



# COMPEDIUM OF SPEECHES AND INTERNATIONAL STATEMENTS BY CHRC CHAIRPERSON IN 2023



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Cameroon Human Rights Commission

# SUMMARY

## A. SPEECHES 2023

I. Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) on the Signing Ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the Cameroon Child Rights Civil Society Organisations Network (CAM-CRIN)   <b>14 July 2023</b> .....	3
II. Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the workshop to strengthen cooperation between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics   <b>16 August 2023</b> .....	9
III. Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission on the Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)   <b>13 September 2023</b> .....	16
IV. Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission on the Signing Ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS)   <b>28 September 2023</b> .....	22

## B. STATEMENT 2023

V. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on the Rights of persons with disabilities   <b>27 February to 4 April 2023</b> .....	28
VI. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on the Rights to a Healthy Environment   <b>27 February to 4 April 2023</b> .....	31
VII. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on Child Trafficking   <b>27 February to 4 April 2023</b> .....	34
VIII. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 52 <sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on the Abolition of the Death Penalty   <b>27 February to 4 April 2023</b> .....	37
IX. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 41 <sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)   <b>28 April 2023</b> .....	40
X. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 75 <sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights   <b>13 May 2023</b> .....	49
XI. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 4 <sup>th</sup> Cycle of the Universal Periodic Review - 2023   <b>1 September 2023</b> .....	59
XII. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 14 <sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference of Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI)   <b>18 October 2023</b> .....	63
XIII. Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 42 <sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Right and Wellbeing of the Child (ACERWC)   <b>8 to 17 November 2023</b> .....	68

# **SPEECH**

## **1**

**Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) on the Signing Ceremony of a Memorandum of Understanding between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the Cameroon Child Rights Civil Society Organisations Network (CAM-CRIN)**

**14 July 2023**



Cameroon Human Rights Commission  
Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun

**SIGNING CEREMONY OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING  
BETWEEN THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (CHRC)  
AND THE CAMEROON CHILD RIGHTS CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS  
NETWORK (CAM-CRIN)**

Yaoundé, 14 July 2023  
CHRC Conference Room

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**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS  
COMMISSION**

**Distinguished Commissioners of the CHRC,**

**The Permanent Secretary of the CHRC,**

**The President of the Cameroon Child Rights Civil Society Organisations Network,  
dear partner,**

**The Head of the Division for the Promotion and Protection  
of Human Rights of the Commission,**

**The representatives of Plan international Cameroon,**

**The National Coordinator of the Cameroon Freedoms Observatory, here  
represented,**

**Distinguished guests, all protocol observed,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On 16 June, we all paused to solemnly celebrate the 33rd Day of the African Child, a date that has become mythical because of the emotional burden it carries for those who remember the public murder of South African children who were peacefully demanding their rights.

It is once again the noble cause of the Rights of the Child that has brought us together in this conference room of the CHRC, to demonstrate our resolute determination to promote and protect the Rights of this vulnerable group.

I would hasten to express my gratitude to the President of the Cameroon Child Rights Civil Society Organisations Network (CAM CRIN), who was keen to strengthen the latent collaboration between Cameroon's national human rights institution and the Network under his responsibility, by signing a Memorandum of Understanding aimed at improving the situation of Child Rights in Cameroon. This option, which I immediately endorsed, demonstrates the importance for CSOs and the NHRI to strengthen their ties based on trust and mutual respect, as recommended by the Paris Principles and the enabling law of the CHRC. The same prescription can be found in UN General Assembly Resolution on NHRIs, adopted in July 2019, which states that "*national human rights institutions should initiate, formalize and maintain cooperation with Civil Society Organizations and strengthen their capacity to participate meaningfully in the promotion and protection of human rights*".

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Distinguished Guests,**

In addition to the unwavering commitment to the values set out in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the African Union's Agenda 2040 for the Children of Africa, and the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, the formalisation of this collaboration reflects, *inter alia*, the Commission's interest in better protection of the rights of the vulnerable group of children.

It should be noted that the areas of cooperation set out in this Memorandum of Understanding are based on the latest recommendations made by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), following the presentation of Cameroon's 4<sup>th</sup>, 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Periodic Reports under the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and 1<sup>st</sup> Reports under the Maputo Protocol and the Kampala Convention.

We will be discussing this in greater detail very shortly, but in a few words, concerning the promotion and protection of the Rights of the Child, the ACnHPR has, *inter alia*, recommended that Cameroon should:

- ensure full compliance with the provisions of the Penal Code that criminalise early and forced marriage of children
- strengthen the protection of the rights of young girls in detention and
- focus on equal access for girls at all levels of education and on keeping them in school.

The impact of the efforts of all those involved in the promotion and protection of the Rights of the Child in Cameroon needs to be assessed, especially as the atrocities perpetrated in certain regions of the country where there are security challenges aggravate the violations of their rights. Such violations include:

- i) child trafficking
- ii) the recruitment of child soldiers
- iii) violations of the right to identity and citizenship relating to procedures of registering births and issuing birth certificates *which affects their right to education, particularly when sitting for secondary school examinations.*<sup>1</sup> - It's worth mentioning that public authorities recorded *more than one and a half million children without birth certificates in 2022.*

The right to health, the right to food, the right to life, the right to freedom from the worst forms of child labour and access to justice are also Rights that deserve special attention when it comes to protecting our country's children.

Given these situations, the State, through its institutions and structures, is working for the well-being and respect for the rights of this vulnerable group by implementing policies that benefit children.

These include

- the National Action Plan for the Elimination of the Worst Forms of Child Labour in Cameroon, which covers the period from 2018 to 2025
  - the policy to combat violence in schools, adopted by the Ministry of Secondary Education, and the prohibition of corporal punishment in schools, in accordance with article 5 of the law of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon
  - the National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence in Cameroon for the period 2022-2026
  - the National Action Plan for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation, covering the period 2022-2026 and

the National Development Strategy 2020-2030, which provides strategic guidelines for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in Cameroon. The CHRC supports these policies on a daily basis, in particularly by promoting children's rights and preventing torture in places of detention, through:

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<sup>1</sup> KUM Peter, 18/11/2020, [www.aa.com.tr](http://www.aa.com.tr)

- Publishing statements on the occasion of commemorative days related to the rights of the child, such as the
  - International Day of Education, 24 January
  - International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February
  - Day of the African Child on 16 June
  - International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking on 26 June
  - African Civil Registration and Vital Status Day on 10 August
  - International Day to Protect Education from Attack on 9 September
  - International Sign Language Day on 23 September and
  - Universal Children's Day on 20 November
- creating of human rights clubs in secondary schools and the partnership being established with the Association for the Defence of the Rights of Students in Cameroon (ADDEC).
- monitoring of the State's obligations under instruments relating to the rights of the child
- handling with complaints and self-initiated investigations of alleged violations of the rights of the child

visits to places where children are deprived of their liberty, such as borstal institutes and all other places where children may be detained. These actions are carried out in close or private collaboration with civil society organisations fighting against violations of children's rights, such as CAM-CRIN, a network of sixty CSOs whose role and advocacy actions have gained a certain renown among the main actors involved in the defence of children's rights. We are therefore delighted that this cooperation will soon be strengthened by the signing of this valuable Memorandum of Understanding.

**Honourable President of CAM-CRIN,**

Rest assured that the CHRC will spare no effort to ensure that this renewed collaboration lives up to its great promise, and particularly to ensure that your long-standing advocacy for the adoption of a Child Protection Code in Cameroon succeeds, or at least is taken to the next level. The Memorandum of Understanding that is about to be signed certainly covers the areas that have been read out to us at the beginning of this ceremony, but this does not exclude us from looking at other issues that will be topical in our country in terms of protecting the rights of the child at a later date. In order to fulfil our respective mandates in this area, let us pool our resources to ensure the success of this fruitful collaboration, the ultimate beneficiaries of which are the children who are so full of potential.

Let's work together for the ultimate happiness of Cameroon's children, so that they can be like those radiant, well-cradled children who smile mysteriously in their sleep.

**Long live the partnership between the CHRC and civil society organisations!**

**Long live human rights!**

**Long live a strong, united and prosperous Cameroon!**



# **SPEECH**

## **2**

**Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the workshop to strengthen cooperation between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics**

**16 August 2023**



**WORKSHOP TO STRENGTHEN COOPERATION BETWEEN THE CAMEROON  
HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE STATISTICS**

**Mérina Hôtel, Yaoundé**

**16 August 2023**

**Speech by the CHRC Chairperson**

**The Minister for the Economy, Planning and Regional Development, here represented,**

**The Minister for External Relations, here represented,**

**The Secretary General of the Ministry of Trade,**

**The Director-General of the National Institute of Statistics, here represented,**

**The Commissioner of the Commission on Human Rights and Administrative Justice of Ghana, dear colleague,**

**The Executive Director of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions, a permanent collaborator of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC),**

**The Ambassador, Head of the Delegation of the European Union to Cameroon, here represented,**

**The Vice-Chair of the CHRC,**

**The Commissioners of the CHRC,**

**The Secretary-General of the CHRC,**

**Representatives of the United Nations agencies accredited in Cameroon,**

**Dear coordinators of the networks of civil society organisations, CHRC partners,**

**Distinguished guests, all protocol observed,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

It is with great pleasure that I begin by expressing my deep gratitude to the Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT), whose presence at the opening ceremony of this workshop dedicated to **strengthening cooperation between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics** demonstrates his commitment to the noble cause of human rights, the importance he attaches to sustainable development issues, which are at the heart of Cameroon's National Development Strategy 2020-2030 (NDS 30) and the Framework for Cooperation between Cameroon and the United Nations (2022-2026), two strategic documents under the responsibility of the Ministry he heads.

I also express my gratitude to the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), which is duly represented here by its Vice-Chair, the Chairperson of the National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) of Ghana and of the NANHRI Working Group on Sustainable Development, my dear colleague and brother - whom I warmly welcome to Cameroon - and the Executive Director of NANHRI, a dear friend and privileged partner of all the NHRIs of Africa, who is not visiting Cameroon for the first time.

NANHRI has been kind enough to make the CHRC the first beneficiary of this important activity, which should be a significant step towards consolidating the nascent collaboration with the National Institute of Statistics (NIS), following what has already been done in Ghana and Kenya. We will have the privilege of learning more from the facilitators from these countries who have spontaneously and enthusiastically agreed to come and share their experiences and expertise with us.

My gratitude goes to the NIS for accepting the CHRC's request for assistance.

It is worth noting that this collaboration between NHRIs and government structures in charge of statistics was born during the annual meetings of the NANHRI Working Group on Sustainable Development in 2019. The creation of this working group follows the *Kigali Declaration and Plan of Action* adopted by NANHRI in November 2017 to greatly benefit from the mandate of NHRIs under the Paris Principles in the implementation of development programmes.

The CHRC has been a member of this working group since 2019 and thus participated in the Africa Regional Forum on Sustainable Development (ARFSD). During these meetings, an emphasis was made on the importance of NHRIs working with national statistical offices to improve the quality of national efforts to collect data about inequality, discrimination, and exclusion.

