballot itself - continue to hamper the free expression of opinion at the grass-roots level. Outside the election process, people are still virtually never consulted on matters of local interest, although there has been a proliferation of development initiatives, and documents concerning town planning seem to herald a more obviously participatory approach.

32. Lastly, if regional and local interests are to develop without undermining national solidarity, it is essential to provide a legitimate and autonomous political space that is not vulnerable to the repressive tendencies of central authority. However, any such stimulus must go hand in hand with an appropriation of the local political process by the citizenry, and this requires political mobilization through training, information, awareness-raising and organization for individuals and communities at the grass-roots level. It also requires the electoral rules to be adjusted to facilitate self-expression and involvement by the various contributors to community life. In short, for emerging democracies to take root a flourishing political involvement at the local and community levels is essential.

C. Diversity and the prevention of discrimination

33. In a paper read on his behalf, Mr. Eugène Ngalim said Cameroon's great ethnic and cultural diversity had never been a source of division or conflict. The peoples of Cameroon have lived side by side in harmony since independence and the country is relatively peaceful. Cameroon has taken measures at the national, regional and international levels to combat racism, xenophobia and all forms of discrimination. At the international level it has ratified various conventions on human rights and discrimination and incorporated their provisions into its Constitution and Criminal Code. Discriminatory acts and insults to races or religions, inter alia, are punishable under the Criminal Code. But how does this translate into practice?

34. Generally speaking, the people of Cameroon live together without distinction as to race, sex, tribe or religion. All Cameroonians have access to education, training and public-sector employment, for example, albeit subject to the principle of regionalization. In terms of freedom of association, political parties have proliferated since the 1990s and their membership is quite diverse with regard to sex and ethnic origin. National integration and peaceful coexistence are reflected even at the highest levels of the State: ministers are appointed on a regional basis and as the President comes from the French-speaking part of the country, the Prime Minister is from the English-speaking part. National integration and peaceful coexistence can thus be said to be a fact of life in Cameroon.

35. For all that, there are Cameroonians who consider themselves to be victims of discrimination. Some English speakers, for example, are against the idea of living side by side with French speakers because they believe their share of the national "cake" does not justly reflect the contribution their region makes to Cameroon's development. In addition, traditional chiefs engage in racist, xenophobic and discriminatory practices. There are also gaps in Cameroonian law in respect of discrimination, including an explicit distinction between native and non-native.

36. There is, however, one ray of light in this rather gloomy picture, namely the great importance attached to dialogue and reconciliation in dealing with crises and conflicts arising from racism, xenophobia or intolerance of any kind.

37. Following these presentations, a number of questions were raised concerning, inter alia, the means used to help Cameroon's Pygmies to integrate; the exploitation of ethnicity, clan and family in Africa; the general meaning of the terms "racism", "discrimination" and "xenophobia"; and the lack of interest shown by women in high office in their sisters at the bottom of the ladder.

38. In reply to these concerns, the speakers said the problem of the Pygmies was not given the attention it deserved by the Government; only civil society seemed to think it important. On the question of the definition of terms, participants were referred to their preliminary documentation. On the issue of the manipulation of ethnicity, the speaker said it occurred in the subregion but was also attributable to the lack of a democratic culture on the one hand, and to the poverty of households on the other.

IV. SESSION III - POLITICAL PARTIES AS EFFECTIVE INSTRUMENTS FOR COMBATING RACISM

39. There were two topics on the agenda at this session, which was chaired by Mr. Richard Etoundi: (a) political parties and efforts to combat the stigmatization of the socially excluded, introduced by Mr. Victor Ngouilou-Mpemba; and (b) the role of political parties in the integration of persons settled in national territory, introduced by Mr. Dimanche Lissou.

A. Political parties and efforts to combat the stigmatization of the socially excluded

40. Mr. Victor Ngouilou-Mpemba said the Central African States had several times undertaken to establish pluralist democracies in the subregion, and pluralist democracy by definition implied political parties.

