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DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

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CAMEROON HUMAN
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STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO
MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY FOR THE ELIMINATION OF
VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN

25 November 2023

Theme. - *UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls*

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter: "the Commission"), established by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019, and rendered operational since April 29, 2021, following the swearing-in of its members before the Supreme Court sitting in Joint Benches,

Bearing in mind that it was through United Nations General Assembly Resolution 54/134 of 17 December 1999, that the International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women was proclaimed to be celebrated on 25 November each year, in order to promote respect for the rights of women and young girls,

Also mindful that on the same occasion, this celebration pays tribute to "María Teresa, Minerva, and Patria Mirabal, three sisters from Salcedo, Dominican Republic, [...] savagely killed on 25 November 1960, after opposing the regime of Trujillo the tyrant (1930-1961)¹ »,

Recalling that the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Violence Against Women was adopted on 18 December 1979, by United Nations General Assembly Resolution No. 34/180, subsequently entered into force on 3 September 1981, and was ratified by the State of Cameroon on 23 August 1994,

Considering that the theme of this year's celebration, *UNiTE! Invest to Prevent Violence against Women & Girls*, calls on everyone to recognise that:

violence against women and girls remains one of the most widespread human rights violations in the world, [since] it is estimated that 736 million women, globally, – nearly one in three – have experienced physical and/or sexual

¹ See "Trois sœurs contre une dictature", <https://gazettedesfemmes.ca/14159/trois-soeurs-contre-une-dictature/>, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

violence by an intimate partner or sexual violence by a non-partner, or both, at least once in their lifetime²,

Considering further that the campaign titled "*16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence against women and girls*" which shares the aforementioned theme, will commence on

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Recalling that according to Article 1 of the United Nations General Assembly's Resolution 48/104 on the elimination of violence against women, adopted on December 20, 1993, this violence is defined as

any act of gender-based violence that results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual, or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion, or arbitrary deprivation of liberty, whether occurring in public or private life⁴,

Recognizing that through paragraph 6 of the Preamble of the same resolution,

violence against women reflects historically unequal power relations between men and women, [which] have led to the domination and discrimination exercised by men and hindered the advancement of women, and that it is among the main social mechanisms that account for the subordination of women to men⁵,

Emphasizing that, according to UNWomen, violence against women includes:

- domestic violence (economic, psychological, emotional, physical, and sexual violence)
- femicide (honour killings)
- non-domestic sexual violence (rape, corrective rape, rape culture)
- trafficking of women and girls
- female genital mutilation
- child marriage

² See "Gros plan : 16 jours d'activisme contre la violence basée sur le genre", https://www.google.com/url?sa=t&ret=j&q=&esrc=s&source=web&cd=&ved=2ahUKEwjp4--pIdiCAxVqhV0HHQdKAtYQFnoECA4QAO&url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.unwomen.org%2Ffr%2Fnouvelles%2Fgros-plan%2F2023%2F11%2Fgros-plan-16-jours-dactivisme-contre-la-violence-basee-sur-le-genre&usq=AOvVaw386YjUvJ08_yIEF4aX6Vqy&opi=89978449, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

³ Concept Note for the *Activism against Gender-Based Violence against women and girls* initiated by the United Nations Secretary General.

⁴ United Nations, Declaration on the Elimination of Violence Against Women, A/RES/48/104 of 23 February 1994.

⁵ *Ibid.*

- online violence or digital violence (cyberbullying, non-consensual sexting⁶ and doxing⁷),

Considering that the Preamble of the Constitution of 18 January 1996, affirms that *"the nation protects and promotes the family, the natural basis of human society. It protects women [and the girl child],"*

Recalling that the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, adopted on 11 July 2003, during the Second Ordinary Session of the African Union Conference in Maputo, Mozambique (Maputo Protocol), which entered into force on 25 November 2005, and was ratified by Cameroon on 28 December 2012, when it deposited its instruments of ratification, recognises *"the crucial role of women in preserving African values based on the principles of equality, peace, freedom, dignity, justice, solidarity, and democracy,"*

Considering that, according to Article 1(g) of the aforementioned Protocol, *"Women" means persons of the female gender, including girls,*

Considering further that certain instruments of the national policy for the promotion and protection of the rights of women and the girl child, including combatting violence against women, have been adopted and are being implemented at the national level, particularly:

