



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/12/16
4 June 2009

Original: ENGLISH/FRENCH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Twelfth session
Agenda item 6

UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW

Report of the Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review*

Comoros

* Previously issued under document symbol A/HRC/WG.6/5/L.15. The annex to the present report is circulated as received.

CONTENTS

	<i>Paragraphs</i>	<i>Page</i>
Introduction	1 - 4	3
I. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS	5 - 64	3
A. Presentation by the State under review	5 - 19	3
B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review	20 - 64	5
II. CONCLUSIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS	65 - 67	14

Annex

Composition of the delegation		20
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Introduction

1. The Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review, established in accordance with Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007, held its fifth session from 4 to 15 May 2009. The review of the Comoros was held at the 15th meeting on 13 May 2009. The delegation of the Comoros was headed by H.E. Mohamed Jaffar Abbas, Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Civil Service, Administrative and Institutional Reform and Human Rights. At its 17th meeting, on 15 May 2009, the Working Group adopted the present report on the Comoros.
2. On 8 September 2008, the Human Rights Council selected the following group of rapporteurs (troika) to facilitate the review of the Comoros: Ghana, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland and Mexico.
3. In accordance with paragraph 15 of the annex to resolution 5/1, the following documents were issued for the review of the Comoros:
 - (a) A compilation prepared by the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) in accordance with paragraph 15 (b) (A/HRC/WG.6/5/COM/2);
 - (b) A summary prepared by OHCHR in accordance with paragraph 15 (c) (A/HRC/WG.6/5/COM/3).
4. A list of questions prepared in advance by the Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Latvia, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland was transmitted to the Comoros through the troika. These questions are available on the extranet of the UPR.

I. SUMMARY OF THE PROCEEDINGS OF THE REVIEW PROCESS

A. Presentation by the State under review

5. At the 15th meeting, held on 13 May 2009, Mohamed Jaffar Abbas, Secretary-General of the Ministry of the Civil Service, Administrative and Institutional Reform and Human Rights, made a presentation. He expressed his thanks for the efforts made to enable the Comoros to participate in the universal periodic review. He said that since independence the Comoros had always proclaimed, in its different constitutions, its strong attachment to human rights ideals. Despite the countless economic, social and psychological constraints, many commitments had already been entered into, or were about to be entered into, in order to foster real human development.
6. The representative of the Comoros specified that his presentation would not cover the Comorian island of Mayotte, which remained under French rule despite international condemnation. Nevertheless, he expressed his concern at the discrimination and ill-treatment suffered by Comorian nationals on the island of Mayotte, who were accused of being in an irregular situation in a country that was, after all, their own. In one appalling detention centre babies, children, women and men were cramped together in a room unfit for habitation, that had originally been designed for 60 people but housing over 200, and families were separated by

force. The visa requirement imposed on nationals of other Comorian islands travelling to Mayotte had resulted in thousands of deaths, as people braved the sea in makeshift vessels in order to gain entry to the island.

7. With regard to the legal framework for the protection of human rights, the Government wished to recall that there were three sources of law in the Comoros: customary law, Muslim law and Napoleonic law. Each of those three sources contained, in varying degrees, imbalances that resulted in patent inequalities between Comorian men, women and children.

8. In terms of jurisdiction, it was possible to apply each source of law, depending on the place and the person in question. However, in practice, positive law prevailed, despite the influence of religion and social traditions.

9. In addition to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and the Convention on the Rights of the Child, other instruments on the rights of the child had been adopted. In 2007, new legislation had authorized the President of the Union of the Comoros to ratify both optional protocols to the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Other legislation, adopted in 2007 and 2006, had amended the Criminal Code with the aim of protecting children and punishing juvenile delinquency.

10. With regard to the situation of women, the Comoros had ratified the Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and adopted a new Family Code, which protected the rights of women and children within the marriage.

11. In addition to those instruments, the State of the Comoros had established several structures for the protection of women's rights, including: a national directorate for gender promotion, a department for women's rights, a ministry for gender promotion on the autonomous island of Njazidja, a gender directorate on the autonomous island of Mwali, and a gender directorate on the autonomous island of Nzwani. In addition, more than 100 women's associations working to promote women's rights received Government support, the most active being the Réseau National Femme et Développement (National Network for Women and Development) and the Comoros branch of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE). A number of structures had also been established for the protection of children, in particular three facilities for the counselling and care of abused children, in Njazidja, Mwali and Nzwani.

12. The Comoros noted that all forms of violence against children were on the increase, as shown by the statistics for the past three years. Children who had been abandoned or abused by their parents were looked after by designated families and child protection officials, if no care centre was available. It was to be noted that the separatist crisis in Nzwani in 2008 had led to an increased number of families being abandoned, owing to people leaving for sister islands.