41. A close study of political parties in the States of the subregion shows that they are ethnically-based and have a tribalist ideology. On the basis of principle 5 of the Bamako Declaration on the Practices of Democracy, Rights and Freedoms in the French-speaking Community, the presentation looked at two aspects of the question, namely the legitimate existence of political parties and their action on behalf of marginalized groups. The speaker first discussed the definition and aim of political parties - basically the peaceful acquisition and exercise of power in order to further a democratic vision of society - and then considered their ethnic nature. The Congolese experience shows that the concepts of tribalism and ethnicity refer to similar objective and subjective realities and that both are a product of manipulation based on membership of "Us".

42. All in all, tribalism represents a denial of the modern impersonal, egalitarian State and is consequently discriminatory in nature. Political parties should therefore oppose such attitudes.

43. In the second part, the speaker presented a range of possible measures to help counter the stigmatization of excluded groups. Both governing and opposition parties were encouraged to take initiatives on behalf of the Pygmies, women, people with disabilities and street children. Political parties should not wait for election time to reach out to marginalized groups.

**B. The role of political parties in the integration
of persons settled in national territory**

44. Mr. Dimanche Lissou presented a paper by Mr. Julien Nimubona, who said the role of political parties in modern democracies was to control the masses and shape and direct opinion. In a liberal regime, control of populations by political parties does not entail enrolment, since the system does not countenance totalitarian parties. With more flexible population control, there is plenty of room for other forms of association. In seeking to attract the greatest numbers, political parties will not wish to exclude anyone.

45. At first sight the political parties of the subregion do not appear to give sufficient prominence to the question of the integration of persons settled in national territory, but in fact each party's general policy is that the interests of such individuals should be fully taken into account and protected. Parties have therefore adopted clear positions in favour of a simplification of the formalities surrounding the granting of residence permits or refugee status, so that all who are duly entitled can have their situation speedily regularized.

46. These political parties are also in favour of a healthy policy on tourism, with fewer controls on tourists and protection for their persons and property. The introduction of a legal and judicial framework for business is encouraging not only nationals of Cameroon but also expatriates to invest and feel at ease in the country. Lastly, he said every economic policy statement advocated an opening of markets on the basis of a particularly liberal investment code. This reflects the willingness of political parties to accept others and make integration a reality.

47. The two presentations were followed by a frank and productive discussion. Participants made the point that the definition of political parties as organizations whose aim is to gain power does not reflect reality, as political parties are sometimes formed in the full realization that they will never attain that goal. Participants also said they would prefer the expression "persons settled in national territory" to apply also to nationals and not only to foreign residents or tourists.

48. At the same time they denounced the selfishness of political parties, which so often exploit vulnerable groups in order to win votes at election time; they also found it regrettable that the speakers had not stressed more strongly the need to reinforce the power and presence of women in politics.

49. Replying to these comments, the panellists recognized that there is a mismatch between political parties' real objectives and their hidden aims. They also said moral and material poverty are an important reason for the exploitation of less favoured groups.

V. SESSION IV - THE ROLE OF THE MEDIA AS THE VOICE OF THOSE WITH NO VOICE

50. This session was chaired by Mr. Blaise Diba and focused on two topics: (a) the media - the press, television and radio in particular - and efforts to combat discrimination, introduced by Mr. Athanase Karayenga; and (b) the media and the promotion of tolerance, introduced by Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal.

A. The media - the press, television and radio in particular - and efforts to combat discrimination

51. Mr. Athanase Karayenga said that, if the media wished to play an effective part in efforts to combat racial discrimination, it was particularly important:

(a) To know the history of the ideas and prejudices by which population groups are influenced. In Rwanda, for example, the missionaries had arrived at a time of debate on racial superiority and Darwinism;

(b) To view the media as forming an economic unit of production with its clients, readership and employees;

(c) To be fully versed in the legal environment by which the media is regulated at both the international and the national levels. If the legal norms had been observed in Rwanda, the situation there would never have degenerated. It is important to point out that hate media are not a speciality of the Central African subregion.

52. This is a problem also in other parts of the world, which is why protection at the global level is needed. It is also necessary to consider setting up a centre for teaching and research in the areas of peace, discrimination and the media, and making the teaching of such principles part of the curriculum in schools. Lastly, it is important to promote increased interaction between the media and civil society organizations.

B. The media and the promotion of tolerance

53. Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal recalled that Central Africa was one of the most troubled regions of the continent. In the space of 10 years, most Central African States had seen or were still in the throes of civil war or inter-ethnic conflict, involving crimes against humanity and in one case genocide.

54. African States in general and the Central African States in particular have ratified and incorporated into their legal order the majority of the international legal instruments on freedom of the press and freedom of information. Article II of the Declaration on Fundamental Principles concerning the Contribution of the Mass Media to Strengthening Peace and International Understanding, to the Promotion of Human Rights and to Countering Racism, Apartheid and Incitement to War (28 November 1978), refers to the contribution of the mass media to the strengthening of peace and international understanding, the promotion of human rights and the countering of racism, apartheid and incitement to war.

55. Given the persistence of ethnic conflicts in Central Africa, and of the problem of minorities, the Durban Programme of Action can be seen as one of the routes to pacification of the subregion. The Declaration and Programme of Action produced by the Durban World Conference against Racism recognize the role of the media in the promotion of human rights and in countering racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related forms of intolerance, notably in paragraphs 140 and 147.

56. Media professionals should therefore promote tolerance through their own organs of the press and support the peace and democracy process in Central Africa. The Durban Programme of Action against racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance includes a wide range of measures to mobilize the public at large and refine and implement mechanisms and policies to counter these phenomena.

57. In this context, the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa has contributed to developing the skills of media and communications professionals in the subregion. For example, a subregional workshop on “The media, human rights and democracy”, for media professionals from ECCAS member States was held in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, from 20 to 22 May 2003.

58. That seminar aimed to help media professionals from Central Africa to better address issues of human rights and democracy in their work and thereby improve the protection and promotion of press freedom in line with universally accepted standards. A network for women journalists, human rights and democracy in Central Africa was formed. Except in the area of training, the working conditions of media professionals need improving.

59. It is important to note also that journalists’ low pay pushes them into corruption and encourages them to present information in a biased way. It is now no longer possible to speak of freedom of the press, for some media professionals in Central Africa live off politicians who manipulate them at will and merely use them as mouthpieces.

60. Yet the media has duties and obligations that could contribute to the protection and promotion of human rights and the democratic process. It has an important role to play in shaping attitudes and civic values, as well as in building a State based on the rule of law and concerned to promote and guarantee citizens’ basic rights and universally accepted democratic principles.

61. Given the relative wealth of the States of the subregion, the expansion of the road network in order to bring people together can and should help to eliminate the barriers, hatred, xenophobia and differences between the peoples of a given region. Such expansion links people and brings them together regardless of their political, ethnic or religious affiliations.

62. Participants expressed a wish to see the media put to more effective use and a distinction made between private and State media, with the latter being used in the public interest and not in the cause of a particular political party or ethnic group. They found it regrettable that the speakers had avoided mentioning that Governments have a duty to observe the conventions on freedom of expression. In addition they emphasized the need to protect journalists’ safety and give them the means to do their work. They recommended making an in-depth study of new communications technologies and their social impact on the behaviour of population groups.

VI. SESSION V - THE ROLE OF CIVIL SOCIETY AND YOUTH ORGANIZATIONS IN PROTECTING AGAINST ALL FORMS OF DISCRIMINATION

63. This session was chaired by Ms. Bella Nceke and considered two topics: (a) the role of civil society organizations in identifying and publicizing anti-discrimination doctrines, introduced by Ms. Aurélie Ndoumba; and (b) young people and efforts to combat discrimination, introduced by Mr. Calixte Ihorihoze.

A. The role of civil society organizations in identifying and publicizing anti-discrimination doctrines

64. Ms. Aurélie Ndoumba said African civil society organizations were relative newcomers to efforts to combat discrimination, having entered the fray with the tide of liberalization which had swept through African political regimes in the late 1980s.

65. Now a matter of social concern, discrimination has spurred a plethora of more or less like-minded African civil society organizations to wide-ranging action to identify and engage with anti-discrimination doctrines. In the dissemination of such doctrines a variety of methods are used, which may be preventive or corrective in nature. Although they have not yet been able to make use of the full range of mechanisms available to them, combating discrimination may be seen as a priority area for African civil society organizations.