- the National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence (GBV) 2022-2026, and
- the National Action Plan 2022-2026 for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) in Cameroon was adopted with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA),

The Commission commends Government efforts to curb violence against women in Cameroonian society, including:

- the official launch, under the auspices of the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF), of the "Women, Peace, and Security in Central Africa" Project in Cameroon, initiated by the Association for the Fight against Violence against Women (ALVF), on 8 November 2023, in the Fouda neighbourhood in Yaoundé
- the launch of the process for drafting a draft law against gender-based violence by MINPROFF on 7 November 2023, at the Hilton Hotel in Yaoundé

⁶ Sexting (also known as textpornography, sexting or sexing) *"is the act of electronically sending sexually explicit text or photographs, especially from one mobile phone to another"*. The term first appeared in Australia in 2005 in an article in the newspaper *The Daily Telegraph*. See <https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sexting>. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

⁷ Le Doxing or doxxing is *"the disclosure of personal data; it is the practice of seeking out and disclosing information on the Internet about an individual's identity and private life with the aim of causing harm. The information disclosed may include identity, address, national insurance number, bank account number, etc."*. See https://fr.wikipedia.org/wiki/Divulgarion_de_donn%C3%A9es_personnelles. Accessed on 14 November 2023.

- the organization of an awareness campaign against gender-based violence in three villages in the Kette Municipality (Timangolo, Mama 1, and Kette Centre) in the Kadey Department, East Region, by the Shelter for Young Mothers Association (FAJEFIM) in partnership with the Regional Delegation of MINPROFF in the East, during the period from August to October 2023,

However, the Commission notes with regret that according to the *Situational Analysis of Gender-Based Violence in Cameroon*, published on 7 November 2023, in Yaoundé by MINPROFF:

- *some 52.6% of women in relationships have experienced domestic or conjugal violence (equivalent to 54 cases of femicide in recent months)*
- *one in three women has experienced physical violence*
- *some 42% of women have experienced emotional violence*
- *some 38% of women have experienced sexual or physical violence*
- *harmful cultural practices such as FGM (1.4% nationally and 20% in hotspot areas) and early or forced marriages (36%) remain common in certain regions of Cameroon⁸,*

The Commission strongly condemns the increasing acts of violence against women and the girl child that have come to its attention since 25 November 2022; these acts contribute to creating an atmosphere of insecurity in families and perpetuate a sense of fear, including:

- the case of Mrs OUMMOUL Kouloumi, residing in the village of Djerokoka, Bélel Sub-Division, Adamawa Region, who suffered several beatings from her husband, named MOUHAMMADOU Mouctar, while she was 28 weeks pregnant; after the suspect was heard by the CHRC Branch, on 15 March 2023, the conciliation attempt was abortive, and the couple divorced on 31 March 2023, according to Islamic customs⁹
- the case of Mrs NGAGNI Julienne, a mother of three minors, who has been subjected to regular physical violence and death threats from Mr SALBAYE Jean Joël, her husband, for almost two years; she received financial assistance from the CHRC Branch of the Adamawa Region to cover legal expenses for initiating divorce proceedings; a separation order between the spouses was issued by the President of the Adamawa High Court on 20 July 2023¹⁰
- the case of Mrs MMADUKA Ochinna, residing in Bamenda, North-West Region, who suffered serious injuries inflicted by Mr MMADUKA Bertrand, her husband, a national of a neighbouring country; the CHRC

⁸ See Demographic Health Survey (DHS) 2023 from *l'Analyse situationnelle des violences basées sur le genre au Cameroun* published by MINPROFF, accessed on 14 November 2023.

⁹ Contribution of the Adamawa Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, 3 pages, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*

Branch summoned the suspect through the quarter head for a hearing on 5 September 2023, but he refused to participate and is currently on the run¹¹