13. In Njazidja, abduction of minors, sexual assault, abandonment and other forms of violence against children were commonplace. Many cases were settled out of court, by means of material or financial compensation, in accordance with Comorian tradition. Settlements sometimes included early marriage, in order to preserve a family's honour. In Nzwani, violence of this kind

was very common, but people did not hesitate to report it, preferring legal proceedings to family settlements. Perpetrators of the offences were brought before the courts and sentenced to five- or six-year prison sentences, plus damages.

14. Another problem concerned children in conflict with the law since as yet there were no juvenile courts. In addition, prisons did not have separate quarters for minors, which only made the situation of juvenile offenders worse. In Mwali and Nzwani, minors were held in the same quarters as adults. In Njazidja they were housed, albeit inappropriately, in the prison guards' barracks.

15. In the short term, the State would be introducing the following measures: the establishment of proper reception facilities for victims of violence, abuse and abandonment; the creation of special police services for child protection; and the development of a national policy to deal with juvenile offenders, which would include the provision of special legal assistance for child offenders, and focusing on rehabilitation and educational support.

16. With regard to the situation of women, the Comoros stated that women enjoyed the same fundamental rights as men, although inequalities remained, which were bound up with the country's customary laws. Women accounted for only 6 per cent of members of Government and only 25 per cent of women worked, compared to 46 per cent of men. In addition, 70 per cent of women had been subjected to physical or sexual violence. One in three women had been verbally, physically or sexually attacked by her partner. Unfortunately, that continued to be a taboo subject, with women not daring to report acts of violence committed against them.

17. In the area of health, the Comoros said that women received insufficient prenatal care. Some women were reluctant to consult a doctor, either because of lack of money or for reasons of modesty. Despite limited resources, the Government was investing in a family health policy, particularly aimed at women.

18. In June 2008 the Government of the Comoros had adopted a national policy on gender equality. In the short term, the Comoros planned to introduce the following strategies: fostering greater participation by women in decision-making and in economic activities; popularizing the Family Code; and setting up a counselling facility and a court for cases of domestic violence. In addition, the Government intended to improve health services, provide more information on family planning and reinforce training of female health workers and paramedics.

19. At the end of its presentation, the Government stressed the rich legal framework of the Comoros, recalling that after more than 30 years of independence, the weight of tradition, which had made the Comoros a discriminatory society, had shifted considerably. Despite some shortcomings that were still to be corrected, women and children, as compared to men, had seen an improvement in their daily lives.

B. Interactive dialogue and responses by the State under review

20. During the interactive dialogue, 31 delegations made statements. A number of delegations praised the Comoros for its participation and for its commitment to the universal period review process. A number of delegations noted with great appreciation the Family Code adopted in 2005, progress in reducing infant and child mortality rates, and efforts to combat poverty.

21. Qatar valued the achievements of the Comoros as results of the national reconciliation and constitutional reform and the multiparty presidential elections in 2006. It noted the country's accession to many human rights instruments such as the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women and the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment. It also took note of the Comoros' efforts to combat corruption, reduce poverty and achieve good governance. Qatar recommended that the Government pursue efforts for the universalization of education for all school aged children in order to fulfil the second Millennium Development Goal on the right to education.

22. Algeria noted the absence of a national report and asked whether technical assistance had been requested in this regard. It welcomed efforts, despite constraints, in combating poverty and inequalities between men and women, and to preserve the rights particularly of women and children. On child protection, Algeria recommended (a) giving particular attention to train judges and police officers and improve care structures for children, with a view to improve its system of protection of children and justice for minors, and with this objective request support from the international community in general and technical assistance from OHCHR in particular. It noted the adoption of the Family Code in 2005 and a national policy on gender equality in 2008, and that the United Nations Development Assistance Framework 2008-2012 recognized the new Family Code as real progress in legal terms. Algeria recommended (b) implementing awareness-raising activities on the provisions of the Family Code and strengthening of the judicial structure designed to assure respect for the Code in order to build on progress to be made with the adoption of the Code, and seek the support and assistance of the international community.

23. Bahrain welcomed the establishment of the development plan in terms of health and particularly for the situation of mothers and children, and asked about more information on measures adopted to ensure equality between the two sexes. It also welcomed measures designed to heighten the awareness of the population as to risks of climate change.

24. Brazil commended the Government for the reduction of the infant and under-five mortality rates, for the adoption of a national policy on gender equality and the National Plan of Action for Education for All. It asked about concrete measures to combat gender-based violence as well as to improve access of women and girls to all levels of education. Brazil recommended that the Comoros (a) consider the ratification of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), recalling paragraph 1 (a) of resolution 9/12 adopted by the Human Rights Council; (b) review its domestic legislation to ensure the removal of discriminatory provisions based on gender; and (c) consider enacting legislation which prohibits the use of corporal punishment on children within the family and at school and promotes alternative forms of discipline.