B. Young people and efforts to combat discrimination

66. Mr. Calixte Ihorihoze explained that young people need structures of their own through which to express themselves. They do not wish decisions to be taken for them or without them: the life of their nation concerns them above anyone else. National youth councils should be set up under appropriate direction.

67. If youth bodies for the whole of Central Africa were to be set up, they could act as interlocutors and speak with partners on behalf of young people, helping them resolve their problems and exercise a positive influence on development, peace and anti-discrimination efforts in their countries. In order to ensure the success of this noble mission, the output of such bodies should be the result of a broad consensus and express the wishes of young people themselves, with the backing of civil society and local and international NGOs.

68. Participants speaking after these presentations condemned politicians' manipulation of young people. They pointed to the absence of any associative movement and criticized authorities' reluctance to set up a legal framework for a partnership with civil society; civil society in any case lacked adequate resources. Participants remarked on the lack of training for the political class, civil society and young people; and they stressed that the lack of initiative displayed by youth organizations in combating discrimination was partly attributable to their limited financial means.

69. Lastly, participants condemned the undermining of the efforts made by certain members of the international community, and by Governments, political parties and civil society in the subregion, to combat racism, xenophobia and intolerance.

VII. CLOSURE OF THE SEMINAR

70. The closing ceremony comprised an expression of gratitude, the distribution of attendance certificates and a closing address. The representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) thanked participants for the fruitful exchanges and for the documents to come out of the seminar, which would serve as framework documents for the member States of ECCAS and for OHCHR.

71. In his closing address, Mr. Paul Mba Abessole, Deputy Prime Minister, said the seminar had marked a milestone in the strengthening of human rights in Central Africa. He urged participants to relay its message to their Governments in order to ensure that its recommendations were put into effect.

VIII. RECOMMENDATIONS

72. **Participants in the Regional Seminar of Member States of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) on combating racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance through inclusive involvement in public life, held in Libreville, Gabon, from 27 to 29 July 2005,**

Recommend:

The member States of ECCAS:

1. **In consultation with civil society, to set up programmes of education for participation, with the aim of enabling citizens to take control of political processes at the local level by providing training, information, awareness-raising and organization for grass-roots communities, as well as identifying legal, political and cultural obstacles preventing effective political involvement at the local level;**
2. **To promote genuine autonomy among local communities in order to enable them to provide an effective framework for grass-roots democracy, by implementing the policy of municipal and regional decentralization and encouraging the establishment of mechanisms for public consultation on important issues of local interest;**
3. **To involve traditional leaders in the prevention, management and resolution of conflicts, in particular conflicts over land;**
4. **To set up custom and tradition observatories within local communities;**
5. **To effectively implement the Beijing Platform for Action, the United Nations recommendations on the inclusive involvement of women in public life, and the African Union resolutions concerning fair representation of women on public bodies, and ultimately their equal representation with men. Member States are also requested to ratify the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, to apply positive discrimination measures in favour of women and to abolish provisions in domestic law that may lower the status of women;**

- 6. To provide incentives and special measures to facilitate the integration of marginalized and vulnerable communities such as indigenous peoples (Pygmies), older people, minorities, people with disabilities and people living with HIV/AIDS, and the exercise of their rights, with a view to their full and complete involvement in social and political life;**
- 7. To guarantee access to State media for all social and political actors;**
- 8. To comply with the various international instruments on freedom of the press and guarantee the protection and safety of journalists in the practice of their profession;**
- 9. To take legislative and regulatory measures to institutionalize the status of the opposition so as to allow it to participate as fully as possible in public life;**
- 10. To adopt measures to protect human rights defenders and establish a support fund for civil society organizations, and as well as funding at the local level;**
- 11. To strengthen, through voluntary contributions, the funding of the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, so as to enable it to carry out its tasks more effectively;**
- 12. To involve young people in national decision-making bodies and support youth efforts to attain greater autonomy;**
- 13. To take effective steps to combat trafficking in children.**

The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR):

