

Brussels, 22 AVR. 2018  
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Ms Ana Gomes, MEP  
European Parliament  
Brussels

*Dear Ana,*

I would hereby like to thank you for your letter of 6 March 2018 as regards Equatorial Guinea.

I share your critical assessment of the situation in Equatorial Guinea regarding human rights and political freedoms, and more specifically your concern as regards the dissolution of the political party Ciudadanos por la Innovacion (CI), and the severe sentences that have been pronounced against CI militants in the recent court ruling. In this regard, my Services are following the case attentively; we are currently awaiting the result of an appeal that CI may undertake in the national courts, in all likelihood. We remain vigilant in this important case, and remain concerned about the reduced political and civil space in the country.

We, at the European External Action Service, have been particularly attentive to the moratorium on the death penalty, which as you recall has derived from Equatorial Guinea's membership in the Community of Portuguese Speaking Countries since 2014. When two death penalty sentences were initially issued last September 2017, the European Union (EU) demarched Equatoguinean authorities to enquire about the case, and both the EU and Member States obtained confirmation that the moratorium would be respected. In the case of CI, we noted that the prosecutor did not ask for death sentences. The complete abolishment of the death penalty remains our common objective indeed, and I am thankful to you and to the European Parliament for the role that you tirelessly play in achieving this goal. As you know, I stand by this EU priority in external action with conviction, all the more as the European Union needs to maintain its voice against our current international background, in which human rights are constantly being challenged.

The EU is represented in Malabo by a local rotating EU Representation, and followed by our EU Delegation to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, and Sao Tome Principe, based in Libreville. We are following the events and situation in Equatorial Guinea closely, especially regarding human rights. You may have noticed my recent Spokesperson's statement in this regard, condemning the continuing restriction of freedoms. We are ready to support Equatorial Guinea so that progress can be made in implementing the international recommendations addressed to Equatorial Guinea in the Universal Periodic Review ahead of Equatorial Guinea's 3<sup>rd</sup> review in 2019. This issue has been raised in high-level meetings recently.

The EU's approach to human rights in Equatorial Guinea equally includes concrete actions via civil society organizations with the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

In the case of Equatorial Guinea, unfortunately, it has not been possible to maintain a very active bilateral political dialogue in recent years, because of the weak common ground. The country refused to ratify the revised version of the Cotonou Agreement due to reservations on the clause on support for the International Criminal Court. As a result, Equatorial Guinea is not eligible for the European Development Fund, the EU does not provide assistance to Equatorial Guinea and it will not resume full cooperation with the country as long as it refuses to ratify the revised Cotonou Agreement, including the relevant provisions on fundamental rights and the Rule of Law.

Nevertheless, we still maintain relations with the country (governed by the previous Cotonou Agreement), and we stand ready for a session of political dialogue as soon as possible. In addition, Equatorial Guinea remains part of our relations with the Africa, Caribbean and Pacific countries, and it is an active member in that group. Now that Equatorial Guinea has a seat in the United Nations Security Council, my approach remains one of engagement, but in full respect of our principles and values.

I would like to thank you again for the interest you have shown in these matters.

Yours sincerely,



Federica Mogherini