

P
er
m
a
n
e
nt
M
is
si
o
n
of
th
e

a
m
ic
R



Isl

**epublic of Mauritania to the United Nations Office and the other
international organisations in Geneva**

First United Nations Forum on Minority Issues

From 15 To 16 December 2008

Right of Reply

To Mr
Biram Ould Dah ould Abeid

Exercised by Mr
Ahmed Ould Moctar BOUSSEIF
Deputy Head of Mission

Point 4 : Égalité d'accès à une éducation de qualité pour les minorités

Genève, le 15 décembre 2008

Thank you, Madam President

I would like to reply to the statement made by Mr Biram Ould Dah ould Abeid about Mauritania, and on behalf of my government I would like to clarify the followings:

- 1) Albeit he pretends he did not have the same access to educational opportunities as other Mauritians, Mr Biram graduated from university. He is a trained clerk of the court and works as an adviser to the President of the National Commission for Human Rights.

Contrary to what Mr Biram affirms, there is no ethnic discrimination in the access to education in my country.

- 2) The Haratins, to which the speaker referred, is not a minority group. They make up the majority of the Mauritanian people together with the white Maures.

In Mauritania, ethnic minorities consist of Halpulaars, Soninkés and Wolofs.

Besides, it is wrong to claim that the percentage of this group is 45 to 50% of the total population. This alleged but incorrect percentage reflects the confusion and exaggeration surrounding this statement.

- 3) Mr Biram relegated the right to education as a secondary issue, while wrongly asserting that slavery still exists in my country. With regard to this, I would like to make it clear that the right to education is guaranteed for all, including ethnic minorities, without discrimination.

In this context, we established an institute for ethnic minority languages as well as a department for national languages at the University of Nouakchott.

At the level of the legislation, we passed a law in 2001 that makes primary education compulsory for all children from age 6. Parents or tutors who would prevent their children from going to school would be sanctioned.

- 4) Regarding the issue of slavery, which Mr Biram mentioned, I would like to recall that slavery has been officially abolished, and a law passed in 2007 criminalises slavery and sanctions slavery practices.

Last but not least, my government puts a lot of efforts to enable access to education to children, in particular those from rural areas and vulnerable groups. We implement socio-economic programmes that fight against the legacy of slavery.

Thank you Madam President.