25. Egypt praised the measures undertaken despite the immense challenges, and asked about efforts in the field of poverty alleviation, education and healthcare, and the needs required. It recommended that the Government (a) continue efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, especially in the economic and social domains; (b) identify its specific requirements to enable it to pursue efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, especially in the economic and social domains, and in this regard, call upon the international

community to extend assistance and support to the Government. Egypt also recommended that the Government (c) continue to resist attempts to enforce any values or standards beyond the universally agreed ones.

26. The Islamic Republic of Iran appreciated the efforts and commitments of the Government, and noted with interest the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy and a National Plan of Action for education for all covering the period to 2015. It also noted with interest that the Ministry of Health is developing a health sector development plan to address maternal and child mortality. It recommended that the Government (a) continue and intensify its efforts, for further promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development for better realization of the Millennium Development Goals; (b) take concrete measures aimed at reducing the poverty rate and further increasing access to education and healthcare for all, particularly for vulnerable segments of the society including women and children; and (c) develop a national plan of action aimed at fostering a genuine human rights culture and raising human rights public awareness among the society with due regard to national and regional particularities as well as historical, cultural and religious backgrounds.

27. Tunisia referred to achievements including with regard to promoting the rights of children, particularly by setting up care and advice centres for children who are victims of abuse and mistreatment. It highlighted efforts to promote the rights of women, their involvement in management of public affairs, and referred to a Gender Division for Gender Promotion and a Gender Department on Women's Rights. Tunisia recommended the Government to continue efforts to promote maternal health and the further participation of women in public life.

28. The United Arab Emirates noted with appreciation the efforts of the Comoros, in particular to eradicate poverty with the help of the United Nations Development Programme and to put in place an educational plan for all until 2015. It also appreciated the work of the Ministry of Health to improve the health of women, mothers and children, progress with regard to the Millennium Development Goals, administrative and institutional reforms to strengthen the rule of law, and welcomed its cooperation with e.g. OHCHR and its signature of main human rights instruments. United Arab Emirates recommended the Government to continue efforts to implement the development goals and the institutional, administrative reforms it has undertaken.

29. Mexico recognized the efforts made by the Government to ensure promotion and protection of human rights, despite adverse conditions, such as the impact of the natural risks associated with climate change and hoped that the universal period review will make a positive and constructive contribution to the efforts in the area of protection and promotion of human rights. It recommended that the Government (a) intensify efforts of international cooperation to improve its institutional legal framework; (b) give positive consideration to acceding to ICESCR and ICCPR; and (c) intensify efforts to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms, in particularly with treaty bodies, by presenting periodic reports and pay due attention to the observations made by these bodies.

30. Canada encouraged the Government to continue integrating international human rights norms in the legal system. It noted with satisfaction that the National Assembly approved in 2007 an amendment of the Penal Code, criminalizing sexual abuse of children. Canada recommended that the Comoros (a) accede to the main international human rights instruments, including ICCPR and ICESCR; (b) modify its national legislation in order to eliminate

discriminatory provisions on the basis of gender; and (c) promote gender equality by taking specific measures in this direction in the field of employment, in particular by setting up a procedure to receive and process allegations of individual discrimination. Canada recommended that the Government (d) use the terminology *droits humains* or *droits de la personne* in French, which reflects true equality between men and women; and (e) set up a national strategy for combating sexual abuse of children, including child pornography with a view of preventing and combating the phenomenon.

31. The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland recognized the resource limitations and several years of political crisis, and noted that the Comoros has made a few advancements in particular in reducing the under five and infant mortality rates over the last decade. It expressed a number of concerns, and asked if the state intends to establish a national human rights institution. In reference to concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child at the marginalization of and discrimination against children with disabilities, it asked about measures to address this since the examination by the Committee. It noted concerns raised by non-governmental organizations of several legal restrictions in place which hinder the ability of persons belonging to religious minorities to practice their religion freely. The United Kingdom recommended (a) doing more to ensure that children with disabilities are fully integrated into society; (b) ensuring that persons belonging to religious minorities are free to practise their faith; (c) taking measures to enable Muslims to convert to religions other than Islam and to allow those of other faiths to proselytize; and (d) involving civil society organizations in the follow-up to the universal periodic review.

32. Pakistan noted the steps taken with regard to promotion and protection of human rights, in particular for women and children, legislative guarantees, national strategies and strengthened implementation mechanisms. It pointed out that article 10 of the Constitution gives precedence to international instruments to which the Comoros is a party over national legislation. Pakistan recommended that the Comoros take measures in conformity with its legislative process for the ratification of the human rights instruments it has already signed.

