



**STATEMENT OF THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
TO MARK THE WORLD REFUGEE DAY  
20 JUNE 2021**

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission, hereinafter referred to as “the Commission”, created by law No. 2019/014 of July 2019,

*Considering* resolution No. A/RES/55/76 of the United Nations General Assembly instituting 20<sup>th</sup> June as the international day for refugees;

*Recalling* that this day was set to honour refugees around the globe, to celebrate the strength and courage of people who have been forced to flee their home country to escape conflict or persecution;

*Bearing in mind* the definition of a refugee given in article 1 of the 1951 convention as “a person who is outside his or her country of nationality or habitual residence; has a well-founded fear of persecution because of his or her race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion; and is unable or unwilling to avail himself or herself of the protection of that country, or to return there, for fear of persecution”;

*Considering* the theme of the year which is “*Together we heal, learn and shine*”<sup>1</sup>

*Bearing in mind* that about 80 million people served by the office of the United Nations’ High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) are at the same risk of catching the coronavirus as anyone else, that those refugees very often struggle to find a doctor when they fall ill, to find a school for their children, or even a place for their children to run around or play, and therefore need access to quality health services and care, to quality education and to sporting activities to strengthen their mental health and help them gain confidence and build new friendships<sup>2</sup>;

*Mindful of* the preamble to the Constitution Cameroon of 18 January 1996, which provides that “every person shall have the right to settle in any place and to move about freely, subjected to the statutory provisions concerning public law and order, security and tranquillity”;

*Mindful of* the African Charter on Human and People Rights, which provides in article 12 that “every individual shall have the right, when persecuted, to seek and obtain asylum in other countries in accordance with laws of those countries and international conventions”;

<sup>1</sup> [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org) consulted on 19/5/2021

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*



**Mindful** of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights which stipulates in article 14 that “everyone has the right to seek and to enjoy in other countries asylum from persecution”;

**Mindful** of the provisions of the 1951 Convention on the status of refugees acceded to by Cameroon on 23 October 1961 and the 1967 protocol ratified on 19 September 1967 which are the basic and universal instruments on the status of refugees;

**Considering** the 1969 OAU Convention governing the specific aspect of refugee problems in Africa ratified by Cameroon in 7 September 1985 which extends the definition of refugee in article 1(2) to “a person who is compelled to leave his country of origin or nationality owing to external aggression, occupation, foreign domination or events seriously disturbing public order....”;

**Mindful of** the African Union Convention for the Protection and Assistance of Internally Displaced Persons in Africa (Kampala convention) acceded to by Cameroon on 24 May 2017;

**Bearing in mind** law No. 2005 /006 of 27 July 2005 relating to the status of refugees in Cameroon and its implementing decree No. 2011/389 of 28 November 2011 for the law relating to the organization and functions of the Eligibility and Appeals Commissions and the appointment of members of the two Commissions in August 2012;

**Bearing in mind** that at least 79.5 million people around the world have been forced to flee their homes amongst who are nearly 26 million refugees<sup>3</sup>;

**The Commission notes** that as at February 2021, there were 440 461 refugees of various nationalities<sup>4</sup> in Cameroon compared with 337 398 in 2017, that there were 7 591 asylum seekers as well.

**The Commission equally notes** that at that same period there were 1 032 942 internally displaced persons in Cameroon with 321 886 of them in the far North in connection with Boko Haram attacks and 711 056 internally displaced persons due to the crisis in North West and South West Regions.<sup>5</sup>In addition, 32000 Cameroonians were forced to take refuge in Nigeria by the end of 2018<sup>6</sup>.

**The Commission commends** the various states for their hospitality towards refugees from Cameroon providing them with protection and basic supplies.

**The Commission commends** the people of Cameroon for their hospitality and generosity towards refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons since 2013 and for accepting them into their communities.

