

India - Equatorial Guinea Relations

India and Equatorial Guinea (EG) have enjoyed warm and friendly relations dating back to pre-independence era of Equatorial Guinea (prior to 1968). Equatorial Guinea was a former Spanish colony. There has not been any high level exchange of visits between the two countries, except that leaders of the two countries have met at some of the international fora such as UN, NAM etc. There are no agreements signed by India with Equatorial Guinea nor any agreements are pending. There has been no Joint Commission or Joint Trade Committee either with Equatorial Guinea.

Political Relations

In April 2004, Shri E. Barwa, then Joint Secretary (West Africa), MEA visited Malabo (Equatorial Guinea) and called on the President and some Ministers and senior officials of Equatorial Guinea Government. Team 9 Agreement was then formally signed by Equatorial Guinea Government. PEC Limited, New Delhi and Angelique International Limited, New Delhi showed interest in the implementation of the Agreement. PEC Limited was already in touch with the Government of Equatorial Guinea to undertake various projects under Team 9 initiative. In October 2007, OVL bid for oil exploration and emerged as preferred bidders for EG 12 & EG 13 blocs. OVL was, however, not eventually awarded the blocs. In addition, OVL was interested in taking over 20% of the stocks of the producing field owned by DEVON Energy of USA. Equatorial Guinea was, from 2005 - 2008, concurrently accredited to High Commissioner of India to Nigeria has been. In 2008, concurrent accreditation was shifted to Embassy of India in Angola. Ambassador A R Ghanashyam, during presentation of his credentials in March 2008, discussed with the President of Equatorial Guinea the issue of India-Equatorial Guinea cooperation in oil sector. OVL's interest was conveyed. The President mentioned that he held India in high esteem and expressed his desire to visit India. Foreign Minister of Equatorial Guinea was also keen to visit India to enhance closer bilateral cooperation. He requested for India's assistance in training 80 Equatorial Guineans in English language. The Equatorial Guinea side proposed drafts for setting up a Joint Commission and the conclusion of the General Cooperation Agreement.

As India hosted the 2nd Africa-India Forum Summit in Addis Ababa in May 2011, the participation of EG in its capacity as Chairman in accordance with the Banjul Format became imperative. In this connection, in May 2011, MoS (IT & Telecom) Shri Sachin Pilot visited Equatorial Guinea as the Special Envoy of the PM. He called on President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo and handed over a personal letter of invitation from PM to attend the Second Africa-India Forum Summit at Addis Ababa. Shri Pilot also held discussions on current state of regional and world affairs with the President and reviewed bilateral ties with Foreign Minister Pastor Micha Ondo Bile. The President of Equatorial Guinea, in his capacity as the Chairman of the African Union, attended the 2nd AIFS summit at Addis Ababa.

In June 2011, the 19th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the African Union (AU) took place in Malabo under the chairpersonship of the Equatorial Guinea President. Then Joint Secretary (West Africa), MEA Shri Rajinder Bhagat led a 4- member delegation at the meeting. India attended the Summit as an Observer. The 25th Ordinary Session of the Executive Council of the AU also took place in Malabo. India attended the same as Observer with a delegation comprising Shri

Vinay Kumar, Joint Secretary (E&SA), MEA; Shri Sanjay Verma, Ambassador of India to Ethiopia, Djibouti and Permanent Representative of India to the African Union.

Minister of State for AYUSH, Sh. Shripad Yesso Naik, visited Equatorial Guinea from 24-25 August 2015 as the Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to hand over the invitation for the Third India Africa Forum Summit. He called on the President and Foreign Minister.

The President of Equatorial Guinea, Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo visited India for the first time in October 2015 to attend the Third India Africa Summit. He led a high level delegation for the summit. In his address, he mentioned that his government attached particular importance to India-Africa cooperation, given the strategic position of India as a member country of the BRICS, with the view of establishing cooperation free of the obstacles found in the economic and commercial exchanges of the current international economic system. He added that Equatorial Guinea is in the process of diversification of its economy and cited the preferred sectors for investment in Equatorial Guinea included energy, fishing, forestry, livestock farming, agriculture and mining. The President and Foreign Minister had bilateral meetings with their Indian counterparts.

In Oct 2015, India conveyed to EG its approval for their opening a resident Mission in New Delhi.

Under the IAFS-II process, India offered to set up a Center on Geoinformatic Applications for Rural Development in Equatorial Guinea. Five such centers were offered to be established in different locations in Africa. In July 2012, Equatorial Guinea authorities conveyed their “general” approval to the project.

Economic and Commercial Relations

Economic and Commercial relations between India and Equatorial Guinea, though limited in nature, have been growing in the last few years, primarily due to its emergence as an important source of oil and other energy products. Bilateral trade increased from US\$ 11.54 million in 2010–11 to US\$ 764.39 million in 2014-15. Equatorial Guinea has been interested in Indian investments especially in setting up of pharmaceutical plants and cooperation in IT sector.

Main items of India’s exports to Equatorial Guinea are fish and crustaceans, iron and steel etc. Main items of India’s imports from Equatorial Guinea are crude oil and oil derivates, seeds, medicinal plants, ore, slag and ash, wood and articles of wood, natural or cultured pearls, stones, imitation jewellery.

Trade figures for the last 5 years are given below:

| | (US\$ million) | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|---------|---------|---------|---------|
| | 2010-11 | 2011-12 | 2012-13 | 2013-14 | 2014-15 |
| Indian Exports | 11.42 | 17.15 | 21.31 | 17.24 | 15.01 |
| Indian Imports | 0.12 | 206.02 | 524.83 | 301.82 | 749.38 |
| Total trade | 11.54 | 223.17 | 546.14 | 319.06 | 764.39 |

Line of Credit

The Line of Credit of US\$ 15 million extended by EXIM Bank of India in 2005 for a potable drinking water project was cancelled in June 2012 as the Equatorial Guinea authorities were unable to prepare relevant documents within the stipulated period and fulfill other formalities, as required under the Line of Credit.

ITEC

Five slots have been allocated to Equatorial Guinea under ITEC programme. However, it has been quite difficult to get nominations from Equatorial Guinea Government due to language barrier as well as poor connectivity with India.

Indian Community

About 300 Indian nationals are working in the capital city of Malabo in departmental stores and hotels etc. Occasionally, the Oil companies bring in Indians on short-term assignments in offshore oil installations.

Useful Resources:

Embassy of India, Luanda website:

<http://www.indembangola.org/>

Embassy of India, Luanda Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Embassy-of-India-Luanda/209463462473631>

January 2016