33. Germany noted that access to clean water and access to services such as health care is still limited, and asked about measures to address these challenges. It noted that reporting to some treaty bodies, such as the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women and the Committee on the Rights of the Child, is overdue, and asked what measures had been undertaken and if the Comoros had sought technical assistance in this area. It referred to recommendations of the Committee on the Rights of the Child in 2000 to pay particular attention to addressing discrimination against girls and women, inter alia in reviewing legislation, and expressed interest to learn more about steps taken. Germany recommended taking concrete measures by law to prevent and combat child abuse and ill-treatment of children within the family, at school, in other institutions and in society at large and to officially prohibit by law the use of corporal punishment within the family and at school.

34. Turkey welcomed the commitment of the Comoros and encouraged the authorities to pursue efforts to further improve human rights. It encouraged it to accede to the main international human rights instruments, such as ICCPR, ICESCR and the Convention against Torture. It also praised the importance given to the rights of the child by the authorities and appreciated the adoption of the legislation relating to child welfare, as well as the amendment of the Penal Code including the criminalization of sexual abuse of children. Turkey further

encouraged the Comorian authorities to take into consideration the concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child on the low school enrolment ratios and the lack of equal access to education. It welcomed the decrease of the gender gap in schools which has dropped from 13.3 per cent to 4.1 per cent during the years. It wanted to have more information about the level of advancement on the establishment of a national human rights commission. It also asked about further measures that can be taken to increase international support and assistance for human rights capacity-building in the country. Turkey recommended that the Comoros address illiteracy as a priority.

35. The Netherlands noted that progress has been held back due to years of political crisis and economic difficulties. It recommended that the Comoros (a) ratify ICESCR, ICCPR and the Convention against Torture; (b) take further measures to address violence against women, domestic violence and sexual abuse and harassment, including awareness raising campaigns in society at large and provide protection measures for the victims; and (c) ensure and protect the freedom of religion, both in legislation and in practice, and take measures to prevent discrimination in practice against persons from all religions and beliefs.

36. Slovenia referred to concerns expressed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child and asked about measures intended to take to prevent and combat ill-treatment of children in family, school and other institutions. It recommended that the Government (a) include a specific prohibition on the use of corporal punishment within the family and at school in its legislation. Slovenia recommended the Government to (b) consider its strong position and abolish the death penalty, if necessary by initially establishing a moratorium on executions, which would be in line with the General Assembly resolution 63/168 on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty. It noted signatures of some of the core human rights documents, and strongly recommended that the Government (c) ratify ICCPR, ICESCR and the Convention against Torture and international instruments as soon as possible and as a priority.

37. Senegal acknowledged that it is difficult for the country to implement with efficiency its commitments undertaken in the area of human rights. The delegation encouraged the Comoros to conduct an exhaustive assessment of their needs in terms of technical assistance and that it requests support from the international community in this regard. Senegal also encouraged the Government to redouble its efforts in order to make the institutional and normative context more favourable to the effective enjoyment of human rights and fundamental liberties.

38. Jordan noted that despite political, economic and social challenges the Comoros continues to take steps to consolidate peace, foster political reconciliation, rebuild national institutions and improve human rights situation. Jordan recommended that the Comoros (a) consider the establishment of a national human rights institution; and (b) continue efforts to give special regard to women and children and ensure their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

39. Malaysia acknowledged that until only recently, the Comoros has had to contend with an uncertain political and security situation, which has had grave implications on the Government's ability to effectively promote and protect the human rights of its people. The delegation appreciated the presentation in the areas of national reconciliation and national reconstruction. Malaysia recommended (a) continuing to harmonize, implement and enforce existing laws aimed at protecting the human rights of women and children; (b) engaging members of the international

donor community and seeking technical assistance and capacity-building to address the problem of poverty and poor human development performance; and (c) increasing cooperation with the relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations in the efforts to mitigate the harms of climate change and adapt to its effects on the country's citizens.

40. France commended the commitment of the Comoros and the ratification of some main international instruments. With regard to the Comoros' observations about the Island of Mayotte, France noted that the people of Mayotte had freely expressed on several occasions their wish to be and to remain French and that France has fully respected their right to self-determination. The delegation further specified that the human rights situation in Mayotte was dealt with within the context of the review of France. In addition, France raised questions concerning arbitrary detentions during March 2008, the upcoming referendum for the revision of the Constitution and the protection of the rights of children especially with regard to preventing violence against children in religious schools. France recommended that the Government (a) set up a criminal policy which is determined to prevent, combat and punish those responsible for violence against women and take specific measures for the victims of violence; (b) sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women; (c) create an agency for the protection of children, with the help of partners such as UNICEF; and (d) sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons against Enforced Disappearance and ratify ICCPR.