Thus, during the 9<sup>th</sup> African Regional Forum on Sustainable Development in Niamey, Niger, from 28 February to 2 March 2023, the CHRC reiterated to NANRHRI its desire to be more involved in the monitoring of the SDGs and *to strengthen its data collection mechanism*.

This desire was first expressed during *the training and experience-sharing workshop on integrating the human rights-based approach in data management and monitoring of post-COVID-19 recovery plans to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals in Cameroon, organised by OHCHR-CARO*, here represented in May 2022.

We therefore hope that the work of this workshop will soon lead to the signing of a *Memorandum of Understanding* between the CHRC and the NIS *to strengthen the CHRC's statistical information system and to ensure that the statistics produced by the NIS take into account the human rights-based approach*. This *Memorandum of Understanding* will provide the institutional basis for managing areas of convergence between the CHRC and the NIS so that the expertise of these two government bodies can contribute more effectively to the implementation of development agendas aimed at "*achieving human rights for all*."

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The issues that bring us here today are timely and of paramount importance. We are now less than seven years away from the 2030 Agenda deadline for sustainable development, even though we are still more than three decades away from the 2063 deadline for achieving all the aspirations of *the Africa we want*. Cameroon is committed to these two structural programmes, which we hope will fulfil all their promises: a commitment to peace, security, and human rights. These agendas also convey the idea that, through supported economic, social, environmental, political, and cultural policies, states can achieve a level of development sufficient for the fulfilment of the people while at the same time reducing inequalities.

As I said earlier, this is a priority for Cameroon since it has set its vision and emergence on achieving these carefully contextualised SDGs. MINEPAT will certainly educate us on this issue, as the draft NDS 30 is full of references to the 17 SDGs, to the human rights promoted and protected by the regional and universal instruments ratified by Cameroon, and to the national standards in force in the country, standards whose implementation the CHRC is mandated to monitor.

Cameroon's *second Voluntary National Review*, presented at the *High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development* in New York in May 2022, speaks for itself. At this meeting, Cameroon reported on its efforts to achieve the SDGs on education, the empowerment of women and the girl child, the protection of oceans, seas, and terrestrial ecosystems, and the mobilisation of resources and partnerships. This is the right opportunity to remind MINEPAT and UN partners that the CHRC should be involved in drafting the 3rd Voluntary National Report once it is launched.

In addition, the commitment of Cameroon to the sustainable development agendas is evidenced through Section 4 of the Law relating to the establishment of the CHRC: "*the Commission shall contribute to developing a human rights culture based on the ideals of peace, **equal rights** and responsibilities, mutual respect and **sustainable development**.*" The Mérida Declaration on the role of NHRIs in implementing the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, adopted on 10 October 2015, is fully respected. This instrument recalls the interdependence between human rights and the development needs of our people.

From now on, states will have to monitor the implementation of these SDGs by defining reliable indicators, especially as SDG 17.8 suggests *increasing the availability of data disaggregated by different groups* (income, gender, age, race, ethnicity, migration status, disability, geographic location) and *developing inclusive and reliable data collection systems that contribute to the respect, protection, and achievement of human rights*.

The aforementioned 9th African Forum on Sustainable Development culminated in a declaration in which stakeholders stated that they recognised the *critical importance of official statistics as a reliable source and reference for estimates and projections* to fill the gaps in achieving the SDGs and human rights. The CHRC aims to acquire the capacity to prevent human rights violations through reliable data. In this way, the CHRC can henceforth provide sound advice to public authorities and report on the human rights situation with data.

Our approach is also motivated by the fact that since 2020, the Commission has produced *a brochure on its actions and the human rights situation in Cameroon of 10 figures each*, in addition to its annual report. For added impact and credibility, this exercise is based on studies or surveys that the Commission is empowered to carry out under the provisions of Section 3(1) of its Founding Law, which allows the Commission to "*conduct studies on human rights*."

In addition, the CHRC, while monitoring the implementation of recommendations made by regional and universal human rights mechanisms, including the treaty bodies ratified by Cameroon, has noted that government reports generally lack statistical data and the required levels of disaggregation.

For example, Cameroon is expected to provide the following information when it submits its next report to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights in March 2024:

- Statistical data on compensation procedures for communities affected by economic development activities and the exploitation of natural resources, including indigenous peoples
- Statistical data on the exercise of women's right of access to land

- Statistical data on *free birth registration* and accessibility of BUNEC in rural areas
- Statistical data on the provision of mental health services, including community services and the human resources available in this sector
- Statistical data on child labour and the economic exploitation of children, and the mechanisms for monitoring such work.

In May 2022, the issue of producing statistical data appeared among the initial recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (CERD), following the consideration of Cameroon's 22nd and 23rd combined reports under the Convention on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, as follows:

*“4. The Committee expresses its concern about the lack of comprehensive statistics on the demographic composition of the population, disaggregated by ethnic or national origin and language spoken, including on indigenous peoples, internally displaced persons, migrants, refugees and stateless persons, and on the socioeconomic status of the different population groups.*

*5. Recalling its guidelines for reporting under Convention (CERD/2007/1) and its previous recommendation, the Committee recommends that the State party collect and provide to the Committee reliable, updated and comprehensive statistical data on the demographic composition of the population based on the principle of self-identification, including on ethnic, ethno-linguistic, ethno-religious groups and indigenous peoples, internally displaced persons, refugees, asylum seekers”.*

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I hope that the above examples have convinced you of the relevance and urgency of the desired cooperation to improve our methods of collecting, analysing, authenticating, and disseminating the data we generate as part of the handling of complaints, including through our toll-free number 1523, self-initiated investigations, visits to all places of detention by the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture (NMPT), and the promotion and cooperation activities of the CHRC's Head Office and 10 Branches. We must all realise that sustainable development is the way forward to achieve the great human rights cause of *"leaving no one behind"* because it reflects the hopes and needs of the people concerned. If we recognise that inequality and discrimination are obstacles to our progress and development, this approach should lead us to more collaborations. Collaborations between the administrative services that interact most with the CHRC in these areas, namely, the Ministry of Justice, the Ministry of External Relations, MINEPAT, and the

Ministry of Trade - given that human rights requirements are now taken into account in the implementation of the *African Continental Free Trade Area agreements* - and the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development, which henceforth has to produce *Voluntary Local Reports on sustainable development*.

At this point, I cannot overlook the essential contribution of the civil society, represented here by the Cameroon Freedom Observatory (CFO), the Cameroon Network of Human Rights Organisations (CNHRO), and CAM-CRIN, which are effective partners and relays of the CHRC on the field and which deserve to benefit from the fruits of this nascent collaboration with the NIS. We particularly hope that the NIS will model the appropriate tools to enable the CHRC efficiently generate its data.

We all agree that the human person must remain the central subject of all our public policies because this is the essence of the human rights-based approach that we want everyone to take away from this activity and should guide most of the discussions during our work. Improving our statistical system under the Law of 20 July 2020 on the *National Strategy for the Development of Statistics* and identifying relevant indicators will undoubtedly provide us with reliable, adequate, valid, high-quality, and disaggregated data to provide information on the identified indicators, measure progress, close gaps and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs and human rights since development is a fundamental right.

# **SPEECH**

## **3**

**Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission on the Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and United Nations High Commission for Refugees (UNHCR)**

**13 September 2023**





Cameroon Human Rights Commission  
Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun

**MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING SIGNING CEREMONY  
BETWEEN THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (CHRC)  
AND UNITED NATIONS HIGH COMMISSION FOR REFUGEES (UNHCR)**

Yaoundé, 13 September 2023

UNHCR Office in Cameroon

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**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON  
OF THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**Madam, the Deputy Resident Representative in charge of Protection  
at the Office of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees  
in Cameroon, dear partner,**

**Honourable Representative of the Minister of External Relations,  
Honourable Representative of the Minister of Territorial Administration,  
Honourable Representative of the Minister of Justice,  
Honourable Commissioner, Member of the CHRC,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen, Honourable Representatives of the Refugee Committee in  
Councils of Cameroon and Civil Society Organizations,**

**Distinguished guests, in your respective ranks, titles, grades and qualities,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On the Twentieth of June of this year, we all paused to mark the 2023 World Refugee Day under the theme "*Hope Away from Home: A World Where Refugees Are Always Included*". This celebration took place in a context where Cameroon welcomes refugees of different nationalities on its soil and works to put in place effective mechanisms to protect their rights. Statistics from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs show that the country hosted around 473,535 refugees and 9,284 asylum seekers in August 2023.

This celebration also took place in a context that highlighted violations of the rights of other groups of people under UNHCR protection, namely internally displaced persons and persons at risk of statelessness. It is noted that on the Seventh of June 2023, more than 2,300 internally displaced persons (IDPs) were attacked by an unidentified non-state armed group in the Far North region.

It is therefore with great delight that I express my deep gratitude to the Resident Representative of the UNHCR in Cameroon, who has kindly requested that we formalise here today a long-awaited collaboration through the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between our two institutions. Its preparation began in 2021, while the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) was still finding its feet after the profound transformation brought by the institutional law of July 2019.

A year earlier, the Commission had launched a follow-up to the commitments made by the State of Cameroon in the context of the High-Level Segment on Statelessness. This approach was highly appreciated by the UNHCR. They took the opportunity to meet with me during a hearing held in the CHRC's Conference Room in August. The purpose of the meeting was to recall the CHRC's missions and emphasize the benefits of cooperation between our two institutions for the use of all beneficiaries of UNHCR protection.

This cooperation was further promoted during a meeting with the UNHCR Office in Geneva on the side-lines of the Annual Conference of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions (GANHRI) on 14-16 March 2023. During the meeting, the Guidelines for Strategic Partnerships between UNHCR and NHRIs were reaffirmed and identified as beneficial for strengthening the joint mandates of both organisations. These partnerships would, among other things:

- i) Ensure meaningful protection of the rights of asylum-seekers, refugees, IDP's and persons at risk of statelessness;
- ii) Strengthen data collection on the exercise of rights of refugees, IDPs and stateless persons. In this regard, we welcome the participation of UNHCR in the workshop to strengthen cooperation between the CHRC and the INS, held in Yaoundé from the Sixteenth 16 to the Eighteenth of August, which

- will lead in a few days to the signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the CHRC and the INS in the coming weeks,
- iii) Thirdly, partnerships between NHRIs and UNHCR make it possible to improve the monitoring of the implementation of the principle of non-refoulement as well as the monitoring of the conditions of detention of persons under the protection of the UNHCR,
  - iv) Finally, these partnerships make it possible to ensure that national legislation and practice comply with regional and international standards on the protection of the rights of refugees, IDP's and stateless persons.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Distinguished guests,**

The CHRC believes that the cooperation between the CHRC and the UNHCR will meet the above-mentioned expectations, as it is in line with the Paris Principles on the functioning of National Human rights Institutions, the strategic vision of the UNHCR, and all regional and international instruments on the protection of the Rights of forcibly displaced persons, especially since Cameroon's centuries-old tradition of hospitality and its commendable efforts in terms of arrangements to protect the rights of these vulnerable groups are conducive to such cooperation.

In order to improve the conditions of refugees and asylum-seekers in Cameroon, on the 8 of November 2022, the country will hold a workshop on the 8 of November 2022. The purpose of the workshop is to follow up on the recommendations of the Yaoundé Declaration. These recommendations were made at the end of the Regional Ministerial Conference on solutions in the context of forced displacement related to the situation in the Central African Republic, held from the 25 to the 27 of April 2022.