- 14. To make a thorough study of collegial, participatory systems of government in traditional societies in order to identify aspects that could be incorporated into modern political systems in the States of the subregion, as a means of enhancing inclusive involvement in public life;**
- 15. To organize a training session for human rights trainers, a capacity-building seminar to enable civil society organizations in the subregion to make an effective contribution to inclusive involvement in public life, and a seminar for the subregional coordinators of women in Central Africa, to evaluate the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;**
- 16. To organize awareness-raising sessions for political leaders and opinion-formers in order to encourage anti-discriminatory political and social behaviours;**
- 17. To support, through the Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, the introduction of a higher education programme on human rights and combating discrimination, in a regional institution such as the International Relations Institute of Cameroon in Yaoundé;**

18. To conduct technical cooperation missions in ECCAS member States to produce programmes for the implementation of the Durban Declaration and Programme of Action;

19. To provide civil society organizations with the material and financial resources to carry out projects to counter racism, racial discrimination, xenophobia and related intolerance within the subregion;

20. To organize training sessions for media professionals on human rights and countering discrimination and intolerance;

21. To ensure that the international community as a whole has a better understanding of efforts by African States and civil society to promote human rights.

Annex I

LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

| | | |
|----------------------------------------------|------------|-------------------------------------|
| Mr. Athanase Karayenga | Panellist | Burundi |
| Mr. Calixte Ihorihoze | Panellist | Burundi |
| Mr. André Tchoussi | Panellist | Cameroon |
| Mr. Alain-Didier Olinga | Panellist | Cameroon |
| Mr. Dimanche Lissou | Panellist | Cameroon |
| Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal | Panellist | OHCHR/Yaoundé |
| Mr. Victor Ngouilou-Mpemba Ya Moussoungou | Panellist | Congo |
| Ms. Aurélie Joséphine Ndoumba Ngono | Panellist | Cameroon |
| Mr. Salvador Allende de C. do Bom Jesús | Government | Angola |
| Mr. Richard Etoundi | Government | Cameroon |
| Mr. Basile Diba | Government | Central African Republic |
| Mr. Nodjigoto Domaye | Government | Chad |
| Mr. Zorhino Massamba | Government | Congo |
| Mr. Charles Shamavu Kabuba | Government | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| Ms. Angela de Barros Lima de Jesus Costa | Government | Sao Tomé and Príncipe |
| Ms. Edwige Eyogo Ndong | Government | Gabon |
| Mr. Wilfried Otchanga | Government | Gabon |
| Ms. Mireille Nzenze | Government | Gabon |
| Mr. Jean Nazaire Nze-Nang-Nze | Government | Gabon |
| Ms. Colette Metimbe Fady | Government | Gabon |

| | | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|
| Mr. Pierre Alain Ndong | Government | Gabon |
| Ms. Daniel Meyet | Government | Gabon |
| Ms. Edwige Nkeze | Government | Gabon |
| Ms. Maïté Mapangou | Government | Gabon |
| Mr. Arthur Félicien Sabi Djaboudi | Government | Gabon |
| Cdt. Elisabeth Nyngomanda | Government | Gabon |
| Mr. Paulo Antonio Nlandu | NGO | Angola |
| Mr. Jacob Manzinga | NGO | Angola |
| Mr. Juvénal Muvunyi | NGO | Burundi |
| Ms. Bella Nceke | NGO | Burundi |
| Princess Odette Tchoconte Happy | NGO | Cameroon |
| Mr. Ally Mulumba | NGO | Democratic Republic of the Congo |
| Mr. José Esono Andeme | NGO | Equatorial Guinea |
| Mr. Don Pastor Nlavo Nande | NGO | Equatorial Guinea |
| Mr. Gregorio Cardoso Santiago | NGO | Sao Tomé and Príncipe |
| Ms. Elsa Marie Menezes Lomba | NGO | Sao Tomé and Príncipe |
| Ms. Beatrix Ratanga | NGO | Gabon |
| Ms. Marie Anne Mboga | NGO | Gabon |
| Mr. Michel Bouka Rabenkogo | NGO | Gabon |
| Mr. Séraphin Ibouanga | NGO | Gabon |
| Ms. Marie-Claire Simo | Secretariat | OHCHR, Yaoundé/Cameroon |
| Ms. Beatrijs Elsen | Secretariat | OHCHR, Geneva |
| Mr. Pierre Sob | Secretariat | OHCHR, Geneva |
| Mr. Corentin Hervo-Akendengué | Consultant/ Secretariat | Permanent Mission of Gabon, Geneva |