- the case of Princess BIH Claudia, a 13-year old, residing in Nankwa village in the North-West Region, who was raped several times by a 23-year-old man named NJI Walters until she finally found the courage to report him to her parents; the CHRC Branch referred the matter to the Central Police Station in Bamenda on 29 August 2023, for the suspect to be arrested; the Branch office equally referred the matter to the Unit handling GBV of the Regional Hospital in Bamenda for the medical care of the victim¹²
- the case of Mrs WAPUNGHA Irene, a victim of physical and psychological violence by Mr ACOH Pascal, her partner, who refuses to take care of their four-year-old twins. The CHRC North-West Branch contacted the suspect by phone before serving him a notice to appear, delivered through his father¹³
- the case of Mrs ZEBI Catherine, who has suffered physical (beatings) and psychological violence from her partner, named KAYANG ELANGA Casimir, with whom she has children; the CHRC Branch of the East Region supported the victim in filing a complaint with the Secretary of State at the Ministry of Defence in charge the National Gendarmerie¹⁴
- the case of Mrs TCHAMBA, formerly-known as DIEUNANG Gaëlle, who was pregnant and subjected to a violent physical assault by Mr TAKOUKENG Duplex, her landlord, in Bertoua, on 22 February 2023. The Branch Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) for the East Region is closely monitoring the progress of this case, which has been referred to the Bertoua Court of First Instance¹⁵
- the case of little NGUEPNANG Francine, a 19-year old, who on 20 October 2023, was a victim of abduction by Mr SIPINI Simplicie, her guardian, who is also a registered lawyer at the Cameroon Bar Association, in Ngodi Bakoko quarter in Douala; the young girl was allegedly locked in a cage intended for dogs; a neighbour who discovered the girl in that condition raised an alarm on social media; the residents of the area then alerted the officers of the 16th District Police Station in Douala¹⁶,

¹¹ Contribution of the North-West Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, 7 pages, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Contribution of the East Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, 9 pages, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ Contribution of the Littoral Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, 2 pages, Accessed on 14 November 2023.

The Commission is outraged by the fact that between 26 November 2022, and 25 November 2023, a total of 107 cases of violence against women and girls have been recorded throughout the country, the most emblematic of which are:

- the murder of Mrs YONGO TCHOUNDOU Diane, a teacher at the Bilingual High School of Nylon in Douala, by Mr MVONDO BEKOBÉ Eric, her husband, subsequent to a rain of blows she received on 12 November 2023, within the premises of Zabele Hospital in Douala, where this mother of three children was admitted to intensive care before she passed away on 18 November 2023; on the same day, the suspect was arrested and detained at the Bakoko Brigade¹⁷
- the rape followed by the murder of young TIMIZA Aissatou in the Daiguene quarter in Garoua-Boulai, Lom and Djerem Division, East Region, on 22 October 2023, by unidentified individuals; an investigation has been opened at the Garoua-Boulai Gendarmerie Brigade¹⁸
- the physical assault on NGO BAHOP Chimène, a young girl aged 20, by scalding with hot pepper water on 28 August 2023, at the "New Florida" leisure complex located in the Brazzaville quarter in the Douala 5 Sub-Division, by young girls who work there as waitresses and exotic dancers; three suspects were arrested and detained at the Judicial Police Division in Douala on 29 August 2023; they have since been held in provisional detention at the New Bell Central Prison, and the case is ongoing before the Wouri High Court¹⁹
- the brutal gang assault on NGO LINGOCK Therese Moraine, a young girl aged 16, by a group of three young girls in Bonaberi, Douala; the scene was filmed by one of the participants and posted on social media, and the suspects were arrested on 28 August 2023, then brought before the State Counsel's Office of the Bonaberi Court of First Instance on 31 August 2023²⁰
- the murder, on 4 February 2023, of a woman named Claudia, a trader residing in the Ngolambe 1 village in the Dimako quarters, by unidentified individuals; the related trial is ongoing before the Abong-Mbang Court of First Instance and Grand Instance²¹
- the rape and attempted murder of Miss KOS BELAMO Bibiche, a student at the Technical High School of Dimako, on Wednesday, 11 January 2023, by a certain TCHINDA and his accomplices who were arrested a few days later by the local population and taken to the Doumé Gendarmerie Brigade where they

¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁸ Contribution of the East Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, 9 pages, accessed on 14 November 2023.

