



## STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO MARK THE WORLD CHILDREN'S DAY

**Under the theme: *Shine the Light on Children's Rights***

**20 November 2021**

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter referred to as: "the Commission"), created by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019, and established on 29 April 2021 subsequent to the swearing-in of its members before the Supreme Court sitting in chambers,

*Bearing in mind* Resolution A/RES/1386 (XIV) of the General Assembly of the United Nations adopted in 1959 which establishes 20 November of each year as *World Children's Day*,

*Bearing in mind* that this 67<sup>th</sup> World Children's Day coincides with the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations Children's Fund,

*Recognising* that the Preamble of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child states that "*the child, due to the needs of his physical and mental development requires particular care with regard to health, physical, mental, moral and social development, and requires legal protection in conditions of freedom, dignity and security*",

*Bearing in mind* that the United Nations, through this Day, celebrated this year under the theme *Shining the Light on Children's Rights*, invites States, through local authorities, to *light up in blue, the colour of peace*, to convey messages in favour of children, to raise funds for the most vulnerable among them and to raise public awareness of this cause,

*Recalling* that in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the United Nations proclaimed that the child is entitled to special care and assistance,

*Considering* that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, which was adopted in July 1990 and entered into force on 29 November 1999, states in its Article 4 (1) that "*In all actions concerning the child undertaken by any person or authority the best interests of the child shall be the primary consideration*",

*Considering* also that Cameroon ratified, on 11 January 1993, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child which, in its Article 19 (1), calls on all States Parties to take "*all appropriate legislative, administrative, social and educational measures to protect the child from all forms of physical or mental violence, injury or abuse, neglect or negligent treatment, maltreatment or*



*exploitation, including sexual abuse, while in the care of parent(s), legal guardian(s) or any other person who has the care of the child",*

**Recalling** that the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the most widely ratified international human rights treaty, sets out a list of children's rights to be protected from violence and discrimination<sup>1</sup>,

**Observing** that, in contempt of the African saying that '*you don't open the hyena's belly before children*' (Bassar wise-saying - Togo), some 70,000,000 children around the world are leaving childhood too early. The main reasons typically include health problems, conflict, extreme violence, child marriage, early pregnancy, malnutrition, educational deprivation and child labour<sup>2</sup>,

**Further observing** that in 2020, the United Nations found that:

- that there are 26,425 cases of violations against children in situations of conflict, i.e. 72 cases per day<sup>3</sup>
- that approximately 120 million children live on the streets of the world<sup>4</sup>
- that the number of children in child labour, which was approximately 160 million worldwide, has increased to 8.3 million in 2021<sup>5</sup>
- that children are among the most vulnerable groups in society and therefore need special protection.

**Observing** that the situation of children remains a serious issue in the world and especially in Cameroon, **the Commission is concerned:**

- that approximately 1,000,000 Cameroonian children require protection from violence<sup>6</sup>
- that at least 150,000 children have been internally displaced by conflict<sup>7</sup>
- that about 441 homeless children on the streets of Bafoussam, Buea, Douala, Maroua, Ngaoundéré and Yaoundé were reported in 2019<sup>8</sup>
- that more than 3 000 000 girls are under-educated and out of school in Cameroon, mostly in the three northern regions of Cameroon<sup>9</sup>
- that 90 per cent of sexual violence against children of both sexes and young children is perpetrated in the family or among friends<sup>10</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.un.org/fr/observances/world-childrens-day/background> accessed on 27 / 9 / 2021.

<sup>2</sup> The State of the World's Children Report.

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.google.com/amp/s/www.unicef.fr/article/266-000-cas-de-violations-graves-des-droits-des-enfants> accessed on 27 / 9 / 2021.

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.humanium.org/org/fr/les-enfants-en-situatiion-de-rue> accessed on 27 / 9 / 2021.

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.humanium.org/org/fr/hausse-mondiale-du-travail-des-enfants> accessed on 27 / 9 / 2021.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations, *Cameroon: More than 855,000 children remain out of school in North-West and South-West Cameroon (UNICEF)*, <https://www.unicef.org/fr/communiqu%C3%A9s-de-presse/les-attaques-et-les-enlevements-visant-des-enfants-dans-certaines-zones-de-lAfrique-de-lOuest-et-du-Centre-suscitent-des-inqui%C3%A9tudes>, accessed on 1 / 9 / 2021).

<sup>7</sup> *Idem*.

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.Cameroon-Tribune.cm/article.html/31116/fr/enfants-de-la-rue-une-op%C3%A9ration-coup-de-coeur> (accessed on 27 septembre 2021).

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.humanium.org/fr/la-sous-scolarisation-des-jeunes-filles-au-cameroun/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://www.voaafrique.com/a/cameroun-la-justice-pour-les-enfants-victimes-de-violences-sexuelles>.