41. Morocco noted the efforts of the Government with regard to improvement of the situation of human rights and asked for further information with regard to the launching of a process for establishment of national commission on human rights, measures in the health sector aiming to reduce maternal and child mortality and national policy on gender equality, adopted in 2007. It recommended that the Comoros (a) request assistance from the United Nations specialized agencies, specifically World Health Organization, to provide financial and technical support as necessary, to consolidate measures for the reduction of maternal and child mortality and improve children's access to healthcare; (b) continue efforts to promote school attendance of children and to fight illiteracy through specific programmes for the most vulnerable population especially in rural areas; and (c) continue the policy for the improvement of the situation of women and their integration in public and political life.

42. Italy was concerned about restrictions faced by individuals and communities belonging to religious minorities in their right to practice their religion. It recommended (a) stepping up efforts to ensure the full respect of freedom of religion and worship, including by reviewing provisions of the Penal Code related to the freedom of religion, in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religion or belief; (b) taking all necessary and appropriate measures to eradicate all forms of child labour, in accordance with international legal standards, and to protect children from economic exploitation. Italy also recommended (c) developing a national strategy to guarantee a better access to education to all children and to include in the school system at all levels appropriate measures in the field of human rights education, in accordance with the plan of action 2005-2009 of the World Programme for Human Rights Education.

43. Chad congratulated on the presentation, while noting the absence of the national report. It noted with satisfaction that the Comoros is party to a number of international human rights instruments. It recommended that the Government (a) integrate the different agreements and treaties to which it is party in its domestic legislation and become party to other international

instruments in the area of human rights; and (b) request the international community to provide material and financial assistance to the Comoros so that it can meet the challenges before it in the area of human rights.

44. The Czech Republic welcomed the information by UNICEF on the juvenile justice system and asked about its functioning. It recommended that the Government (a) speed up the ratification process of the core international treaties, which it has signed over recent years, and strengthen its human rights institutional framework; (b) take measures to ensure effective protection of journalists together with investigation and punishment of perpetrators of such threat or attacks; (c) carry out genuine investigations into cases of human rights violations be carried out, in order not to allow the atmosphere of impunity prevail. The Czech Republic recommended that the Government (d) review conditions in prison and detention facilities so that they meet international standards, in particular where juveniles are concerned; (e) establish a systematic registration of all newborn children and adopt further measures, including awareness-raising campaigns to fight child labour and violence against children; and (f) review provisions of the criminal law penalizing consensual same-sex-activity between adults and organizing of awareness-raising campaigns promoting tolerance in this regard.

45. Latvia noted that although no requests have been made by special procedures mandate holders to visit the Comoros, it recommended that the Government consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council.

46. The Syrian Arab Republic referred to major efforts made to re-establish democracy, and stated that those responsible for establishing the different policies in the country have applied human rights principles despite taking into account the specific traditions and cultures of each island. It considered that the presence of the representative of the Comoros demonstrated the importance placed on cooperation with all human rights bodies. The Syrian Arab Republic stated that as the Comoros has a responsibility to the international community, the international community has a responsibility to support the Comoros and promote the right to development as well as rights to education and health. The Syrian Arab Republic recommended that the Government continue efforts to ensure respect for human rights, while bearing in mind the religious and cultural specificities of the country.

47. South Africa commended the Government for the efforts to establish the legislative framework. It noted the development of the Growth and Poverty Reduction Strategy, as well as the National Plan of Action for education for all. It sought clarification on measures implemented to eliminate disparities between men and women in the political, economic and social spheres, including cultural beliefs. South Africa also asked about measures implemented to align policies and strategies with the provisions of Convention on the Rights of the Child. It encouraged continuing efforts for national reconciliation, to intensify efforts to reduce poverty, promote access to water, health, education and other social as well as to establish a national human rights institution in accordance with the Paris Principles. Mindful of financial and other resource constraints and political challenges, South Africa urged the international community to continue its efforts of assisting and supporting in its development efforts through capacity-building programme.

48. Lebanon noted the comprehensive, transparent and frank presentation. It recommended that the Comoros (a) continue pursuing and redoubling efforts to establish plans and strategies for the development of the country, concentrating on the improvement of the situation of economic and social rights of its citizens and seek to benefit from the support and services of OHCHR and the international community; and (b) continue its commitment to the improvement of the situation of women in the society through policies, programmes and projects to that end.