To improve the conditions of these vulnerable groups, Cameroon also launched the pilot phase of the identification, production and issuance of biometric identity cards in June 2022.

In addition, Cameroon has been part of the global survey programme on the living conditions of refugees since August 2021.

Finally, a Biannual Multi-Stakeholder Dialogue on Managing Refugees in Cameroon was launched in November 2022.

However, the CHRC recognises the challenges that these vulnerable groups, including the doubly vulnerable, continue to face and the required support from the authorities in addressing the needs of the MoU beneficiaries and the host populations simultaneously. The CHRC is particularly concerned about the lack of functioning of Refugee Status

Management Bodies in Cameroon, as well as the issue of the Right to identity of IDPs, asylum-seekers and refugees, which affects all other rights granted to them.

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear government and UN partner,**

I would like to reassure you, if necessary, of the Commission's commitment to these vulnerable groups. As you will see, the Commission did not wait for this partnership with the UNHCR to be officialise, to become actively involved in monitoring their rights. However, this instrument will be a catalyst for the growth of the CHRC's action to help the groups concerned.

By illustrating one of the most eloquent actions of the institution, I can mention the publication of three Statements on the occasion of World Refugee Day since 2021. These statements are consistent with CHRC's promotional mission. They are performance-based, as they are accompanied by recommendations for incentives for all relevant actors, formulated with the input of its internal focal points, the focal points of the administrations and CSO's. We can cite the example of the Minister of Public Health, who committed to implement the recommendations of the CHRC as part of the World Refugee Day 2022 Statement.

The latest Statement, published on the 19th of June 2023, contains recommendations whose implementation, in my view, needs to be closely monitored in the context of cooperation with the UNHCR.

Recommendation of the CHRC:

- to take further measures to provide protection and humanitarian assistance to all refugees, as well as special measures to facilitate their identification by providing them with new identity documents,
- Continue to implement the Government's guidelines and instructions to facilitate access to education for forcibly displaced persons,
- Pursue the socio-professional integration of forcibly displaced persons, taking into account, inter alia, the provisions of the Treaty establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area, adopted on the 1st of January 2021.

I am also convinced that the new protection prerogative of the CHRC to intervene in cases of medico-surgery as well as the prevention of torture, namely regular visits to all places of deprivation of liberty, including border transit areas, will allow us to further improve the

advancement and fulfilment of the rights of forcibly displaced persons and stateless persons.

At this point in my remarks, I cannot hide the indispensable contribution of civil society, whose members, partners and effective relays on the ground will benefit from this enhanced cooperation with UNHCR.

I have full confidence in the unanimous agreement on the importance of placing human beings at the core of all our public policies. This principle is the very essence of the human rights-based approach and the fundamental purpose of the Law itself, as encapsulated in the well-known Latin maxim: "*hominum causa omne jus constitutum est.*" It is our aspiration to translate this approach into tangible actions across all the activities to be carried out under this Memorandum of Understanding.

I am confident that the clauses contained therein will be implemented without delay to better protect these vulnerable groups, in line with national, African and universal Human Rights standards, including the Global Compact on Refugees and the Sustainable Development Goals so dear to our country.

**Long live international cooperation.**

**Long live Human Rights**

**Long live Cameroon**

# **SPEECH**

## **4**

**Speech by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission on the signing Ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS)**

**28 September 2023**



SIGNING CEREMONY OF A MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING BETWEEN  
THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION (CHRC) AND THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE  
OF STATISTICS (NIS)

**28 SEPTEMBER 2023, NIS HEAD OFFICE - YAOUNDÉ**

**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE CHRC**

- **The Representative of the Minister of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development,**
- **The Director General of the National Institute of Statistics,**
- **The Director of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI),** whom I like to call a permanent and indispensable partner of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC), who is currently attendance via videoconference,
- **The Representative of the Ambassador, Head of the European Union Delegation to Cameroon,**
- **The Representative of the Resident Coordinator of the United Nations System in Cameroon,**
- **The Resident Representative of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Cameroon,**
- **The Resident Representative of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) in Cameroon,**
- **Representative of the Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa (UNCHR-CA),**
- **Honourable Chairpersons of the Sub-Commissions of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission,**
- **The Permanent Secretary of the Human Rights Commission of Cameroon,**

- **Distinguished coordinators of networks of civil society organisations** and dear CHRC partners,
- **Distinguished guests**, all protocols observed,
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

The CHRC needs quality statistics for its reports and especially to better assess the MDGs. The CHRC is starving for quality statistics that meet the best standards on the matter. You can therefore understand my delight at this moment in this hall on the occasion of the signing ceremony of the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) and the National Institute of Statistics (NIS). Allow me to reiterate my deep gratitude to the Minister of the Economy, Planning and Regional Development (MINEPAT) for kindly appointing a representative to attend this ceremony.

I would also like to seize this opportunity to express my gratitude to the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI), a major partner whose support has made it possible to draw up the document that brings us together here today. Indeed, from the last Sixteenth to the Eighteenth August, under the auspices of NANHRI, we met at the Merina Hotel in Yaoundé for a workshop dedicated to strengthening collaboration between the CHRC and the NIS, with clear and precise objectives. The workshop was all about:

- increasing the CHRC's and the NIS's knowledge and understanding of the human rights-based approach to the implementation of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the rights-based approach to statistical data,
- strengthening the capacity of Cameroon's National Human Rights Institution (NHRI) to initiate and maintain effective collaboration with the NIS,
- strengthening the capacity of the NHRI and the NIS to develop and make use human rights indicators in the monitoring and achievement of the SDGs and to maintain dialogue with a view to the preparation and signing of a Memorandum of Understanding between the NHRI and the NIS.

At the end of the meeting, one of the key recommendations was to draw up and sign this document, which would officially launch cooperation between the two public institutions. In less than a month and a half, and after several working sessions, a draft MoU was drawn up.

This document sets out the individual and joint commitments of the parties, and lays down the terms and conditions for action between the two bodies on issues of common interest.

I would like to seize this opportunity to express my heartfelt gratitude to the Director-General of the National Institute of Statistics (NIS) for his generosity and determination in



realising this new agreement with the CHRC. As I emphasised at last month's meeting, the benefits of a stronger collaboration between our two bodies are well established.

On countless occasions, the CHRC has expressed its desire to be involved in the process of monitoring the indicators for the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Cameroon and to strengthen its statistical capacities.

For those who wonder whether this MoU will change anything, I reply that it will not only improve the capacities of the NIS in the field of human rights, increase the importance given to human rights in the national statistical information system, better monitor and evaluate the human rights situation in Cameroon, but also better assess the implementation of the UN's Agenda 2030 and the AU's Agenda 2063.

By providing the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) with an enhanced data management system, this collaboration will have the advantage of giving Cameroon the opportunity to better assess the development of the State's right which is one of the main pillars of "Governance" in the Strategic Document for the Development of the State of Cameroon 2020-2030, known as the SND 30.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

More specifically, as part of the preparation of the third Voluntary National Report to be presented by Cameroon to the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development in the run-up to the SDGs. The development trend in the areas of education, health, empowerment of women and girls, access to water, energy, protection of marine and land areas as well as many others must be monitored and measured. The integration of the CHRC into this process will therefore have to be effective. This integration will make it possible to assess the results of public policies in terms of the SDGs using a human rights-based approach.

Furthermore, in compliance with the law of 20 July 2020 governing statistical activity in Cameroon, which defines official statistics as "statistical data produced by the services of the national statistical information system", the statistics produced by the CHRC will henceforth bear the seal of official statistics and will be accessible to all members of the national statistical information system and to all actors interested in human rights issues.

As a result, the opinions and advice formulated by the CHRC for institutional and non-institutional actors will henceforth be more credible, as they will be backed up by more reliable and relevant figures. The same applies to its statutory reports on the promotion and protection of human rights and the prevention of torture in places of detention facilities,

along with the thematic reports produced by the CHRC each year, in line with the provisions of Article 42 of its founding Law of 19 July 2019. I would also like to mention the CHRC's other publications, such as its annual summary reports, entitled "Actions of the CHRC in 10 points" and "The human rights situation in 10 points", the quality of these reports will undoubtedly improve. Statistics collected, processed and interpreted more effectively will include information on complaints, self-initiated investigations into human rights violations, visits to places of detention, and human rights awareness-raising and dissemination activities.

The capacity of the CHRC's Unit for the Production of Statistics and CHRC's staff in the field of statistics will be strengthened.

In addition, as I also pointed last month during the aforementioned Merina Hotel workshop, a solution to this thorny problem of the lack of statistical data or the lack of sufficiently reliable and disaggregated statistics according to universally accepted criteria, can finally be found.

The missing statistical data will henceforth be compiled to strengthen the content of government reports and alternative reports submitted by the CHRC to both African and Universal human rights monitoring mechanisms.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have a better understanding of the importance of this strategic document that we are signing with the National Institute of Statistics today. I would like to remind you that the CHRC is not new to this field. The CHRC once signed a MoU with the Council of Minta on 4 February 2022. It also signed a MoU on 14 July with a platform of civil society organizations known as CAM-CRIN represented here, which is very committed and active in the promotion and protection of child rights, without forgetting the MoU signed last 13 September with the Office of the High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), whose presence I welcome here today.

I would like to seize this opportunity to extend my greetings to all members of civil society, here represented by the Cameroon Freedom Observatory (CFO), the Cameroon Network of Human Rights Organizations (CNHRO) and CAM-CRIN, who will also benefit from this memorandum as permanent partners of the CHRC.

I cannot conclude without expressing the wish that this date be marked as the dawn of a new era to strengthen the adoption of the human rights-based approach by the NIS and for the development and acquisition of a genuine statistical culture by the CHRC.

**Long live the cooperation between CHRC and NIS!**

**Long live cooperation between CHRC and other public administrations!**

**Long live cooperation between CHRC and NAHNRI!**

**Long live the international cooperation on human rights!**

**Long live Cameroon!**

# STATEMENT

## 5

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council on the Rights of persons with disabilities**

**27 February - 4 April 2023**



Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun  
Cameroon Human Rights Commission

## **STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON THE RIGHTS OF PERSONS WITH DISABILITIES**

*52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council  
27 February to 4 April 2023*

### **Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities**

1. The CHRC is pleased to take the floor in this interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities during this 52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council, to discuss how best to rethink and adapt services for persons with disabilities for the 21<sup>st</sup> century, so that they can effectively exercise their right to live independently and be a full part of society.
2. The CHRC is pleased with the legal measures the Government of Cameroon has taken to make services accessible to persons with disabilities, such as strengthening of legal and institutional measures to protect the rights of the child. The most recent of these measures are:
  - the inclusion in the General Tax Code, amended on 1 January 2022, of the Ministerial Order establishing the list of specialised equipment and materials for persons with disabilities that are exonerated from VAT
  - the signing of a Prime Ministerial Decree on 19 May 2022 establishing the conditions for granting age exemptions to persons with disabilities in competitive examinations and recruitment into public service
  - the inclusion of security and written communication features in the new series of CEMAC banknotes that entered into circulation on 15 December 2022, particularly curved lines printed in relief for recognition by the visually impaired and blind

- the commitment made by the competent authorities on 21 July 2022 to upgrade the technical facilities of the Cardinal Paul Émile LÉGER National Centre for the Rehabilitation of persons with disabilities.
3. The CHRC has addressed the accessibility of public buildings for persons with disabilities, with inspections carried out in these places throughout the country. The CHRC has been particularly concerned with access to education, training and employment for persons with disabilities and has successfully handled a case of discrimination and failure to respect the principle of equal opportunities for a young person with a disability who wished to enroll in a higher institute of learning.
  4. The CHRC believes that NHRIs are structures that can provide transformative services to persons with disabilities to effectively promote and protect their rights. This position is further underscored by its mandate to monitor human rights in the corporate sector, which it is committed to promoting respect for the rights of vulnerable groups.
  5. The Government and local authorities would be well-advised to allocate sufficient resources to take disability into account in the provision of services to persons with disabilities, to ensure their accessibility also to the adoption of standards applicable in particular to the public contract sector.
  6. Finally, the CHRC calls for international technical cooperation to help NHRIs better advise public authorities and ensure the effective application of national and international measures applicable to persons with disabilities.

