

Bilateral Relations between India and Equatorial Guinea

Overview

India and Equatorial Guinea (EG) have enjoyed warm and friendly relations 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 August 18, 2017. Three agreements, namely Establishment of Joint Commission, Foreign Office Consultations and Exemption from the 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 7-9 April, 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 the 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 Medicines, 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 Communique.

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 agriculture 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 in the field of mining and hydrocarbons. This was followed by a 4-member delegation from the Department of Telecommunications from 9-13 July, 2018, who undertook preliminary study to explore areas of cooperation in the field of telecommunications. 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 the Second Africa-India Forum Summit at Addis Ababa. The President of Equatorial Guinea, in his capacity as the Chairman of the African Union, attended the 2nd AIFS summit at Addis Ababa.

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

President Obiang again visited India on 11 March, 2018 along with an 88-member delegation to participate in the International Solar Alliance Summit. Equatorial Guinea has signed and ratified the ISA agreement.

Foreign Minister S Jaishankar held bilateral discussions with EG Foreign Minister Simeon Oyono in New York in September 2019 on the sidelines of UNGA. 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 in New Delhi. 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. Minister Borupu had desired India's assistance in the 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 Embassy in Malabo in March 2019. The first resident Ambassador of India to the Republic of 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.

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 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\$ 983.88 million in 2019-20. 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)

	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20
India's Exports	17.53	11.24	10.77	11.89	10.92
India's Imports	457.30	797.85	755.64	634.12	972.88
Total Trade	474.83	809.10	766.41	646.01	983.80

Training and scholarships

32 slots are allocated to Equatorial Guinea under ITEC programme and 4 slots under ICCR's Africa Scholarship Scheme. 36 Equatorial Guinean 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.