¹⁹ Contribution of the Littoral Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, *op.cit*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Contribution of the East Regional Office of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC) during activities to mark the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women in 2023, *op. cit.*

were referred to the State Counsel's Office of the Haut-Nyong and placed in provisional detention at the main prison of Abong-Mbang²²,

The Commission is appalled by the trivialisation of horrific acts of violence against women and girls, resulting in violations of their rights to life, physical and moral integrity, safety, dignity and equality for all, especially when the person has been tortured before being killed and the body mutilated,

The Commission is pleased with the activities it has organized and participated in as part of the fight to eliminate violence against women and the girl child, such as:

- the dialogue on resilience under the theme "*Gender, environmental crimes and biodiversity loss: identifying challenges and solutions*", organised by the Action for the Protection of Internally Displaced Persons and Environmental Migrants in Africa (APADIME) on 3 October 2023 at the Makepe Palace in Douala; the activity highlighted that women and girls are often the most affected by the harmful effects of environmental crimes
- the capacity-building workshop for the CHRC as a national institution for the promotion and protection of women's rights, organised by the UN Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa in Buea on 8 August 2023
- the Women's Rights Awareness Campaign to mark the International Women's Rights Day organised by the CHRC Branch for the South Region on 8 March 2023 in Ebolowa
- the celebration of the 16 Days of Activism to Combat Violence against Women and Girls global campaign organised by the CHRC Branch for the East Region at the MANSA Hotel in Bertoua, on 8-9 December 2022,

The Commission remains concerned about:

- the trivialization of domestic and intimate partner violence against women and young girls perpetrated by family members and close friends of the victims
- the persistence of harmful customary practices that constitute violence against women and girls (widowhood rites, breast ironing, etc.),

The Commission emphasizes that:

- gender inequality is deeply rooted in socio-traditional and patriarchal norms.
- the socio-political situation in the North-West and South-West regions has a negative impact on women and girls.
- the persistent insecurity in some regions is the cause of the escalation of GBV in these areas,

²² *Ibid.*

Aware that IDPs from insecure areas tend to live in overcrowded houses or find accommodation that becomes a programme of sexual exploitation or forced labour, especially for girls,

Aware also that, due to limited access to resources and livelihoods, some women and young girls engage in prostitution, thus leading to:

- high rates of unintended pregnancy and abortion
- rise in sexually transmitted infections (STIs) and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs)
- persistence of abductions and violence against women,

The Commission recommends:

1. To the Government:

- *to continue with greater commitment, the implementation of all adopted strategic policies, including:*
 - *the National Strategy to Combat Gender-Based Violence 2022-2026*
 - *the National Action Plan 2022-2026 for the Elimination of Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon, adopted with the support of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA)*
- *to complete the development process of the draft law against GBV launched by MINPROFF (Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family), and the draft law on the Family Code,*

2. To the Ministry of Justice:

- *to track down, apprehend, and punish all perpetrators of violence against women and girls according to the existing law, to deter others from committing acts of violence against women*
- *to further strengthen the capacity of actors in the judicial chain on the African and universal normative framework protecting women's rights.*

3. To the Police and Gendarmerie:

- *to ensure regular training of judicial police officers and gendarmes on the detection, care, referring and following up cases of violence against women at the police and gendarmerie units*
- *to take additional measures to ensure the safety of victims or witnesses of violence against women to encourage reporting*

4. To the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family:

- *to conduct more awareness-raising campaigns targeting women, community leaders, and traditional chiefs to eradicate violence against women and girls*

- to encourage victims and communities to report perpetrators and accomplices of violence against women and girls to the appropriate authorities
- to promote a more inclusive and equitable approach to resolving identified cases of GBV, giving women in general, including rural women, the opportunity to participate in decision-making,

5. To the Ministry of Social Affairs:

- to advocate to the Government for funding specific projects to combat gender-based violence
- to strengthen data collection and quality assurance to ensure accurate and reliable analysis of GBV-related data
- to establish shelters or centres for victims of GBV in the regions.

6. To Civil Society Organizations:

- to further intensify awareness-raising against all forms of violence against women and girls within families, traditional authorities, places of worship, schools, cultural associations, etc.
- to encourage the resilience of women in the face of identified challenges through diversification of their activities and the pooling of their efforts.

The Commission calls on all men to cease all forms of violence against women and girls and protect these vulnerable groups,

The Commission will spare no effort in continuing to raise awareness against violence against women and girls through training workshops, awareness campaigns, advocacy, investigative missions, and in handling complaints or self-initiated investigations,

The Commission once again invites anyone who is a victim or witness of human rights violations - and especially women's rights - to report them, including through **the toll-free number at 1523 (even without airtime).**

Useful Addresses of CHRC

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24 NOV 2023

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