# STATEMENT

## 6

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human  
Rights Council on the Rights to a Healthy  
Environment**

**27 February - 4 April 2023**



Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun

Cameroon Human Rights Commission

## **STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON THE RIGHT TO A HEALTHY ENVIRONMENT**

*52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human Rights Council  
from 27 February to 4 April 2023*

### **Interactive Dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on Environment**

1. The CHRC is pleased to participate in this dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on the Environment.
2. The CHRC commends the strategic guidelines adopted by the Government of Cameroon as part of its National Development Strategy (NDS 30) to strengthen measures to adapt to climate change and those related to the sustainable exploitation and management of forests and soils to ensure the country's economic growth.
3. The CHRC also notes Government efforts towards the capacity building of all stakeholders to adapt to climate change, particularly in rural areas.
4. The CHRC is, however, concerned about the increasing number of conflicts between communities over access, use, control and management of natural resources.
5. This phenomenon was particularly observed by the NHRI of Cameroon in the Far North Region, Logone-and-Chari Division, where violent intercommunal clashes between Massa, Shoa Arabs and Mosgoums settled in the area broke out in August and December 2021, resulting in the death of 44 people, more than 100 injured, fires, destruction and looting of houses, granaries and various socio-economic infrastructures, and the theft of livestock in 112 villages. According to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in Cameroon, the violence has led to the internal displacement of more than 36,000 people and more than 35,000 Cameroonian becoming refugees in Chad.



6. This crisis is partly due to poor local governance and the effects of climate change, which are drastically reducing the vital resources of the people, especially food resources, which are largely produced by the women of that region. This situation justified the peace-building mission carried out by a large CHRC delegation in the Logone-and-Chari Division from 10 to 12 March, which achieved the expected results. The mission was marked by working sessions with the main administrative and traditional authorities of that area, and with the community leaders of the Arab Choas, Mosgoums, Kanuris and Kotokos, followed by a dinner with the latter as a sign of peace.
7. The CHRC is also concerned about the environmental impact of the activities of certain companies to the detriment of neighbouring communities. Despite the fact that in 2021, 139 environmental permits were issued to companies in Cameroon, it has been observed that agro-industrial companies set up in some regions of the country, such as the South Region, are destroying several hectares of forest.
8. The CHRC calls on the government to ensure that a strengthened policy of adequate control is established as a standard of conduct that creates real obligations on companies, so that they can be held accountable for failing to comply with their EIA requirements and with applicable laws and regulation.
9. The CHRC urges local authorities to fully exercise their prerogatives under the General Code of Regional and Local authorities in the field of environmental protection.
10. Finally, the CHRC calls for international technical cooperation to assist NHRIs to better monitor human rights issues related to the means to enjoy a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment.

# **STATEMENT**

**7**

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human  
Rights Council on Child Trafficking**

**27 February - 4 April 2023**



Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun  
Cameroon Human Rights Commission

## **STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON CHILD TRAFFICKING**

*52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council  
from 27 February to 4 April 2023*

### **Interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on child trafficking**

1. The CHRC is pleased with the commitment of all parties to this interactive dialogue with the Special Rapporteur on child trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography.
2. The CHRC is pleased with Cameroon's ratification on 6 January 2020 of the Optional Protocol to the Convention on the Rights of the Child, on child trafficking, child prostitution and child pornography.
3. Government efforts to fulfil its commitments concerning school enrolment, particularly of girls is equally noteworthy. The importance attached to the right to education is an essential indicator for preventing and reducing the risks of sale and exploitation of children.
4. The CHRC is, however, concerned by the persistence of certain harmful practices that encourage child trafficking. These practices include:
  - since 2017, children from areas affected by terrorism have been sent to work in other parts of the country
  - forced child labour in mines, plantations, shops, etc.
  - the increasingly alarming rate of sale, distribution and consumption of drugs and other psychotropic substances among juveniles, including schoolchildren
  - the phenomenon of street children, for which no satisfactory solution has yet been found.
5. Some of the causes of such practices are cultural or economic, since they are encouraged by the family members of these children.
6. The CHRC urges Governments to continue to combat child trafficking by actively seeking out, apprehending and bringing to justice traffickers and members of child recruitment networks.

7. The CHRC recommends that governments take the necessary steps to optimise their relations with the Committee on the Rights of the Child under the above-mentioned Optional Protocol. Finally, it urges the competent authorities to ensure that victims of child trafficking receive prompt, adequate and effective reparation.

# STATEMENT

8

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 52<sup>nd</sup> Session of the Human  
Rights Council on the Abolition of the Death Penalty**

**27 February - 4 April 2023**



Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun  
Cameroon Human Rights Commission

## **STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON THE ABOLITION OF THE DEATH PENALTY**

*52<sup>nd</sup> session of the Human Rights Council  
from 27 February to 4 April 2023*

1. The CHRC commends the moratorium on the death penalty that Cameroon has maintained for 25 years and considers that by observing this stance, Cameroon implicitly recognises the non-binding nature of the death penalty. This attitude is reflected, inter alia, in the caution of judges, who show great restraint in applying death penalty, and in the frequency with which the President of the Republic pardons or commutes sentences handed down over a ten-year period.
2. According to statistics from the Prison Administration Department of the Ministry of Justice, Cameroon has gone from having 160 death row inmates in 2016 to 94 death row inmates in prisons in the country's 10 regions in September 2022. None of these death row inmates have been executed.
3. The CHRC notes, however, that the de facto abolition of the death penalty does not exclude the possibility of an execution in a context of renewed terrorism or in the current context of calls for the hanging of the murderers of Martinez ZOGO, the journalist, killed on 17 January 2022.
4. In order to shatter the convictions of those who still support the death penalty and to refute the arguments usually used by the Cameroonian government to maintain the death penalty in Cameroon's repressive arsenal, the CHRC relies on three assumptions:
  - i) the argument of deterrence is ineffective
  - ii) the death penalty violates the right to life, perpetuates violence and legitimises mob justice.
  - iii) this punishment has physical and psychological effects comparable to torture and other cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment or punishment.
5. From the viewpoint of the CHRC, the retention of the death penalty in Cameroon's repressive arsenal is likely to encourage the promoters of mob justice to claim that

it is a legitimate form of justice, yet life should only be violated in the absence of an alternative, since justice by death is contrary to the values and principles engraved in the Constitution of Cameroon of 18 January 1996.

6. The advocacy work carried out by the CHRC, in partnership with several Civil Society organisations, is based on the conviction that it is necessary to humanise the penal system without undermining the repressive functions of the judiciary. While carrying out this advocacy as part of a constructive dialogue with the competent authorities, the CHRC intends to use its mandate to prevent torture to ensure the application of better conditions of detention for persons already sentenced to death.
7. Finally, the CHRC recommends that the government set the intermediate goal of voting in favour of the United Nations General Assembly resolution on a universal moratorium on the use of the death penalty.

# STATEMENT

9

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session  
of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights  
and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC)**

**28 April 2023**





**41<sup>st</sup> Ordinary Session of the AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS  
ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)  
Maseru, Kingdom of Lesotho, 28 April 2023**

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)**

**Her Majesty the Queen of the Kingdom of Lesotho,**

**Your Excellencies, Representatives of the States,**

**Representatives of the Institutions, Government and Political Parties of Lesotho,**

**Your Excellency the High Commissioner of the Republic of South Africa to the  
Kingdom of Lesotho,**

**The Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of  
the Child (ACERWC),**

**Distinguished Members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and  
Welfare of the Child**

**The Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the African Union,  
here represented,**

**The President of the African Court on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACtHPR),**

**The Representative of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights  
(ACHPR),**

**The Regional Representative of the Office of the High Commissioner for Human  
Rights for Ethiopia, the African Union and the Economic Commission for Africa  
(ECA),**

**Distinguished Representatives of the National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs)  
affiliated to the ACERWC,**

**The Representative of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions  
(NANHRI),**

**The Representative of Children,**

**The Representative of the Forum of Civil Society Organisations**

**Dear participants, all protocols observed,**

It is with great pleasure that I address this distinguished audience on behalf of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) at this 41st Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (hereinafter ACERWC or the Committee). The NHRI for which I am responsible, which was the first to be granted the status of member of the Committee, is delighted that 16 other NHRIs have followed suit, whereas at the last session of the Committee in November 2022, there were only two of us, together with the NHRI of Ethiopia.

Since becoming a member of the Committee at its 38th ordinary session in November 2021, the CHRC's commitment and determination to work with the Committee to improve the situation of children on the African continent, with Cameroon at its heart, has continued to grow, with tangible demonstrations. Following its online participation in the 39th session of the Committee, held from 21 March to 1 April 2022, the CHRC was represented at the highest level, by its Chairperson, at the 40th session, held last November here in Maseru. Today, at this 41st session of the Committee, the institution's focal point for children's rights accompanies the head of the Cameroonian NHRI.

Between these two sessions, the Chairperson of the CHRC, at the invitation of the Committee, seized the opportunity to participate in person in the Workshop on the Implementation of the Decisions and Recommendations of the ACERWC, held in Nairobi, Kenya, on 23 and 24 February. This shows the importance that the CHRC attaches to the promotion and protection of the rights and duties of the child, as enshrined in the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), which was adopted on 1 July 1990, ratified by Cameroon on 5 September 1997 and entered into force on 29 November 1999.

**Her Majesty the Queen,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Distinguished participants,**

The CHRC is pleased with the choice of topics to be addressed during this session, especially those to be discussed in tomorrow's general debate., such as drug addiction and children, especially as this issue was raised by the CHRC in its statement to the Committee at its last session. The CHRC is therefore pleased to note that the Committee

is attentive to the concerns of NHRIs, which are now emerging as important partners of this African treaty body.

In addition to issues such as the impact of climate change on children and violence against children, of which female genital mutilation is one of the most horrific and scandalous forms, drug addiction is a growing scourge among minors across the continent, slowly destroying the young people who are Africa's nursery of hope.

