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SUMMARY PREPARED BY THE OFFICE OF THE HIGH COMMISSIONER FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (C) OF
THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1

Gabon*

The present report is a summary of two stakeholders' submissions¹ to the universal periodic review. It follows the structure of the general guidelines adopted by the Human Rights Council. It does not contain any opinions, views or suggestions on the part of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), nor any judgement or determination in relation to specific claims. The information included herein has been systematically referenced in endnotes and, to the extent possible, the original texts have not been altered. Lack of information or focus on specific issues may be due to the absence of submissions by stakeholders regarding these particular issues. The full texts of all submissions received are available on the OHCHR website. The periodicity of the review for the first cycle being four years, the information reflected in this report mainly relates to events that occurred after 1 January 2004.

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

I. BACKGROUND AND FRAMEWORK

n/a

II. PROMOTION AND PROTECTION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ON THE GROUND

A. Implementation of international human rights obligations

1. Right to life, liberty and security of the person

1. The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children (GIEACPC) indicated that corporal punishment is lawful in the home. The Global Initiative further noted that corporal punishment is reportedly prohibited in schools, but that it had been unable to obtain details of applicable legislation. GIEACPC stated that it has been unable to ascertain the legal status of corporal punishment in the penal system, as a sentence for crime or as a disciplinary measure in penal institutions, and in alternative care settings. Finally, GIEACPC strongly recommended that Gabon introduce legislation as a matter of urgency to prohibit corporal punishment of children in all settings, including in the home.²

2. Minorities and indigenous peoples

2. The Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous (STPI) informed that in Gabon, the indigenous peoples Bayoka, Babongo, who are approximately 2,000 people, and Baka are forming a minority with 1.5% of Gabon's population. Lumped together under the pejorative name of "pygmies", they live in the Northeaster Equatorial Forests of Gabon. For thousands of years they have been living as forest-dwelling hunter-gatherers in a semi-nomadic life.³

3. Pygmies are the poorest and most vulnerable groups in Gabon, estimated STPI, which recalled that in the mainstream society they are counted as "sub-humans" and are being discriminated and exploited. They are also confronted with the rigid stereotype of being "backward and uncivilised sub-human". STPI reported that it is impossible for them to eat with members of the majority groups of population or even to sit near them. Apart from this discrimination and segregation, pygmies are often denied basic political and civil rights, noted STPI, which further stated that they often work in conditions akin to slavery, without basic health care, education or voting rights and their basic human rights are therefore negated.⁴

4. In matters of health and schooling, they are completely ignored, according to STPI. Thus, their access to education, health services and new sources of income is very limited. A number of pygmies living in rural areas of Gabon's capital Libreville, in close contact with Bantu, suffer from human immunodeficiency, AIDS and other infections. At the same time, they have maintained their resistance to malaria and microfilaria.⁵

5. STPI noted that in a common declaration of the indigenous peoples of central Africa formulated on 13 April 2007, it was stressed that deforestation and forest politics as the main problems of their expulsion and exclusion. Today pygmies' way of life and their very survival are threatened due to massive logging in the forests that form the indispensable basis of their culture, according to STPI. As they do not have any rights over their territory, and have been alienated from their original way of life, there is no legal way to oppose deforestation. Through large-scale deforestation programmes, pygmies have, in many places, been driven

out of their traditional home, robbed of their forest existence and largely forced to abandon their way of life and culture. STPI also reported that near the village of Belinga, located more than 500 km east of Libreville, there is one of the world's biggest untapped iron ore deposits (supposedly 500 million tonnes), which is still surrounded by virgin forest inhabited by pygmy people. A foreign state-owned company, according to STPI, will lead the consortium chosen by Gabon's Government to exploit the mine. This company did not consult the pygmies directly affected by the mine and infrastructure plans. The project does not meet, in STPI's opinion, any demands with regard to transparency and human rights, and plans for a vast infrastructure including roads, electricity, and running water, a port, railway, dams and two hydroelectric power stations.⁶

III. ACHIEVEMENTS, BEST PRACTICES, CHALLENGES AND CONSTRAINTS

n/a

IV. KEY NATIONAL PRIORITIES, INITIATIVES AND COMMITMENTS

n/a

V. CAPACITY-BUILDING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE

n/a

Notes

¹ The stakeholders listed below have contributed information for this summary; the full texts of all original submissions are available at: www.ohchr.org. (One asterisk denotes a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council.)

Civil society

GIEACPC The Global Initiative to End All Corporal Punishment of Children, London, United Kingdom, UPR submission, November 2008

STP The Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous, Göttingen, Germany, UPR submission, February 2008*

² Global Initiative to End All of Corporal Punishment of Children, London , United Kingdom, UPR submission, November 2008, pp.1-2.

³ Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous, Göttingen, Germany, UPR submission, February 2008, p.1.

⁴ Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous, Göttingen, Germany, February 2008, pp.1-2.

⁵ Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous, Göttingen, Germany, February 2008, p.1.

⁶ Society for Threatened Peoples Indigenous, Göttingen, Germany, February 2008, p.1.