Annex II

SEMINAR PROGRAMME

Tuesday, 26 July 2005

10.00 a.m.-6 p.m. Reception and registration

Wednesday, 27 July 2005

9.00-9.30 a.m. Reception of participants and guests

9.30-10.00 a.m. Opening ceremony:

- Welcome address by Mr. Pierre Sob, representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR)
- Opening address by the representative of the Government of the Republic of Gabon

10.00-10.30 a.m. **Introductory session**

Chair: **Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal**, Director, Subregional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, Yaoundé

Speaker: **Mr. Pierre Sob**, Acting Coordinator, Anti-Discrimination Unit, OHCHR, Geneva

- *General introduction to the main theme*
- *Seminar programme*
- *Nomination of Presiding Officers*
- *Organization of working groups*

10.30-10.45 a.m. Coffee

10.45-11.15 a.m. **Session I - Integrating traditional forms of governance with efforts to combat racism**

Chair:

(a) *Overview of traditional political institutions in Africa*

Speaker: **Mr. Dimanche Lissou**

(b) *Political involvement in traditional public life*

Speaker: **Mr. André Tchoussi**

11.15 a.m.-1 p.m.

Discussion

1.00-2.00 p.m.

Lunch

2.30-3.15 p.m.

Session II - Encouraging political involvement at the community level

Chair:

(a) *The involvement of women and other minorities in public life in Central Africa*

Speaker: **Ms. Aurélie Ndoumba**

(b) *The effectiveness of political involvement at the local level*

Speaker: **Mr. Alain-Didier Olinga**

(c) *Diversity and the prevention of discrimination*

Paper submitted by: **Mr. Eugène Ngalim**

3.15-4.30 p.m.

Discussion

4.30-4.45 p.m.

Coffee

4.45-6.00 p.m.

Group work

Thursday, 28 July 2005

9.00-9.30 a.m.

Session III - Political parties as effective instruments for combating racism

Chair:

(a) *Political parties and efforts to combat the stigmatization of the socially excluded*

Speaker: **Mr. Victor Ngouilou-Mpemba**

(b) *The role of political parties in the integration of persons settled in national territory*

Paper submitted by: **Mr. Julien Nimubona**

| | |
|-------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 9.30-11.15 a.m. | Discussion |
| 11.15-11.30 a.m. | Coffee |
| 11.30 a.m.-1 p.m. | Group work |
| 1.00-2.30 p.m. | Lunch |
| 2.30-4.00 p.m. | Session IV - The role of the media as the voice of those with no voice |

Chair:

- (a) *The media - the press, television and radio in particular - and efforts to combat discrimination*

Speaker: **Mr. Athanase Karayenga**

- (b) *The media and the promotion of tolerance*

Speaker: **Mr. Teferra Shiawl-Kidanekal**

4.00-4.15 p.m. Coffee

4.15-6.00 p.m. Discussion

Friday, 29 July 2005

9.00-10.00 a.m. Presiding Officers' meeting

10.00-10.45 a.m. **Session V - The role of civil society and youth organizations in protecting against all forms of discrimination**

Chair:

- (a) *The role of civil society organizations in identifying and publicizing anti-discrimination doctrines*

Speaker: **Ms. Aurélie Ndoumba**

- (b) *Young people and efforts to combat discrimination*

Speaker: **Mr. Callixte Ihorihoze**

| | |
|-------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 10.45 a.m.-1 p.m. | Discussion (including a break for coffee) |
| 1.00-2.30 p.m. | Lunch |
| 2.30-3.00 p.m. | Presiding Officers' meeting |
| 3.30-5.00 p.m. | Review of deliberations in plenary, discussion and adoption of report (including a break for coffee) |
| 5.00-6.00 p.m. | Closing ceremony: <ul style="list-style-type: none">– Summary of proceedings (Chair)– Certificates of attendance– Expression of gratitude– Closing address by the representative of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights– Closing address by the representative of the Government of the Republic of Gabon |