Cameroon has not been spared from this scourge. The latest statistics from the National Committee for the Fight against Drugs (CNLD) show that 21 per cent of Cameroon's school-age population have already taken drugs, while more than 15 per cent of 15-year-olds are affected by this scourge, with a higher prevalence in schools<sup>1</sup>. Apart from tobacco, which is widely used, the most commonly used substances in Cameroon are:

- Cannabis (58.54%), which is very often combined with tobacco, especially in the composition of various types of water pipes, including the hookah, also known as "chicha", which is very popular among young people because of its novelty and flavoured taste
- Tramadol (44.62%), which is also widely used by young people in and out of school
- cocaine (12.10%), and
- heroin, which is used in 5.70% of cases<sup>2</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> See Statement by the CHRC to mark the International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking 26 June 2022, p. 3.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*

The specific case of nargilé (*chicha*) is particularly worrying. In January 2022, the Cameroon Ministry of Health (Minsanté) and the CNLD revealed that almost 46 per cent of young Cameroonians indulge in this habit in snack bars and even at home<sup>3</sup>.

However, water pipe smokers and those exposed to the smoke are exposed to the same dangers as cigarette smokers, and even more so when substances such as cocaine and opium are combined with the main ingredients of the water pipe, which are tobacco (28% on average) and molasses (a syrup containing sugar and flavours such as strawberry, apple or coconut, which makes up 70% of *chicha* on average). According to the Minsanté, a 45-minute *chicha* session consumes the nicotine equivalent of a cigarette and a half, the carbon monoxide equivalent of 20 cigarettes, the tar equivalent of 26 cigarettes and the smoke equivalent of 40 cigarettes. Harmful effects such as addiction, increased heart rate and blood pressure, carbon monoxide poisoning, loss of consciousness, reduced lung function, damage to the larynx and the development of cancer are some of the serious dangers encountered by *chicha* smokers<sup>4</sup>.

To put an end to this phenomenon, the Cameroon government, through the Ministry of Territorial Administration (Minat), took measures to ban the sale and consumption of this substance throughout the country<sup>5</sup>, in a memorandum signed on 8 February 2022. However, a review of the situation more than a year later shows that *chicha* is still being sold and consumed in the usual ways<sup>6</sup>. Although the Ministry has tried to explain the authorities' laissez-faire attitude to the application of this measure by the fact that adults also consume this toxic product, *the fact remains that effective strategies must be found and strictly applied to protect minors under the age of 18 from this scourge*.

The ban on commercial activities likely to lead to the consumption of *chicha*, such as take-away sales, drinks outlets and games rooms near schools, which has been the subject of repeated recommendations to the government by Cameroon's NHRI, has certainly been reiterated by the Minister of Secondary Education to the Regional and Divisional Delegates of Secondary Education and to the Heads of Secondary Schools in a circular of 20 March 2012, in which the Minister recalled the relevant provisions of the law of 14 April 1998 laying down guidelines for education in Cameroon.

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<sup>3</sup>« MINSANTE: LA CHICHA, DU PLAISIR A LA MORT », article published via : <https://www.minsante.cm/site/?q=en/node/4189> on 19 January 2022, accessed on 22 April 2023.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>5</sup> Cameroon joins Kenya, Gambia, Tanzania, Rwanda, Ghana and Senegal on the list of African countries that have banned shisha. However, Kenya and Sudan have distinguished themselves on this issue by reversing the ban several times. In Burkina Faso, the city of Ouagadougou has also banned *chicha*.

<sup>6</sup> "SHEMA" newsletter, no. 20, published by *Réseau Foi et Justice Cameroun*, January 2023, p. 5.

Once again, the problem of effective and systematic implementation of this measure remains, in a context where the forces of law and order in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions are monopolised by the regimental missions of safeguarding the territorial integrity of the country.

One of the most serious and immediate effects of drug use among juveniles is the increase in violence, particularly in schools.

In Cameroon, since 2018, at least 10 cases of murder committed by students, mostly in schools, have made headlines. These include the cases of a Maths teacher and the principal of a private secondary school, who were stabbed to death in the schools where they exercised their profession by their students, minors aged 18. The schools where this happened are located in the same quarter in Yaoundé (Nkolbisson), on 14 January 2020 and 6 April 2022 respectively. Similarly, eight secondary school students were killed by their classmates (victims and perpetrators all under the age of 18) during the same period, in Douala (3 cases), Bafoussam (2 cases), Edéa (2 cases) and Ebolowa (1 case), and the incidences occurred in or around school premises.

Other cases of violence by students against educational staff or other students were less dramatic, but caused serious injuries to the victims, sometimes leaving scars for life. This is the case, for example, of a student whose hand was cut off by a classmate in the town of Obala, in the Centre region.

Various secondary school administrative bodies, faced with the destructive plague of drug abuse and its devastating effects especially among schoolchildren, have taken measures to increase security in secondary schools, especially in large cities. Such measures include systematic searches of school bags at school entrances and the installation of CCTV cameras on school grounds. Those systematic searches have henceforth led to the confiscation of a large number of edged weapons and substances such as tramadol tablets, whisky sachets and other toxic substances.

In the case of whisky packaged in plastic sachets, which was sold on every street corner at a ridiculous price (50 FCFA per sachet), the ban on production and sale is the latest measure taken by the Cameroonian government, in this case the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development, in a decision dated 11 April 2023. We can only hope that the decision will not go unheeded.

**The Chairperson of the ACERWC,**

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

**Distinguished participants,**

The CHRC, convinced that educating children and making them aware of their rights and duties is an effective way of preventing the corruption of juveniles by gangrenous

phenomena such as drug addiction and its corollary, violence, as part of its mission to promote human rights (pursuant to Sections 4 and 5 of the Law of 19 July 2019 relating to the establishment, organisation and functioning of the CHRC), will launch a campaign to create human rights clubs in all secondary schools and public and private universities, starting in January 2023.

So far, although the initiative was launched when the school year was already a third over, the results have been promising. A total of **113 human rights clubs** have been created in 74 secondary schools in the Far North (16), North (10), Adamawa (12), East (29), Littoral (one), West (seven) and North-West (six) regions. In the North-West Region, human rights clubs were also established in seven primary schools, while in the East, 21 vocational training centres and two universities now have human rights clubs, and the human rights club at the University of Ngaoundéré in the Adamawa Region was revived. In the South Region, 93 human rights clubs are currently being created. Awareness-raising activities have already been carried out by some of the existing human rights clubs under the impetus of the CHRC branches. We are pleased that subsequent to the activities of the human rights clubs in the five main secondary schools in Ngaoundéré, which started on 7 February, the Adamawa branch has not received any reports of violence or drug use in these schools, as was previously the case.

In addition to promoting the rights of the child, the CHRC has published two statements specifically on the rights of the child since the beginning of 2023, on the occasion of the International Day of Education (24 January) and the International Day of Female Genital Mutilation (6 February). These statements are awareness-raising and advocacy tools through the recommendations they call to the attention of the authorities (who are in the habit of acknowledging receipt and accepting the recommendations they contain) and all other relevant actors.

Furthermore, the Commission is still seizing every opportunity to encourage the authorities to adopt a Child Protection Code that would harmonise the national legal and institutional framework for child protection.

The NHRI of Cameroon is also committed to the protection of the rights of the child by implementing its human rights protection mandate (as per Sections 6 and 7 of the Law of 19 July 2019 relating to the establishment, organisation and functioning of the CHRC), which consists of filing and handling written or oral complaints and reports, and conducting self-initiated investigations into serious, systemic or recurrent human rights violations.

With this in mind, the CHRC has been operating a **new toll-free number, 1523**, since July 2022, through which anyone, including children, can report any human rights violation to the institution. Since the toll-free number was launched, the Cameroon NHRI has received **31 reports of violations of children's rights, including three calls made by children themselves**. Such calls were made from different parts of the country. The main Child

rights allegedly violated are: the right to education, the right to an adequate standard of living (right to food, health, etc.), the right to family protection, parental care and protection, and the right to physical and moral integrity.

Concerning the conventional complaints lodged and the self-initiated investigations carried out by the CHRC to protect child rights, the data for the first quarter of 2023 show that the CHRC filed **20 conventional complaints from the branches, three of which were submitted by children themselves, and three complaints of alleged violations of child rights submitted by adults to the Commission's head office**. During the same period, **the Commission carried out self-initiated investigations into 15 cases of serious violations of children's rights in the 10 regions**.

The main alleged cases of violations of child rights raised by these complaints and self-initiated investigations are as follows:

- The right to life - many children have lost their lives in unclear circumstances, sometimes as a result of serious ill-treatment, sexual abuse or apparently ritual crimes, the right to physical and moral integrity - undermined by numerous cases of physical and moral violence, including sexual abuse of minors, most of which occur within the family circle
- The right to an adequate standard of living
- The right to parental care and protection, and
- The right to education.

The CHRC handled these allegations by taking the necessary steps to confirm the violations found, then conciliating between the parties in non-criminal matters and referring the matter to the Ministry of Justice for prosecution in criminal matters.

Concerning the third aspect of its mandate, the prevention of torture in places of detention (Sections 8 to 11 of the 2019 Law), in the first quarter of 2023 the focus was on visits to the unconventional places of detention that the 2019 Law authorises the CHRC to visit, in this case borstal institutes for the supervision of juveniles. In the 10 regions of the country, **37 places where children are deprived of their freedom of movement for one reason or another were visited by the CHRC** to prevent torture by the competent authorities. **A total of 16 of these places are borstal institutes**, while the other 21 are traditional places of detention (prisons, police and gendarmerie cells) or general places where all categories of persons are detained (psychiatric centres, hospitals, a centre for the disarmament, demobilisation and reintegration of former Boko Haram fighters and mosques).

**Your Majesty the Queen,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

**Dear participants,**

**You should have understood that since our last meetings, the main findings of the CHRC on the situation of child rights in Cameroon have given rise to great concern about *the resurgence of violence against the child and by the child*, in which drug addiction is a factor.**

The decline in the standard of living of the population and the galloping inflation, which are other worrying issues affecting the well-being of children in Cameroon, are certainly due to endogenous crises and security situations (Boko Haram attacks in the Far North and secessionist terrorists in the North-West and South-West regions) and exogenous situations (Covid-19 and the Russo-Ukrainian war), without forgetting the impact of climate change on communities, the most visible manifestation of which is the frequent flooding in the Far-North region. Recent floods in the Buea town, in the South-West Region, destroyed many homes and left many families homeless.

This shows the relevance of the topics on the agenda of this 41<sup>st</sup> session, from which we hope that the CHRC's participation will enable it to gather great ideas for sustainable and feasible solutions to effectively combat these phenomena or to curb their impact on the communities and particularly on children. Enriched by the exchange of experiences between the countries of the continent at this meeting of give-and-take, the CHRC, as the advisor to the State of Cameroon on human rights, including the rights of the child, will be able to make recommendations to the government and parliament, to improve the situation of child rights in the country.

Finally, the CHRC wishes to reiterate its determination to cooperate fully with ACERWC to increase the effectiveness of its actions for the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in Cameroon and preventing children detained anywhere from being tortured. As a pioneer institution affiliated to the Committee, the CHRC calls on all other African NHRIs to subscribe to such commitment.



