

Madame President,

Norway welcomes the delegation of Gabon and the presentation of its national report. We appreciate the steps taken to protect human rights, such as the abolition of death penalty in 2010 and the establishment of a National Commission of Human Rights in 2011. However, several areas of improvement remain.

The situation with regard to freedoms of the press has not improved significantly since the first review. In August this year, two independent newspapers were suspended for a period of six months for primarily doing their job as watch dogs and bringing to the fore issues of concern related to the governance of the country.

- Norway recommends that Gabon ensure compliance with article 19 of the ICCPR and works towards an environment conducive to a free and open press.

Although the Government has adopted legislation to combat human trafficking, significant gaps remains in the protection of victims of contemporary slavery, in particular in relation to forced labour, sex trafficking, as well as trafficking in organs and other body parts. Gabon is still a transit country for human trafficking, of which children are especially targeted and vulnerable.

- Norway recommends that Gabon amend the existing legislation in order to address the gaps in the protection of victims of contemporary slavery, as well as to criminalize child trafficking in accordance with international standards.

In order to ensure the universality of human rights, women's rights must be protected.

- Norway recommends that Gabon bring its legislation in line with the principle of gender equality, and that the government effectively enforces the laws already in place, especially those pertaining to domestic violence and rape.

I thank you, Madame President.