49. Bangladesh noted the fact that the process of establishing an independent human rights commission is underway. It considered that poverty alleviation remains an overriding concern for the Comoros, and referred to concerns expressed by treaty bodies about the vulnerability of children. It appreciated the progress made in the last few years in reducing infant and child mortality rates, and welcomed the considerable improvements in achieving gender parity in schools. It expressed concern over the high incidence of malnutrition among children, and noted that the rising threats from climate change and environmental degradation are very real for a resource constrained island nation. Bangladesh recommended that the Government (a) draw up an effective and appropriate policy framework and institutional mechanism to fight poverty with a view to attaining Millennium Development Goal 1, with the support and assistance of the international community; (b) improve the overall conditions of children by taking into account the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with the support and assistance of the international community; and (c) strengthen the nationwide health system and infrastructure to improve people's access to health care and add impetus to achieving the health-seated Millennium Development Goals, with the support and assistance of the international community.

50. The United States of America asked what measures the Government has put in place to combat corruption. It recommended that the Government (a) implement a system of budget monitoring, accountability and transparency for each of the three islands and the Union Government as a whole; and (b) implement a public information campaign alerting citizens to their rights, and the laws governing the role and actions of Government officials with regard to corruption.

51. Mauritius noted that the two countries cooperate closely within the Indian Ocean Commission, having similar concerns, amongst which, economic development, human development, HIV/AIDS and environment protection. The Observatory on the Rights of Children in the Indian Ocean Region established with the assistance of UNICEF was pointed out as another example of partnership between Mauritius and the Comoros. Mauritius asked for more information in regard to ratifications of ICESCR and ICCPR.

52. The Comoros thanked all the delegations for their comments and said that it intended to improve the human rights situation, while taking into account the specificities of Comorian society.

53. The Government said that discrimination against persons with disabilities was not a problem in the Comoros, since Islamic tradition was very tolerant in that regard. The fact that the President of the island of Njazidja was an albino was given as an example.

54. With regard to freedom of the press, the Government stated that in rare cases, journalists had been questioned by the authorities when their reports exceeded the boundaries of the law, but only when private matters not involving the State were concerned. The Government also said that there were no political prisoners in the Comoros, and that the few dozen soldiers who had been arrested during the island of Nzwani's attempted secession in 2008 had been released and were under judicial supervision.
55. With regard to guarantees that opposition media would be able to cover the forthcoming elections, the Government said that of approximately 100 channels available in the country, only 1 was controlled by the State. The rest were independent.
56. Homosexuality remained a taboo subject, given that the Comoros was a 100 per cent Muslim country. Nevertheless, homosexuality was not a prosecutable offence, except in the case of allegations of rape, especially when children were involved.
57. The Government said that Islam was the religion of the State of the Comoros, but there were two Catholic churches and the practice of other religions was allowed. However, it was not easy to accept that a church should try to convert people to another religion, as was the case with Jehovah's Witnesses. The church had been warned, but at no point had legal or any other kind of sanctions been imposed.
58. With regard to environmental risks, the Comoros remained a vulnerable country in terms of global warming, cyclones and volcanoes. The Government thanked France and the United Nations for their help in that area and invited other States to support them.
59. The Comoros repeated that it relied mainly on awareness-raising to combat domestic violence, since women rarely reported ill-treatment on the part of their husband.
60. With regard to the exploitation of children, the Government said that it was necessary to qualify that concept, as it was very common for children in remote regions of the Comoros to work with their parents. The Government was trying to make families more aware of the need to send children to school instead of putting them to work.
61. The Government confirmed that corruption remained a highly sensitive issue. To remedy the problem, the Government had considered the possibility of bringing in international judges, which showed how determined the Comoros was to eradicate the problem.
62. On the matter of the apportionment of administrative bodies' budgets and powers, he affirmed that the referendum of 17 May was designed to solve the problem of disparities between the islands and the Union and, in particular, the problem of the distribution of powers. The aim of the revision of the Constitution was to restore a conventional State system to the Comoros.
63. The Government pointed out that the death penalty had only been applied twice in the 30 years of the country's independence, and added that the Comoros needed time to reconcile tradition, religious precepts and the modern State.
64. Lastly, the Government thanked all States for their comments and recommendations and repeated that human rights remained a priority for the Comoros.

II. CONCLUSIONS AND/OR RECOMMENDATIONS

65. The recommendations formulated during the interactive dialogue have been examined by the Comoros and the recommendations listed below enjoy the support of the Comoros:

1. **Accede to the main international human rights instruments, including the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR) (Canada); give positive consideration to acceding to ICESCR and ICCPR (Mexico); consider the ratification of ICESCR and the ICCPR, recalling paragraph 1 (a) of resolution 9/12 adopted by the HRC (Brazil); ratify ICESCR and ICCPR (the Netherlands, Slovenia); Ratify the ICCPR (France);**
2. **Ratify the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (the Netherlands, Slovenia), and other international instruments as soon as possible and as a priority (Slovenia);**
3. **Sign and ratify the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons against Enforced Disappearance (France);**
4. **Sign the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (France);**
5. **Integrate the different agreements and treaties to which it is party in its domestic legislation and become party to other international instruments in the area of human rights (Chad);**
6. **Speed up the ratification process of the core international treaties which it has signed over recent years and to strengthen its human rights institutional framework (Czech Republic);**
7. **Take measures in conformity with its legislative process for the ratification of the human rights instruments it has already signed (Pakistan);**
8. **Continue efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, especially in the economic and social domains (Egypt);**
9. **Continue to resist attempts to enforce any values or standards beyond the universally agreed ones (Egypt);**
10. **Continue and intensify efforts for further promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights, including the right to development, for better realization of the Millennium Development Goals (Islamic Republic of Iran);**

11. **Continue efforts to implement the development goals and the institutional, administrative reforms it has undertaken (United Arab Emirates);**
12. **Intensify efforts of international cooperation to improve its institutional legal framework (Mexico);**
13. **Consider the establishment of a national human rights institution (Jordan);**
14. **Create an agency for the protection of children with the help of partners such as UNICEF (France);**
15. **Develop a national plan of action aimed at fostering a genuine human rights culture and raising human rights public awareness among the society with due regard to national and regional particularities as well as historical, cultural and religious backgrounds (Islamic Republic of Iran);**
16. **Set up a criminal policy which is determined to prevent, combat and punish those responsible for violence against women and take specific measures for the victims of violence (France);**
17. **Develop a national strategy to guarantee better access to education to all children and include in the school system at all levels appropriate measures in the field of human rights education, in accordance with the Plan of Action 2005-2009 of the World Programme for Human Rights Education (Italy);**
18. **Continue pursuing and redoubling efforts to establish plans and strategies for the development of the country, concentrating on the improvement of the situation of economic and social rights of its citizens, and seek to benefit from the support and services of OHCHR and the international community (Lebanon);**
19. **Draw up an effective and appropriate policy framework and institutional mechanism to fight poverty with a view to attaining Millennium Development Goal 1, with the support and assistance of the international community (Bangladesh);**
20. **Implement a system of budget monitoring, accountability and transparency for each of the three islands and the Union Government as a whole (United States);**
21. **Implement a public information campaign alerting citizens to their rights and the laws governing the role and actions of Government officials with regard to corruption (United States);**
22. **Intensify efforts to cooperate with United Nations human rights mechanisms, particularly with treaty bodies, by presenting periodic reports and pay due attention to the observations made by such bodies (Mexico);**

- 23. Consider extending a standing invitation to all special procedures of the Human Rights Council (Latvia);**
- 24. Review its domestic legislation to ensure the removal of (Brazil)/Modify its national legislation in order to eliminate (Canada) any discriminatory provisions based on gender (Brazil, Canada);**
- 25. Promote gender equality by taking specific measures in this direction in the field of employment, in particular by considering setting up a procedure to receive and process allegations of individual discrimination (Canada);**
- 26. Use the terminology *droits humains* or *droits de la personne* in French, which reflects true equality between men and women (Canada);**
- 27. Continue efforts to give special regard to women and children and ensure their enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms (Jordan); continue to harmonize, implement and enforce existing laws aimed at protecting the human rights of women and children (Malaysia); continue its commitment to the improvement of the situation of women in society through policies, programmes and projects to that end (Lebanon); improve the overall conditions of children by taking into account the recommendations made by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, with the support and assistance of the international community (Bangladesh);**
- 28. Do more to ensure that children with disabilities are fully integrated into society (United Kingdom);**
- 29. Establish systematic registration of all newborn children and adopt further measures, including awareness-raising campaigns, to fight child labour and violence against children (Czech Republic);**
- 30. Take further measures to address violence against women, domestic violence and sexual abuse and harassment, including awareness-raising campaigns in society at large and provide protection measures for the victims (Netherlands);**
- 31. Consider enacting legislation which prohibits the use of corporal punishment on children within the family and at school and promotes alternative forms of discipline (Brazil); take concrete measures by law to prevent and combat child abuse and ill-treatment of children within the family, at school, in other institutions and in society at large and to officially prohibit by law the use of corporal punishment within the family and at school (Germany);**
- 32. Set up a national strategy for combating sexual abuse of children, including child pornography, with a view of preventing and combating the phenomenon (Canada);**