# **STATEMENT**

**10**

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 75<sup>th</sup> Ordinary Session  
of the African Commission on Human and Peoples'  
Rights**

**13 May 2023**



Cameroon Human Rights Commission

Commission des Droits de l'homme du Cameroun

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**75<sup>th</sup> ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMISSION  
ON HUMAN AND PEOPLES' RIGHTS**

from 3 to 23 May 2023

*Banjul, 13 May 2023*

**Affiliate status:** No. 08

**Name and title of the NHRI representative:** Prof James MOUANGUE KOBILA, Chairperson of the CHRC

**Law establishing the NHRI:** Law No. 2019 / 014 of 19 July 2019

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)**

**The Chairperson of the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights,**

**Honourable Commissioners,**

**Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocols observed,**

I will talk successively about the main activities of the CHRC during the inter-sessional period, about furthering human rights in Cameroon, and then the challenges, before concluding with recommendations.

***Concerning the main activities of the CHRC ...***

Since November 2022, the CHRC has endeavoured to carry out its mission of promoting human rights through a wide dissemination of its Performative Statements to mark twelve (12) Human Rights Commemorative Days. These Statements are accompanied by

recommendations made with input from its in-house focal points, government and CSO focal points, to all stakeholders who generally commit to implementing them. Thus, between November 2022 and March 2023, the CHRC received 15 positive feedbacks from the public administrative services concerned following the publication of its Statements.

Despite the scarcity of resources, the CHRC conducted activities during the period under review to assess the level of accessibility of persons with disabilities to public buildings in the field, as well as a series of awareness-raising activities for the socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities, for the prevention of disability and the rehabilitation of persons with disabilities, as part of celebrating the International Day of Persons with Disabilities on 3 December 2022.

*Under human rights protection*, the CHRC has, since November 2022, handled 219 complaints, including 58 at its Head Office and 161 in its 10 branches, and received 1163 calls through its toll-free number 1523.

Among the cases successfully handled during the period under review, the CHRC would like to mention a case that illustrates the cooperation between NHRIs. This is the story of a Cameroonian woman who was remanded in October 2020 in the Abidjan *Maison d'arrêt et de correction* in Côte d'Ivoire. At the CHRC's request, the Human Rights Council of Côte d'Ivoire took up the case and the victim benefited from a presidential pardon which enabled her to be released on 12 January 2023.

*Concerning the prevention of torture in all detention facilities*, special emphasis was placed on new detention facilities. Between November 2022 and May 2023, the CHRC's dedicated Sub-Commission and the 10 branches in the regions carried out 223 visits to detention centres, of which 11 were conducted by the Head Office and 212 by the branches. These included hospitals, transit areas at ports and airports, and closed youth care centres.

### ***Concerning progress ...***

During the inter-sessional period, the government undertook to strengthen the realisation of human rights, including by:

- i) improving workers' living conditions by raising salaries and the minimum wage
- ii) combating intolerance, hate speech and incitement to violence
- iii) combating gender-based violence and violence in schools, and
- iv) increasing inclusion of visually impaired persons.

### ***Let's move on to the challenges...***

The CHRC deplors the upsurge in cases of femicide in Cameroon in recent months - 28 cases were recorded in the last 75 days. The CHRC is also alarmed by the resurgence of hate speech. These are expressed in language that directly violates human rights and undermines the sense of belonging to a single nation.

Many of us are certainly still affected by the appalling footage of the lifeless body of journalist ZOGO MBANI Arsène, AKA Martinez ZOGO, which was found on 21 January 2023. The CHRC, in a press release issued on 23 January 2023, strongly and unreservedly condemned this barbaric and retrograde act before commending the promptness with which the appropriate investigations were ordered. These investigations led to the arrest and subsequent pre-trial detention of some twenty suspects in this assassination, including the head of the country's intelligence services.

I should mention that in Cameroon, sanctions against uniformed men for human rights violations are so severe that the CHRC had to refer the matter to the Minister of Defence, the Delegate General for National Security, the Secretary of State for the Gendarmerie and the Minister of State in charge of Justice, concerning the penitentiary administration, so that the families of the disciplined officers would have their rights respected: right to food, shelter, education, health etc.

I would equally like to mention the murder of another journalist, Anye Nde Soh, by secessionist terrorists on 7 May 2023 in Bamenda, North West Region, the day after the International Press Freedom Day celebration on 3 May. The CHRC joins the media family in strongly condemning this heinous crime.

### ***As regards recommendations,***

The CHRC reiterates its 95 recommendations addressed to all human rights stakeholders in its 12 statements issued during the inter-sessional period. The 15-page document containing these recommendations was forwarded to the ACHPR Secretariat.

In addition, CHRC suggests that the State should adopt special measures to invest in human rights education sustainably. Human rights education seems to guarantee the prevention and countering of the violence observed in Cameroonian society.

Finally, the CHRC recommends that the ACHPR actively disseminate the activity reports of the members of the Commission and those of the special mechanisms to the entire African and world human rights community, as these valuable documents are full of data and analyses of crucial importance for the progress of the noble cause of human and peoples' rights.

# PUBLIC INTEREST AND GLOBAL GOVERNANCE OF HUMAN RIGHTS

*By James Mouangue Kobila*

*Professor of Public Law*

*Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission*

**Your Excellencies,**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I am introduced as the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission, but noting the presence of many academics and specialist researchers in the room, I should underline that I am also speaking in my capacity as an academic from the University of Douala.

A few days after the Centenary celebration of The Hague Academy of International Law from 24 to 26 May 2023 on the theme "Challenges of International Law", with an inaugural round table devoted to "The Public Interest and International Law", it would seem interesting to me to focus on "The Public Interest and the Global Governance of Human Rights" as part of this Forum.

The human rights arena is undoubtedly among the least consensual areas of global governance. Yet the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights provides a solid foundation for cooperation in human rights matters. Article 2, paragraph 1, states that "*Each State Party to the present Covenant undertakes to take steps, individually and through international assistance and co-operation [...], with a view to achieving progressively the full realisation of the rights recognised in the present Covenant*". On the eve of the celebration of the Day of the African Child on 16 June, it should also be recalled that the Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child stresses "*the importance of international co-operation for improving the living conditions of children in every country, in particular in the developing countries*".

More recently, on 18 April 2023, the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights published his *Report on the Implementation and enhancement of international cooperation in the field of human rights*, to be presented at the 53rd Session of the Human Rights Council, which will be held from 19 June to 14 July 2023.

There will be no debate on defining human rights here, as it is clear that *while human rights are universal, the content of the term is not*. What is considered a human right in Africa and part of Asia is sometimes dismissed elsewhere. What is hailed as a human right in Europe or, more broadly, in the West, is sometimes just as vigorously rejected elsewhere. We are therefore confining ourselves to the universally recognised human rights that

constitute the common denominator in this area. But beyond these, the criteria for assessing respect for human rights vary substantially from one context to another.

From this perspective, several authors approach the question of global governance of human rights alongside other subjects through distorting prisms resulting from specific biases. Often, these authors are content to give a scientific colouring to ideological postures. *What is presented as the general interest is often no more than the interest of a category of States or an ideological camp.*

The subject before us raises a host of questions. Can international cooperation lead to better governance of human rights? Under what conditions? And with what results? Does international cooperation on human rights ultimately require global governance based on a guiding public order? If so, which actors have the legitimacy to play such a role, if any?

Without claiming to provide detailed answers to all these questions, we will find the outlines of some answers by examining the three main trends in the current governance of human rights, including within the United Nations: the prioritisation of rights and the consequent obscuring of duties (I), the limited consideration given to the right to peace, which should be reflected in active conflict prevention (II), and the many biases affecting transnational cooperation on human rights, in this case, the relations between non-state actors and states in this field (III).

#### **I- The prioritisation of rights and the consequent concealment of duties**

The Cameroonian people, through the Preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996, "*Affirm our attachment to the fundamental freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the Charter of the United Nations and The African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and all duly ratified international conventions relating thereto*".

The Constitution of Cameroon, the domestic laws enacted to implement it and the African and universal legal instruments ratified by the State of Cameroon thus guarantee all persons under its jurisdiction the free exercise of their rights "*with due respect for the rights of others and the higher interests of the State*".

There is too often a tendency to forget this segment of the Preamble to this Constitution, which nevertheless recalls Article 27 (2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which reads as follows: "*The rights and freedoms of each individual shall be exercised with due regard for the rights of others, collective security, morality and the common interest*".

By ignoring these statements, we are neglecting the warning of Gustave le Bon, the French physician, anthropologist, social psychologist and sociologist - a specialist in behavioural disorder and crowd psychology, inter alia - who observed that "*the surest way to destroy*

*the principle of authority is to talk to everyone about their rights and never about their duties".*

In a context of one-upmanship where certain human rights are presented - wrongly - as absolute dogmas and where freedoms border on anarchism in social media and beyond, a context where we tend to forget that freedom is the right to do anything lawful, it is worth remembering an old Latin adage, widely ignored: *ubi jus, ibi onus*. And I translate: *where there is a right, there is also an obligation*.

To illustrate this legal adage, I refer you to one of the indents in the Preamble to the Constitution of Cameroon cited above, and to Articles 27 to 29 of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights. It follows that failure to respect the international mechanisms of "*collective security, morality and common interest*" is a source of conflict.

## **II- Limited recognition of the right to peace, which should be reflected in active conflict prevention**

The human right to peace, which is the inalienable right to life, dignity and peaceful coexistence of all individuals, groups and peoples, is being trampled underfoot by war criminals and terrorists who have been killing, beheading, amputating, eviscerating, torturing and destroying devastatingly throughout the world since time immemorial, violating all rights.

Quoting from *the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Peoples to Peace*, approved by the General Assembly in a resolution on 12 November 1984, we can state, without risk of being contradicted, that "*Convinced that life without war serves as, [at the national, regional and universal level], a prerequisite for the material well-being, development and progress of countries, and for the full implementation of the rights and fundamental human freedoms*" proclaimed by all international and regional human rights instruments, whether binding or not."

At the African regional level, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), which was adopted in 1981 and came into force on 28 October 1986, refers to the right to peace from a collective perspective. Article 23, paragraph 1 of the ACHPR states that "*all peoples shall have the right to national and international peace and security*". This enshrinement of the right to peace calls for the adoption of measures, both nationally and internationally, to prevent conflicts and to preserve, maintain and consolidate peace.

Peace is certainly an expression of the African soul and culture. The lushness of our landscapes, the musicality of our rivers and woodlands, and our aesthetic emotions as much as our mechanisms for settling disputes are a constant appeal to conviviality and elevation towards universal harmony.

In 2001, the UN Commission on Human Rights, now the Human Rights Council, adopted a specific resolution on the "*right of peoples to peace*".

Against this background, Boutros Boutros-Ghali of Egypt, the former Secretary General of the UN put forward his famous 1992 Agenda for Peace, based on a three-pronged approach to international solidarity.

Unfortunately, this agenda was not well taken up by some of the major powers, who are permanent members of the United Nations Security Council. As a result, on the African continent as elsewhere in the world, people continue to pay the heavy price of wars from elsewhere, against a backdrop of exacerbated cultural differences (ethnic, linguistic, religious, etc.) that are inherent in all human societies, and numerous biases that compromise the general interest of international societies.

