

Islamic Republic of Mauritania

Honour-Fraternity-Justice

Embassy of Mauritania to Switzerland

Permanent Mission to the Office of the United Nations and the International Organisations in Geneva

8th Forum on Minority Issues

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Statement of Mauritania

Mr President,

My delegation thanks Ms Rita Izsák, Special Rapporteur on Minority Issues, and congratulates her for the quality of her report, welcoming the important work she has accomplished in the framework of her mandate since the presentation of her last report at the General Assembly.

As you know, my country is located at the junction between the Arabic Maghreb and Sahelian Africa. With its historic heritage as a land of cultural exchanges and influence, our country has acquired the status of multiethnic and pluricultural nation and is proud of it. This status of a land of cultural and linguistic diversity is enshrined in our Constitution.

Mauritania adopted many political and legislative measures in the framework of criminal procedures with the aim to secure the best conditions for the fulfillment of the right of everyone to be equal before the law, the right to non-discrimination, and to a fair trial. Among these measures I would like to mention, for information purposes, the reinforcement of the legal framework on anti-discrimination and the national action plan against racial discrimination which addresses all aspects of discrimination in the country.

My country has been implementing various measures that continue promoting more effective participation of all national components, without exclusion, in the administration of justice.

Mr President, allegations saying that some communities would receive a different treatment from the State or be discriminated against by the justice system, are abusive.

What one of the panelists said about slavery in Mauritania is unfounded and contradicts the reports of the Special Rapporteur on this issue. The justice system systematically followed up all complaints regarding proven cases of slavery-like practices. Judicial processing of cases related to slavery-like practices gave rise to 26 cases of slavery-like practices where perpetrators were handed over to the court. 18 of these took place in Nouakchott and 8 in the other provinces of the country. However, fictional allegations obviously cannot lead to systematic sentences.

Magistrates were given all appropriate training to address such cases and Oulemas, who are religious leaders, are at the forefront of the fight against the long term effects of slavery. The adoption of a new law that is more binding, criminalising enslavement and slavery-like practices was welcomed by Ms Special Rapporteur on contemporary forms of slavery. It is supported by a vast ongoing socio-economic programme aiming at improving means of existence and conditions of emancipation of populations affected by the legacy of slavery and harmful traditional practices. This shows our political will.

We understand that some NGOs, who cynically use this noble cause as an alibi to stir the public's feeling and get funding, are worried. Indeed, the implementation of the road map to combat slavery will soon dry up the cash cow.

My government, in a regional context marked by the outbreak of extremist activism and terrorist threats, fights with the necessary security means as well as the indispensable tools of law against excesses in order to preserve peace and social cohesion that are so important to Mauritians.

In such an environment, it is not acceptable to allow the seeds of discord to be sown where there has always been harmony between communities.

My delegation is attached to the protection and promotion of the rights of ethnic and cultural minorities who, just like other national communities, are bound by the same laws of the Republic that protect us and guarantee our cultural diversity.

Thank you.