33. **Take all necessary and appropriate measures to eradicate all forms of child labour, in accordance with international legal standards, and to protect children from economic exploitation (Italy);**
34. **Review conditions in prison and detention facilities so that they meet international standards, in particular where juveniles are concerned (Czech Republic);**
35. **Carry out genuine investigations into cases of human rights violations in order to not allow the atmosphere of impunity to prevail (Czech Republic);**
36. **Give particular attention to train judges and police officers and improve care structures for children, with a view to improve its system of protection of children and justice for minors, and with this objective request support from the international community in general and technical assistance from OHCHR in particular (Algeria);**
37. **Implement awareness-raising activities on the provisions of the Family Code and strengthen the judicial structure designed to assure respect for the Code in order to build on progress to be made with the adoption of the Code, and seek the support and assistance of the international community (Algeria);**
38. **Ensure that persons belonging to religious minorities are free to practice their faith (United Kingdom);**
39. **Continue efforts to ensure respect for human rights, while bearing in mind the religious and cultural specificities of the country (Syrian Arab Republic);**
40. **Continue the policy for the improvement of the situation of women and their integration in public and political life (Morocco);**
41. **Continue efforts to promote maternal health and the further participation of women in public life (Tunisia);**
42. **Strengthen the nationwide health system and infrastructure to improve people's access to health care and add impetus to achieving the health-related Millennium Development Goals, with the support and assistance of the international community (Bangladesh);**
43. **Take concrete measures aimed at reducing the poverty rate and further increasing access to education and health care for all, particularly for vulnerable segments of the society including women and children (Islamic Republic of Iran);**
44. **Increase cooperation with the relevant United Nations bodies and other international organizations in the efforts to mitigate the harms of climate change and adapt to its effects on the country's citizens (Malaysia);**

- 45. Pursue efforts for the universalization of education for all school-aged children in order to fulfil the second Millennium Development Goal on the right to education (Qatar);**
- 46. Address illiteracy as a priority (Turkey);**
- 47. Continue efforts to promote school attendance of children and to fight illiteracy through specific programmes for the most vulnerable population, especially in rural areas (Morocco);**
- 48. Identify its specific requirements to enable it to pursue efforts aimed at promoting and protecting human rights, especially in the economic and social domains, and in this regard, call upon the international community to extend assistance and support to the Government (Egypt);**
- 49. Engage members of the international donor community and seek technical assistance and capacity-building to address the problem of poverty and poor human development performance (Malaysia);**
- 50. Request assistance from the United Nations specialized agencies, specifically the World Health Organization, to provide financial and technical support as necessary to consolidate measures for the reduction of maternal and child mortality and improve children's access to health care (Morocco);**
- 51. Request the international community to provide material and financial assistance to the Comoros so that it can meet the challenges before it in the area of human rights (Chad);**
- 52. Involve civil society organizations in the follow-up to the Universal Periodic Review (United Kingdom).**
- 66. The following recommendations did not enjoy the support of the Comoros:**
 - 1. Consider its strong position and abolish the death penalty, if necessary by initially establishing a moratorium on executions, which would be in line with General Assembly resolution 63/168 on the moratorium on the use of the death penalty (Slovenia);**
 - 2. Include a specific prohibition on the use of corporal punishment within the family and at school in its legislation (Slovenia);**
 - 3. Take measures to ensure effective protection of journalists against intimidation together with investigation and punishment of perpetrators of such threats or attacks (Czech Republic);**
 - 4. Review provisions of the criminal law penalizing consensual same-sex activity between adults and organize awareness-raising campaigns promoting tolerance in this regard (Czech Republic);**

- 5. Take measures to enable Muslims to convert to religions other than Islam and to allow those of other faiths to proselytize (United Kingdom);**
 - 6. Step up efforts to ensure the full respect of freedom of religion and worship, including by reviewing provisions of the Penal Code related to the freedom of religion, in order to eliminate all forms of discrimination based on religion or belief (Italy);**
 - 7. Ensure and protect freedom of religion, both in legislation and in practice, and take measures to prevent discrimination in practice against persons from all religions and beliefs (Netherlands).**
- 67. All conclusions and/or recommendations contained in the present report reflect the position of the submitting State(s) and/or the State under review thereon. They should not be construed as endorsed by the Working Group as a whole.**

Annex

COMPOSITION DE LA DELEGATION

La délégation des Comores était dirigée par S.E. M. Mohamed Jaffar Abbas,
Secrétaire Général du Ministère de la Fonction Publique, des Réformes administratives et
institutionnelles et des droits de l'homme.

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Title: 0913821
Subject:
Author: Foster
Keywords: A/HRC/WG.6/5/L.15
Comments: Final T&T
20 pages
Creation Date: 6/11/2009 11:32:00 AM
Change Number: 24
Last Saved On: 6/18/2009 4:33:00 PM
Last Saved By: Doyle
Total Editing Time: 85 Minutes
Last Printed On: 8/27/2009 12:09:00 PM
As of Last Complete Printing
Number of Pages: 20
Number of Words: 8'084 (approx.)
Number of Characters: 44'790 (approx.)