### **III- Transnational cooperation biases in human rights matters**

We will start by examining the case of Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) before looking at that of Civil Society Organisations (CSOs).

#### **A- The Non-Governmental Organisations case**

Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs), which are usually national associations operating in several countries or associations whose members come from several countries, are not very different from domestic Civil Society Organisations. In his book entitled *France in an age of globalization*, Hubert Védrine, the former French Minister of Foreign Affairs, classifies the 30,000 or so NGOs he has identified worldwide into several categories. He writes that "you find everything there, the best and the rest: generosity, dedication, networks, militancy, interests, lobbies, beliefs and a lot of real power in disguise" (p. 20); so that, without a clear view of this landscape, we are very often mistaking bladders for lanterns, especially as the 'hierarchies of power' and the 'global balance of power' are reflected in it: As he explains, "[i]t is, therefore, the civil societies and NGOs from the rich countries, with the most media coverage, the means to communicate, and thus the power to impose their interpretation of an event, that will wield the most influence in the world: Americans, not Niger, Bolivia or Bangladesh! It's not the NGOs in Nigeria that will speak out in Northern Ireland or demonstrate in Seattle" (ibid.)

Whatever the case, NGOs are often the vectors of specific biases that distort understanding and sometimes permanently sabotage the noble cause of human rights throughout the world.

- 1- *The preposterous idea that the State is the sole holder of human rights obligations since the State is the sole signatory to treaties means that the State is the culprit*



and solely responsible for the failure on the part of a country to respect human rights. This overlooks the horizontal dimension of human rights.

- 2- The erroneous idea that the rulings of regional and universal non-judicial human rights mechanisms are nonetheless binding.
- 3- *The erroneous idea that human rights standards are absolute dogmas* that apply uniformly in all countries and do not admit of any derogation or exception, or that the State must apply them otherwise it will be treated as a rogue State, in defiance of the "national margin of appreciation of national authorities", This is in total disregard of the "national margin of appreciation of national authorities" enshrined in the case law of the European Court of Human Rights, and in complete disregard of the fact that even the West's conception of human rights is not uniform, and that when it comes to respect for privacy, in the United States freedom takes precedence over dignity, while in Europe the opposite is true.
- 4- *Lack of respect for proportionality*: statistically, non-state actors are responsible for the majority of human rights violations. However, the majority of reports by the best-known international NGOs are devoted to alleged breaches of human rights by States.

#### B- The special case of CSOs

Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) campaign for human rights using their methods, but their action is often trapped by five factors.

- 1- *The bias towards seeking funding*, which leads them either to exaggerate the reality to hope for the desired funding, or to speak the language and work on the priority themes of the donors and not on those they consider relevant or on those of the country where they are active. This is how some CSOs, far from operating out of conviction or in the interests of the communities they claim to protect, become relays or parrots who simply repeat the rhetoric dictated by the donors.
- 2- *By obtaining visas for their members or their relatives*, or third parties for a fee, and presenting them as persons persecuted by governments.
- 3- *The bias of incompetence* sometimes leads them to fight absurd battles.
- 4- *Political bias* leads some CSOs to betray the integrity of human rights defenders by joining political party platforms or making political demands.
- 5- *The bias of conscious manipulation* often consists of passing off legitimate acts of penal repression by the State as acts of persecution of a category of citizens.

## Recommendations

Since it is nevertheless indisputable that Human Rights are a founding principle of modern societies, the following four recommendations can be made:

- 1- Mainstreaming the rights-based approach.
- 2- Mainstreaming human rights education in school curricula, to provide a major lever for better governance of human rights.

As Fr derico MAYOR, the former Director General of UNESCO, put it so well, "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed". Let us be the architects of peace!

- 3- The establishment of funding mechanisms for human rights projects that place particular emphasis on economic, social and cultural rights.
- 4- The establishment of an interactive framework to encourage the sharing of experiences and best practices between NHRIs in the South.

# **STATEMENT**

**11**

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 4<sup>th</sup> Cycle of the Universal  
Periodic Review – 2023**

**1<sup>st</sup> September 2023**



## **4<sup>TH</sup> CYCLE OF THE UNIVERSAL PERIODIC REVIEW - 2023**

### **UPR information session**

#### **Statement by the Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)**

**1 September 2023**

#### **1. Presenting the NHRI of Cameroon**

This statement is made on behalf of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC), governed by the law of 19 July 2019. Section 1 (3) of the said law states that "the Commission shall also serve as the Cameroon National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture."

#### **2. Consultations for the submission of Cameroon's report to the Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

In preparation for this 4th cycle of the UPR, the Ministry of Justice consulted the CHRC, public administrative bodies, companies, development partners, and civil society organisations (CSOs) on the drafting of the National Report during a workshop held on 15 March 2023.

To enrich the National Report, the CHRC also organised a consultation with CSOs on 4 May 2023, following an inclusive and widely publicised call for participation.

#### **3. Human rights situation in Cameroon**

##### **a) Status of implementation of recommendations from the 3rd UPR cycle**

During its last appearance before the 2018 UPR, several recommendations were made to Cameroon concerning:

- i) the security situation in the Far North, North West and South West regions of the country
- ii) freedom of the press
- iii) the protection of journalists and human rights defenders and
- iv) detention conditions.

One of the specific recommendations was the holding of a multiparty dialogue to restore peace in the North West and South West regions. This recommendation was implemented with the holding of the Major National Dialogue from 30 September to 4 October 2019 and the fifth meeting of the Committee for the Follow-up of Recommendations in Buea on 11 August 2023.

The CHRC is also pleased that investigations are systematically carried out whenever members of the Defence and Security Forces (DSF) are accused of human rights violations. The CHRC, however, notes with regrets that some investigation reports are not transmitted to it.

**The CHRC deplors** the persistence of some challenges, such as:

- i) the 325 terrorist attacks in the last twelve months - including terrorist attacks on education
- ii) the incomplete recognition of the right to reparation for victims of terrorism and torture
- iii) the failure to complete the ratification process of some human rights instruments and
- iv) the ineffectiveness of alternatives to detention.

#### **b) CHRC Recommendations**

To improve the human rights situation in the above areas, the CHRC recommends that the State

- raise awareness among the DSF of the need to respect human rights
- deposit the instruments of ratification of the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture
- speed up the process of promulgating the decree implementing the sections of the Penal Code relating to alternative sentencing.

#### **4. The situation of the right to an identity, education, health, the rights of persons with disabilities, and the rights of women, which are the most violated rights in Cameroon and whose respect is essential for the country's development.**

##### **a) Status of implementation of recommendations made during the third cycle of the UPR**

Of the 88 recommendations relating to the rights referred to in the heading above, Cameroon has accepted 70 of these recommendations.

## **CHRC observations and recommendations**

With regard to **the right to identity**, the **CHRC is very concerned** about the number of Cameroonians who do not have birth certificates, i.e. almost 4 million by July 2022, which jeopardises all the rights whose enjoyment depends on the right to identity. **The CHRC recommends** that all actors involved in the civil registration chain implement its 24 recommendations.

With regard to the **right to education**, **the CHRC is concerned** about the increase in abuses in schools (violence, drug use, and harassment), the quality of education, and the failure to respect some elements of the right to remuneration for teachers. **The CHRC recommends** that the authorities put in place modern monitoring mechanisms and effective reporting procedures to combat these abuses and the effective implementation of a human rights education programme at all levels of education.

Concerning **the right to health**, the **CHRC commends** the launch of Universal Health Coverage on 12 April 2023.

Concerning the **rights of persons with disabilities**, **the CHRC particularly deplores** the inaccessibility of public services, including information, education, employment, and health, to all types of disability. **The CHRC recommends** that, in addition to ensuring accessibility of services, the deposit of instruments of ratification of the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities.

Lastly, concerning **the protection of women's rights**, the **CHRC is particularly concerned** about the lack of awareness of women's rights and the mechanisms available in the event of violations. **The CHRC recommends** that the relevant authorities increase women's awareness of their rights and the remedies available to them.

# STATEMENT

12

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 14<sup>th</sup> Biennial Conference  
of Network of African National Human Rights  
Institutions (NANHRI)**

**18 October 2023**



## **14th Biennial Conference of Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI)**

### **Session on “The Nexus between Business and Human Rights and Conflict in Africa”**

**A presentation by Prof James MOUANGUE KOBILA, Chairperson of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) on**

**“Perspectives of the NHRI of Cameroon on the Nexus Between Business, Human Rights and Conflict in Africa”**

**Accra, 18 October 2023**

This talk delves on the following four questions:

- How do human rights contribute to conflict prevention?
- What are the causes of conflict in business operations?
- What is the role of NHRIs in preventing business-related conflicts and providing early warning in Africa?
- How can companies operating in conflict environments adopt a conflict-sensitive approach and respect for human rights?

The geographical focus of this paper is Cameroon, because Cameroon, "Africa in miniature", is experiencing the two main types of conflict currently taking place in Africa: Boko Haram terrorism in the Far North and secessionist movements in the two English-speaking regions of the country, the North-West and the South-West.

#### **1.- How do human rights contribute to conflict prevention?**



Errol P. Mendes makes it clear: “carefully planned and fully developed institutions [...] founded on universally accepted principles of justice and human rights”<sup>2</sup> are the conditions for peace and security worldwide. He further states that “there is a negative impact on the legitimacy of these institutions of global governance if these universally accepted principles of justice and human rights were absent”<sup>3</sup>. What is true worldwide is all the more true at national level.

We will use the syllogistic reasoning familiar to lawyers. Conflicts often arise from a sense of injustice caused by the absence of rule of law. Human rights are a dimension of the rule of law. Respect for human rights therefore helps to prevent conflict.

Better still, when human rights are respected and governance is guided by the public interest, the resulting sense of justice legitimises leaders and institutions. Thus, when human rights are respected, both sides feel that governance is in line with the aspirations of the people and that there is no need for conflict. This legitimacy of institutions is the indirect means of preventing conflict through respect for human rights, without discrimination or hierarchy.

The reverse is true when human rights are not respected and when governance is perceived to be driven by self-interests. Errol P. Mendes qualifies this “self-interested [...] exercise of sovereign power” as being “self-destructive”<sup>4</sup>.

## 2.- What are the causes of conflict in business operations?

The CHRC in a statement of 31 July 2023, to mark the 61<sup>st</sup> African Women's Day celebrated at the African regional level on the theme "**Women's know-how and potential for peace-building with a view to accelerating the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)**", and in Cameroon simply entitled "**Pooling women's potential in peace-building to accelerate the implementation of the African Continental Free Trade Area**", came as an opportunity to identify the main sources of conflicts in trading, which are:

- the inadequacy of national trade laws and regulations to prevent and punish human rights abuses, the displacement of communities, environmental degradation and lack of respect for the rights of workers, women, persons with disabilities and refugee women
- the lack of ownership of trade policies and compliance with trade rules by economic operators

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<sup>2</sup> See by the same author, *Global Governance, Human Rights and International Law. Combating the Tragic Flaw*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Routledge, 2023, p. 191.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*

- the persistence of informal cross-border trade (in a context where 85.8% of jobs in Africa are in the informal sector), including with AfCFTA countries, which means that many services produced at national level escape the control mechanisms that could ensure their structuring and sustainable development.

