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DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

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CAMEROON HUMAN
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**STATEMENT OF THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
ON THE OCCASION OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE
4TH EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION
24 January 2022**

Changing Course, Transforming Education

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission herein referred to as the Commission, created by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019, and set up on 29 April 2021, further to the swearing-in of its members before the Supreme Court sitting in assembled chambers,

Bearing in mind the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 73/25 adopted on 3 December 2018 which proclaims 24 January as the International Day of Education, to celebrate the role of education for peace and development,

Considering that the theme for this year's celebration which is *Changing Course, Transforming Education* aims at showcasing the most important transformations that have to be nurtured to realize everyone's fundamental right to education and build more sustainable, inclusive and peaceful futures¹

Bearing in mind that our humanity and planet Earth are under threat, especially with the prevailing conflicts, global warming and recently the Covid 19 pandemic, creating a feeling of vulnerability about the present and uncertainty about the future and that there is need for urgent action to change humanity's course to save the planet from further disruptions²,

Recognizing that education plays a vital role in addressing these challenges, yet we face a dual challenge of realizing the right to quality education for every child, as well as the challenge of fully realizing the transformational potential of education as a route for sustainable collective futures³,

Recognizing that some of our difficulties stem from how we educate⁴ and to overcome these challenges, we need a new social contract (an implicit agreement among members of a society to cooperate for shared benefit) for education that can repair injustices while transforming the future⁵.

Noting that this new social contract must be grounded in human rights and based on principles of non-discrimination, social justice, respect for life, human dignity and cultural diversity, that it should not only ensure public funding for education, but also include a

¹ UNESCO, international day of education, en.unesco.org, consulted on 12/1/2022.

² *Ibid.*

³ UNESCO, reimagining our future together, a new social contract for education, en.unesco.org/futuresofeducation, consulted on 7/1/2022.

⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵ on <https://reliefweb.int/sites/reliefweb.int/files/resources/Reimagining%20our%20futures%20together%20-%20a%20new%20social%20contract%20for%20education%20%28Executive%20>, consulted on 5/1/2021.

commitment to include everyone in public discussions about education so as to strengthen education as a common good⁶,

Bearing in mind that today, 258 million children and youth still do not attend school; that 617 million children and adolescents cannot read and do basic math; that less than 40% of girls in sub-Saharan Africa complete lower secondary school and some four million children and youth refugees are out of school⁷,

Bearing in mind that at the peak of the COVID-19 pandemic, 1.6 billion learners were affected by school closures across the globe⁸ and the use of digital learning and virtual education to supplement traditional forms of learning revealed the need for structured and suitable systems of distance learning facilitated by digital tools and technology⁹,

Considering that to reinvent education to help us address common challenges, there are three essential questions to ask as follows: What should we continue doing? What should we abandon? What needs to be creatively invented afresh?¹⁰,

Considering the preamble to Cameroon's Constitution of 18 January 1996, which provides that *"the State shall guarantee the child's right to education. Primary education shall be compulsory. The organization and supervision of education at all levels shall be the bounden duty of the State"*,

Considering the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC) adopted by the then Organization of African Unity on 1 July, 1990, entered into force on 29 November, 1999 ratified by Cameroon on 5 September 1997 whose article 11 states that *"every child has the right to an education, to develop his or her personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential, that this education also includes the preservation and strengthening of positive African morals, traditional values and cultures"* and that *"Governments should also take special measures in respect of female gifted and disadvantaged children, to ensure equal access to education for all sections of the community"*,

Recalling article 26 (2) of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights adopted by the General Assembly of the United Nations on 10 December 1948 which stipulates that *"Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace"*,

Noting that in the Convention of the Rights of the Child adopted on 20 November 1989, entered into force on 2 September 1990 and ratified by Cameroon in 1993 invites state parties in article 26 to *"make primary education compulsory and available free to all, to encourage the development of different forms of secondary education, including general and vocational education and make higher education accessible to all"*,

Bearing in mind the General Comment No.13 on the right to education which states that *"education in all its forms and at all levels shall exhibit interrelated and essential features [... which include] adaptability whereby education has to be flexible so it can adapt to the needs of*

⁶ GUNI, Future for Education Report abstract, <https://www.guninetwork.org/publication/unesco-futures-education-report-reimagining-our-futures-together-new-social-contract>, consulted on 12/1/2022.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/cameroon-s-covid-19-pandemic-education-response-and-shift-distancedigital-learning>, consulted on 15/1/2022.

¹⁰ Ibid.

*changing societies and communities and respond to the needs of students within their diverse social and cultural setting*¹¹,

Bearing in mind goal 4 of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development which aims at ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all, and whose target 4.7 aims at ensuring that by 2030, all learners acquire the knowledge and skills needed to promote sustainable development and global citizenship,

Bearing in mind law n°98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon which stipulates in section 4 and 5 that “the general purpose of education is to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and their smooth integration into society bearing in mind prevailing economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors”¹²,

Bearing in mind that the National Development Strategy (2020-2030) identifies human capital as a key factor in a country’s development, and that its strategic objectives in the education and training sector include to ensure access to primary education for all school-age children; achieve a 100% completion rate at primary level, reduce regional disparities in terms of school infrastructure and teaching staff and increase the supply of vocational and technical training from 10 to 25% at secondary level and from 18% to 35% at tertiary level, and continue its policy of equitable access for girls and boys, men and women to education, training and information,