**The Commission commends** the constant assistance of United Nations Agencies, international organisations and national stakeholders for offering assistance to refugees in the form of school items, medical assistance including for cases of Covid-19 infections, the construction of shelters and various forms of aid to internally displaced persons and host communities as well as psychosocial support<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> UNHCR figures at a glance on [www.unhcr.org](http://www.unhcr.org)

<sup>4</sup> UNHCR Cameroon MCO factsheet [www.reliefweb.int](http://www.reliefweb.int) consulted 18/6/2021.

<sup>5</sup>ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Cameroon: North-West and South-West Crisis Situation. Report No. 2 published on 18 January 2019 by Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on [reliefweb.int](http://reliefweb.int) consulted on 6 April 2021

<sup>7</sup> UNHCR factsheet of February 2021. Cameroon MCO on <http://reliefweb.int/sites> consulted on 30 April 2021



**The Commission commends** the Government for actions taken to ensure the health and education of refugees, asylum seekers and internally displaced persons including:

- the construction of 104 schools during the 2016/2017 academic year for refugee children, IDPs and children in host communities in the Far North Region
- the distribution of school material including kits, school uniforms, benches and sports uniforms to refugees and host communities
- the progressive and total inclusion of refugees in the national health system with the construction of health centres for all without discrimination
- the distribution of sanitary material and the continuous sensitization of the population on preventive measures against Covid-19
- for organizing the peaceful and voluntary repatriation of 425 Nigerians in February 2021 and 369 in March 2021.
- for organising the return to the town of Mamfe of 300 persons displaced due to the security situation in the North-West and South-West Regions of Cameroon, where they were handed presidential gifts by the government in January 2021<sup>8</sup>.

**The Commission however notes** the shortage of healthcare facilities in refugee camps such as the Minawao Camp, with just 2 health facilities since 2017 for some 60,000 refugees, a number which is below the UNHCR standards for health centres in refugee camps which is one health centre for 20,000 refugees<sup>9</sup>.

**The Commission notes** that 386 000 children-including refugees, internally displaced children and children in host communities are in need of education services<sup>10</sup>.

**The Commission notes** that the State requires support in the management of refugees and internally displaced persons.

**The Commission condemns** the attacks on some camps of refugees and internally displaced persons especially those perpetrated in the Far North Region by Boko Haram militants leading to another in flux of persons in search of safety, health and education services.

**The Commission entreats** the Ministry of External Relations to effectively operationalise the work of the Eligibility and the Appeal Commissions so that refugees can have a recognised status to benefit from the privileges especially in the area of education, healthcare and sports.

**The Commission recommends** that the Ministries in charge of education in Cameroon should continually facilitate the admission into schools by simplifying some procedures for admission into schools of refugees, internally displaced persons and asylum seekers.

**The Commission also recommends** that the Ministry of decentralisation and local development, the Delegate General for National security should further facilitate the procedure for obtaining identification papers by internally displaced persons so they can easily have access to public services such as health care and education.

**The Commission strongly reaffirms** its engagement to spare no efforts in promoting a culture of Human Rights in Cameroon through education, awareness raising, advocacy, self-initiated

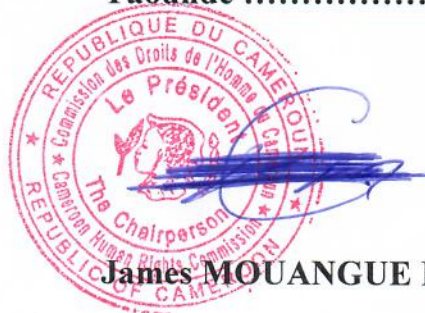
<sup>8</sup> Mamfe: Returning IDPs, refugees receive President Paul Biya's gift, <https://www.cameroon-tribune.cm/article.html> consulted on 30 April 2021.

<sup>9</sup> Ministry of Justice Human Rights report for 2017 p.330-333

<sup>10</sup> UNICEF Cameroon country programme 2018-2020 :Strategy note, Basic education programme 2018-2020 on [www.unicef.org](http://www.unicef.org) consulted on 20 May 2021

investigations and the treatment of complaints on allegations of violations of Human and Peoples Rights according to its mandate.

Yaounde ..... 18 JUIN 2021



**James MOUANGUE KOBILA**