### 3.- What is the role of NHRIs in preventing business-related conflicts and providing early warning in Africa?

NHRIs have nine strings to their bow to help prevent business-related conflicts and provide early warning in Africa:

- Actively raising awareness among businesses about human rights and business, particularly to make them understand that profit must not be put ahead of persons and that “*the responsible exercise of power by de jure or de facto organizations [...] lays the foundation of their legitimacy*”<sup>5</sup>; when businesses are “*are not seen as responsibly carrying out the high visions originally cast for them, there is an inevitable backlash from many quarters, particularly from civil society*”. The CHRC Chairperson delivered this message to the *Cercle des jeunes dirigeants du Groupement inter-patronal du Cameroun* on 22 July 2023 during the *Pitch my Strategy-day* organised at the head office of the organisation.
- Establish an early warning system for human rights violations and investigate cases.
- Assess the impact of trade measures on human rights
- Encourage the authorities to place vulnerable groups and women in particular at the centre of the implementation of the AfCFTA, through the equitable distribution of benefits, respect for the principle of non-discrimination and the participation of this vulnerable group, which is often left behind
- Urge the authorities to put human well-being back at the heart of business and step up capacity-building activities for control officers on the identification of indicators to measure the extent to which the fight against economic violence is being taken into account.
- Recommend that the authorities adopt a National Action Plan (NAP) on business and human rights.
- Strengthen the implementation of *accountability measures* to ensure access to justice for victims of human rights violations.

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<sup>5</sup> See Errol P. Mendes, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

- Increase awareness among potential victims of the various forms of protection and reparations available to them and encourage communities and women of all ages, regardless of their social status, to report all forms of violence against them, including economic violence.
- Expand and strengthen "*education [as] it helps to protect communities and is definitely a preventive measure against violence*"<sup>6</sup>. The fact is that "*when children [especially the girl child] go to school, their minds become unavailable for those trying to recruit them for violence [because] they have the agency to reason better [,] therefore not easily misled [and] are able to make choices that will enable them to take care of themselves [...] to advance communities and nations*".<sup>7</sup>

#### **4.- How can companies operating in conflict environments adopt a conflict-sensitive approach and demonstrate respect for human rights?**

Companies operating in conflict or insecurity contexts are often confronted with a dilemma: to leave or to stay. However, it is important to distinguish between the situation of local companies that are only present in the conflict or tension zone and those that have other operating structures outside the conflict or insecurity zone. Those that are only present in the conflict zone generally have no choice but to leave, given the loss of income and additional operating costs. This issue therefore only really concerns the latter case, whose support base at international level and/or in other regions of the country means that they have the resources to cope with difficult circumstances.

This category of companies is often faced with a choice: continue to invest, work for local development and safeguard jobs, while demonstrating respect for human and peoples rights, or leave the area, understanding that this last solution is sometimes also dictated by human rights: the desire to protect the lives of employees.

Whether they decide to stay or leave, companies operating in a conflict context can adopt a conflict-sensitive approach and demonstrate respect for human rights by putting people at the centre of their decisions. Accordingly,

- the decision to leave should only be taken when employees' livelihoods are significantly at risk.
- those who remain must adapt by improving their productivity to cope with rising operating costs.
- groups that have become doubly vulnerable should remain the focus
- Victims should be granted access to justice.

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<sup>6</sup> United Nations Office to the African Union (UNOAU) and by the African Union Commission (AUC), "She Stands for Peace, 20 years, 20 journeys", January 2020, pp. 50.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.* p. 50.

# **STATEMENT**

**13**

**Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights  
Commission at the 42nd Ordinary Session  
of the African Committee of Experts on the Right  
and Wellbeing of the Child (ACERWC)**

**8 to 17 November 2023**



## **42<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERTS ON THE RIGHT AND WELLBEING OF THE CHILD (ACERWC)**

Addis Abeba - Ethiopia,

From 8 to 17 November 2023

### **Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)**

**Your Excellencies, Distinguished Representatives of States,**

**Honourable Chairperson of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, please accept our congratulations on your election,**

**Distinguished Members of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,**

**Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian and Social Affairs of the African Union,**

**The Representative of the Secretariat of the Platform for African Governance Architecture,**

**Distinguished Representative of the Network of African National Human Rights Institutions (NANHRI),**

**Representative of the Children,**

**Representative of the Forum of Civil Society Organisations,**

**Distinguished participants, all protocols observed,**

It is with great pleasure that I address this distinguished audience at the 42<sup>nd</sup> Ordinary Session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (hereinafter ACERWC or the Committee), on behalf of the Human Rights Commission of Cameroon (CHRC) and on behalf of the Chairperson of the CHRC, who is unable to attend, to present the situation of the rights of the child in Cameroon, the activities of the CHRC to promote and protect the rights of the child, as well as the progress made and the

challenges faced by the first NHRI affiliated to the ACERWC in the implementation of these rights during the intersessional period (from May to October 2023).

The Commission is particularly pleased to participate in this session, during which the study on *parental responsibility* and the *General Comment on Female Genital Mutilation* will be presented. The Commission is particularly interested in these issues, which were addressed on 6 February in a statement with recommendations on the occasion of the World Day against Female Genital Mutilation and in a press release on the protection of the rights of the child in educational guidance, in which the crucial role of parents was amply highlighted.

The Commission also wishes to inform you that it has agreed to join forces with the Cameroon Child Rights Civil Society Organisations Network (CAMCRIN), a network of 60 civil society organisations specialising in the promotion and protection of child rights, with which a Memorandum of Understanding was signed on 14 July. The aim of this cooperation is, inter alia, to advocate for the strengthening of national legal frameworks and to follow up on the recommendations of the African and universal child rights monitoring mechanisms.

A Memorandum of Understanding was also signed on 13 September between the CHRC and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees to join efforts to better protect the rights of forcibly displaced children.

In addition, during the inter-sessional period, the CHRC focused its attention on three major issues concerning the promotion and protection of the rights of the child in Cameroon. These were:

- i) the issue of the child's right to identity
- ii) misinformation and the spread of hate speech among young people, and
- iii) violence against children.

Progress and challenges in these areas have been addressed in the *four statements on the rights of the child published and widely disseminated during the reporting period*:

- i) the Day of the African Child, 16 June 2023
- ii) International Day against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June 2023
- iii) Africa Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day, on 10 August 2023
- iv) International Day for the Protection of Education from Attack, 9 September 2023.

Also, during this period, the 33rd Day of the African Child (DAC) was celebrated on 16 June 2023 under the theme proposed by ACERWC: *The Rights of the Child in the Digital Environment*.

The Cameroonian authorities took **additional measures** to address the issue of birth certificates. On 15 June 2023, the Ministry for Women Empowerment and the Family signed an agreement with local authorities in the most affected seven of the ten regions to increase the national birth registration rate for under-fives to 66.1 per cent. Currently, 1,600,000 children attend school without a birth certificate, according to statistics from the National Institute of Statistics and the National Civil Registration Office.

With regard to the issue of **the rights of the child in a digital environment**, the CHRC is pleased to note that Cameroon's national legal arsenal for the protection of children has been supplemented and strengthened by the adoption of the Charter for the Protection of Children on the Internet, the subject of Law No. 2023/009 of 25 July 2009, which makes Internet access providers, content providers and operators of communication networks duty bearers so that they safeguard at all times the best interests of the child, their dignity and moral integrity, under penalty of administrative or criminal sanctions as appropriate. As for the CHRC, since the last session it has taken advantage of *the establishment of 188 human rights clubs in secondary schools and universities throughout Cameroon to communicate widely on the advantages and disadvantages of the use of new information technologies by children.*

With regard to the **protection of education against attacks**, the CHRC is pleased to inform the ACERWC that the Follow-up Committee on the Implementation of the Recommendations of the Major National Dialogue, at its 5th meeting held in Buea on 11 August 2002, adopted 12 resolutions that will contribute to the better protection of education against attacks by secessionist terrorists in the North-West and South-West regions, including:

- Increased budget allocations for the rehabilitation and construction of school infrastructure
- A security presence around schools
- Encouraging the public to systematically report any planned attacks on education.

In terms of challenges, the CHRC deplors the low level of child participation in the development and implementation of policies for their benefit, particularly with regard to solutions to the harmful effects of the misuse of the Internet and social media, such as disinformation and the spread of hate speech, which are at the root of violence in schools. The CHRC plans to use the human rights clubs established in secondary schools and public and private higher education institutions to address these issues.

In addition, there has been no real reduction in violence against children, mainly due to the security situation in three of the country's 10 regions. We particularly recall the heinous

murder of a 14-year-old boy by the terrorist group ADF in Ako Municipality, North-West Region, while he was helping his father with his business activities. The perpetrators of this crime said that the boy would pay with his life for his father's failure to contribute to the Anglophone secessionist war effort (source: Klein Reporters).

In a statement issued on 9 September 2023 to mark the 4th International Day for the Protection of Education from Attack, the CHRC once again condemned the lockdown and terrorist attacks on pupils, teachers, schools and parents of pupils or students, including one in the South-West Region on 18 August 2023 and another in the North-West Region on 3 September 2023, which violated the right to life of four people, including two teachers and two defenders of the right to education.

Furthermore, as part of its mandate to protect human rights under sections 6 and 7 of the law of 19 July 2019 on the establishment, organisation and functioning of the CHRC, which consists of receiving and handling written or oral complaints and reports, but also conducting self-initiative investigations into cases of serious, systemic or recurrent violations of human rights, the CHRC registered 85 complaints of violations of child rights through the **toll-free number 1523**, complaints and self-initiated investigations between 1 January and 30 October 2023.

To illustrate this situation, the CHRC presented to the Committee the recent case of a woman detained in Yaoundé Central Prison with her two children, aged six and three respectively. The investigations and the complaint to the authorities were based mainly on the provisions of Article 30 (d) of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, ratified by Cameroon, which states that States Parties "*shall ensure that a mother shall not be imprisoned with her child*", and those of Article 4 on the fundamental principle of the best interests of the child. The CHRC's investigation into this case led to a positive assessment of the steps taken by the Ministry of Social Affairs to uphold the children's rights to education, safety and regular contact with their mother. The CHRC plans to draw inspiration from the ACERWC's **General Comment No. 1** on Article 30 of the ACRWC, concerning *children of imprisoned parents or primary guardians*, to make recommendations to all authorities responsible for dealing with such cases.

**Distinguished members of the Committee,**

**Distinguished participants,**

The CHRC wishes to reiterate its determination to cooperate fully with the ACERWC in order to assist it in carrying out its mandates, in particular with regard to the dissemination of its studies and general observations, as well as to monitor the implementation of the recommendations made following the Committee's handling of communications.



The Commission recommends that the authorities update the submission of the three periodic reports under the ACRWC and finalise the adoption of the Child Protection Code. The CHRC recommends that civil society organisations disseminate all laws relating to the rights of the child, in particular the Charter on Child Online Protection in Cameroon.

Finally, as a pioneer institution affiliated to the Committee, the CHRC calls on all other African NHRIs to subscribe to this commitment and to cooperate fully with the Committee.

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