**Aware** of the emerging challenges facing children and their families due to the resurgence of armed conflicts, the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic and its impact on their living conditions,

**Determined** that children's rights to life, education, health, information and recreation be promoted, protected and guaranteed to enable them to develop harmoniously in society,

**The Commission condemns in the strongest terms** any act that seeks to undermine the fundamental rights of children and urges the authorities to actively seek out, arrest and bring to book the perpetrators of such acts.

The Commission welcomes the Government's efforts to provide quality growth and development for children, such as:

- the adoption of law n° 98/004 of 4 April 1998 to lay down guidelines on education in Cameroon, which stipulates in Section 36 that "*[the physical and moral integrity of pupils shall be guaranteed in the education system. The following shall therefore be prohibited: physical abuse and any other form of violence, discrimination of any kind, the sale, distribution and consumption of alcoholic beverages, tobacco and drugs]*"
- the harmonisation of the parents' and teachers' associations (PTAs) dues in secondary schools in Cameroon by the Ministry of Secondary Education, which should not exceed the sum of 25,000 CFA francs
- the organisation of awareness campaigns on the harmful impact of violence and abuse within families, through the mobile rural and urban animation teams (EMAPUR) of the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education
- the promotion of entrepreneurship among young people and especially women, through funding projects by the Youth Integration Fund (FONIJ) and as part of the three-year Special Youth Plan (PTS-JEUNES) set up by the President of the Republic since 2016, a plan whose results to date show 1,141 funded and operational projects, as well as 2,694 funded projects being set up in the 10 regions;
- the implementation of the Prevention of Disabilities and Integrated Rehabilitation Project (PIER) by the Ministry of Social Affairs, in partnership with the FAIRMED Foundation since 2017, which integrates the specific features of children with disabilities in seven Regions, including Adamaoua, East, Far North, Littoral, West, South and South West
- the use of alternative technologies in education, especially through the setting up of time slots on national television to cover the educational curriculum while the country was hard hit by the Covid-19 pandemic
- the five billion granted by the Head of State as part of the humanitarian response plan, intended for the construction of classrooms, toilets, the purchase of desks and school supplies for children in the North and Far North Regions, who are facing the threat of *Boko Haram*
- the provision of soldier teachers in theatres of operations as a substitute for civilian teachers.



**The Commission also encourages** the multi-sector efforts of the Government, development partners and civil society organisations that work tirelessly to promote and protect the rights of all children.

**Reaffirming its positions** contained in the Statement of 1 October 2021, to mark the International Day of Non-Violence celebrated on 2 October every year,

**The Commission recommends** the Government to endorse the Oslo Declaration on Safe Schools, which provides an avenue for governments to express broad political support for the protection and maintenance of education during armed conflict and thus better ensure the right to education of children in insecure areas;

**The Commission recommends** that the government, specifically the Ministry of Defence, take all necessary steps to better ensure the protection of education against attacks;

**The Commission also recommends** that the public authorities take exceptional measures to facilitate access to education for children displaced by armed conflicts in their Regions of origin in other parts of the country;

**The Commission further recommends** to the Ministries of Secondary Education and Basic Education to implement the programme to achieve universal primary and secondary education to overcome illiteracy in Cameroon;

**The Commission recommends** that the Ministry of Social Affairs should raise awareness among parents on the impact of abandoning children in the street and the vulnerabilities of these groups of persons in our society;

**The Commission further recommends** that the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family should spare no effort to promote the rights of the girl child;

**The Commission reiterates its call** on the secessionist groups active in the North-West and South-West Regions to lay down their arms, to enable children to enjoy their Rights to education, health, leisure, family and development:

**The Commission once again** calls on the armed groups in the three conflict-affected Regions to cease attacks on schools and their use as hideouts;

**The Commission reminds** parents that under the Constitution, relevant regional and international instruments and African wisdom, crystallised in a Powé (of Gabon) wise saying, *'the monkey cannot give a bitter fruit to his child'* (parents have the obligation to educate their children).

For its part, **the Commission will spare no effort** to continue to promote and protect children's education against attacks, through training workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, fact-finding missions and the handling of complaints or self-initiated investigations.

Yaoundé, 18 NOV 2021

  
James MOUANGUE KOBILA  
The Chairperson

Créée par la loi n° 2019/014 du 19 juillet 2019, la CDHC est une institution indépendante de consultation, d'observation, d'évaluation, de dialogue, de conciliation et de concertation en matière de promotion et de protection des droits de l'homme. La Commission fait également office de Mécanisme National de Prévention de la torture du Cameroun

Created by law n° 2019/014 of 19 July 2019, the CHRC is an independent institution for consultation, monitoring, evaluation, dialogue, conciliation and deliberation in the promotion and protection of human rights. The Commission shall also serve as the Cameroon National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture