

Bilateral Relations between India and Equatorial Guinea

Overview

India and Equatorial Guinea (EG) have enjoyed warm and friendly relations even prior to latter's independence in 1968. The goodwill relations got culminated into the opening of Indian Embassy in Malabo in March 2019.

Bilateral

The momentum in the bilateral relations between the two countries picked-up with Minister of State (External Affairs) M.J. Akbar's visit to Equatorial Guinea on 18 August, 2017. Three agreements, namely on Establishment of Joint Commission, Foreign Office Consultations and Exemption from Diplomatic and Official/Service Visas were signed. Agreement on Exemption from visa-requirement for the holders of Diplomatic and Official/Service Passports has since been implemented effective from 01 August 2020.

President Ram Nath Kovind visited Equatorial Guinea from April 7-9, 2018. He held fruitful discussions with President Obiang in an exceptionally warm environment. President Kovind announced 'Establishment of Vocational Training Center & English Language Laboratory in Equatorial Guinea', 'Opening of resident Indian Mission' and 'a special English Language Training Course for the officials of EG Foreign Ministry'. On 8 April, President Kovind was conferred with Equatorial Guinea's highest civilian honour 'Great Collar of the Order of National Independence'; given to the distinguished persons for their contribution in the development of Equatorial Guinea and maintenance of world peace. Three MOUs on cooperation, respectively in the fields of Traditional Medicine, Medicinal Plants and ICT were signed. A cash grant of USD 15,000 was presented by the First Lady of India to CANIGE School and Sampaka Psychiatric Care Centre. The visit was concluded with the issue of a Joint Communiqué.

MOS (External Affairs) M.J. Akbar again visited the country from 11-13 October, 2018 to attend the 50th anniversary of Equatorial Guinea's independence. A 3-member Agricultural delegation visited Equatorial Guinea from 2-4 April, 2018 to study the cooperation in Agriculture and Allied Sectors. Another 3-member delegation from Ministry of Mines visited Equatorial Guinea from 7-17 April, 2018 to explore the possibilities of cooperation. This was followed by a 4-member delegation from Department of telecommunications from 9-13 July, 2018 who undertook preliminary study to explore areas of cooperation in the field of Telecommunication. HMT(I)'s 2 member delegation visited from 21-25 January, 2019 to make a study-plan for setting up of Vocational Training Centres.

Earlier in May, 2011, MoS (IT & Telecom) Sachin Pilot had visited Equatorial Guinea as Prime Minister's Special Envoy to extend invitation to President Obiang for the Second Africa-India Forum Summit (II-AIFS) at Addis Ababa. President Obiang, in his capacity as the Chairman of the African Union, attended the II-AIFS summit at Addis Ababa.

In August, 2015, MOS (AYUSH), Shripad Yesso Naik visited Equatorial Guinea as Special Envoy of the Prime Minister to extend invitation to President Obiang for the Third India-Africa Forum Summit (III-IAFS). President Obiang along with a high level delegation visited India in October 2015 to attend the III-IAFS, and held bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Modi on the sidelines of the Summit. In his address at the summit, he informed that Equatorial Guinea is in the process of diversification of its economy and mentioning preferred sectors for investment in Equatorial Guinea; energy, fishing, forestry, livestock farming, agriculture and mining. EG Foreign Minister also had bilateral meetings with his Indian counterpart.

President Obiang again visited India on 11 March, 2018 along with an 88-member delegation to participate in the International Solar Alliance Summit and on the sidelines held bilateral discussions with Prime Minister Modi. Equatorial Guinea signed and ratified the ISA agreement. In February 2021, EG Vice-President Teodoro Nguema Obiang Mangue accompanied by Vice Minister of National Defence Candido Ncogo and senior officials attended Aero India 2021 in Bengaluru. EG Vice-Minister for National Defence signed a MoU with the Bharat Electronics Limited in Bengaluru (BEL) on the sidelines. This was followed by a 4-member BEL delegation to EG from 3-10 March, 2021.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar held bilateral discussions with EG Foreign Minister Simeon Oyono in New York on the sidelines of UNGA in September 2019. On 16 October, 2017, EG Foreign Minister Agapito had led a delegation to India and participated in the First India-Equatorial Guinea Joint Commission Meeting held in New Delhi. EG Agriculture Minister, Victor Grange Meile visited India and had meeting with Minister for Agricultural and Farmer's Welfare on 19 July 2017. The EG Minister sought India's assistance in capacity building and training in the agriculture sector. The EG Commerce Minister Borupu visited India earlier same year from 7-9 March 2017 to participate in the CII-Exim Bank Conclave on India-Africa Project Partnership and had bilateral discussions with MoS (Commerce and Industry) Nirmala Sitharaman on the sidelines of the Conclave. Mr. Borupu had desired India's assistance in setting-up of a Methane Processing and Polymer Manufacturing plant. EG Minister of Mines and Energy had visited India in January 2016 to attend the Fourth India-Africa Hydrocarbon conference. During the visit, he signed a MoU with ONGC Videsh Limited for cooperation in the Petroleum and Natural Gas sector.

In Oct 2015, India welcomed EG to open its resident Embassy in New Delhi, and reciprocated by opening its Mission in Malabo in March 2019. The first resident Indian Ambassador to Equatorial Guinea Man Mohan Bhanot presented his credentials to President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasago on 19 September 2019.

On 8 June 2020, Government of India gifted medicines and medical equipment to Equatorial Guinea to display her solidarity with Equatorial Guinea in fight against Covid-19 pandemic. On 11 December 2020, Minister of State for External Affairs, Shri V. Muraleedharan had a telephone conversation with EG Foreign Minister Simeon Oyono. Both ministers discussed a wide range of issues including COVID-19 pandemic and its economic impact, bilateral relations, presenting an opportunity to review and strengthen them.

Economic

India's relationship with EG is characterized by strong partnership in the oil and gas sector. Economic and commercial relations between India and Equatorial Guinea, though limited in nature, have been growing in the last few years, primarily due to EG's emergence as an important source of oil and other energy products. Bilateral trade increased from US\$ 11.54 million in 2010–11 to US\$ 983.88 million in 2019-20. Due to on-going pandemic and decline in oil prices, bilateral trade declined in 2020-21. Primary items of India's exports to Equatorial Guinea are food products, cereals, meat, pharmaceuticals, machinery, apparel etc. Main items of India's imports from Equatorial Guinea are oil, gas and timber. Equatorial Guinea has expressed interest in Indian investments and transfer of technology in ICT, SMEs, infrastructure development and agriculture development.

Bilateral trade figures for the last 5 years are given below: (US\$ million)

	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
India's Exports	11.24	10.77	11.89	10.92	14.19
India's Imports	797.85	755.64	634.12	972.88	286.79
Total Trade	809.10	766.41	646.01	983.80	300.98

Training and scholarships

33 slots are allocated to Equatorial Guinea under ITEC programme and ICCR's Africa Scholarship Scheme. 36 Equatorial Guinea government officials have undertaken training in

India as on date. 4 Equatoguinean diplomats attended the special course organized by Sushma Swaraj Foreign Service Institute, New Delhi in May 2019.

Consular

About 300 Indian nationals are working in Equatorial Guinea, mostly employed in the service sectors- Hydrocarbon companies (short-term assignments)/departmental stores. E-visa facility stands extended to Equatorial Guinea since 27 January 2020.

EOIJULY2021