The Commission lauds the effort of government in transforming education in order fight inequities and to help build peaceful and just societies and for sustainable development by:

- ratifying the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) of 18 December 1979 (in 1994) and the Maputo Protocol on the Rights of Women in Africa of July 11, 2003 (in 2011) to ensure real equality between girls and boys and men and women in access to education
- taking specific measures to ensure the equal treatment of social difference such as the institution of compulsory primary education¹³ and free primary education introduced by the finance law 2000/08 of June 30, 2000 as well as the adoption on 13 April 2010 of a law to protect persons with disability
- taking specific measures in favor of the equal treatment of geographical difference in education by recognizing certain regions of the country as priority education zones (PEZ) aimed at providing schools in PEZs with additional human and material resources, in order to cope with the academic and social difficulties encountered by learners;
- strengthening profitable partnerships with the private sector for the professionalization of higher education with the establishment of a specific legal mechanism to support private education¹⁴

¹¹ Adopted by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at the Twenty-first Session, E/C.12/1999/10, 8 December 1999,

[https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/d\)GeneralCommentNo13TheRighttoEducation\(article13\)\(1999\).aspx](https://www.ohchr.org/EN/Issues/Education/Training/Compilation/Pages/d)GeneralCommentNo13TheRighttoEducation(article13)(1999).aspx), consulted on 14/1/2022.

¹² Fedelis Lekeaka Alemnge "Curriculum Reform in Cameroon: An Analysis of the New Primary School Curriculum", International Journal of Trend in Scientific Research and Development (ijtsrd), ISSN: 2456-6470, Volume-3 | Issue-6, October 2019, pp.902-913, URL: <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd29264.pdf>.

¹³ Section 9 of law n°98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon.

¹⁴ Law N° 2004/022 of 22 July 2004 to lay down the rules governing the organization and functioning of private education in Cameroon, all the legislative and regulatory dispositions emanating from the law of 16 April 2001 on the orientation of higher education, and notably decree N° 2001/832/PM of 19 September 2001 to lay down general regulations applicable to private institutions of higher education.

- undertaking a massive reform of the nursery and the primary school curricula to ensure quality basic education for all Cameroonian children, providing them with the opportunity to acquire basic knowledge; knowledge in communal life and national integration; vocational and life skills and equipping them with the capacity to adapt to and transform their environments¹⁵.
- implementing a new pedagogic approach called the Competence Based Approach (CBA), in all primary schools nationwide and the development of a new national curriculum whose purpose is to train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development as well as their smooth integration into society bearing in mind prevailing economic and socio-cultural context,
- creating vocational training centres¹⁶ and technical schools with the objective of making professional training a real driving force for economic growth,
- undertaking reforms since 1993 intended to professionalize higher education specifically aimed at providing all Cameroonians with equal opportunities for higher learning; making programmes more varied, professional, adapted and responsive to the needs of the job market¹⁷,
- creating a research division in the organizational structure of all State universities in Cameroon, with the mandate to support the development, promotion and dissemination of research for development,
- implementing the “Licence-Master-Doctorat” system of higher education since 2007 which harmonised the three cycles of university education in the Francophone system with that of the Anglophone system, creating research centres¹⁸ and introducing professional programmes as well as the envisaged professionalization of other classic programmes.
- creating business incubators to help young graduates who design innovative projects or projects with strong growth potential to set up businesses and familiarize them with the worlds of applied research, intellectual property and business
- promoting inclusive education whereby children with special needs are included in the traditional classroom¹⁹ as well as vocational training for people with disabilities
- improving the quality of education and improving upon teacher’s conditions by direct recruitment into primary schools²⁰ and universities²¹ as well as transforming community teachers hired by parent teacher’s associations into contract government teachers to make up for the shortage of teachers
- paying regularly, research allowances instituted by the Head of State on 8 April 2009 to encourage and modernise academic research to teachers-researchers of state universities²²

¹⁵ Ministry of Basic Education, Cameroon Primary School Curriculum English Subsystem Level II, Class 3 & Class 4 (2018).

¹⁶ Such as the Advanced Vocational Training Centres in Limbe and in Douala inaugurated in 2016 by the Prime Minister as well as the centre in Bertoua which was created in 2021 for training in tourism, hotel management and leisure.

¹⁷ Reforming a National System of Higher Education: The Case of Cameroon, http://clearinghouse.adeanet.org/sites/default/files/docs/he_cameroon_en.pdf, consulted on 16/1/2022.

¹⁸ Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Fourth periodic report submitted by Cameroon under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant, due in 2016, received in 2017.

¹⁹ Article 4 of decree number Decree No 2018/6233 of 26 July 2018 fixing the procedures for the application of law n° 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities in Cameroon.

²⁰ Joint order No. 076/A/43 MINEDUB/ MINFORPRA of 29 July 2021 to recruit 3000 contract teachers.

²¹ Press release No. 001/SG/PM of February 14, 2020 relating to the authorization to open teaching positions in state universities.

²² Announcement of the Minister of Higher Education promising to pay the sum of 3339420000 fcfa as payment for the first quarter of 2020 on <https://cameroonnewsagency.com/minesup-disburses-3-billion-for-research-allowance/>, consulted on 17/1/2022.

- transferring competences to decentralised territorial communities including in education so as to repair injustices at the grass root level while transforming the future
- creating three new state universities in Bertoua, Ebolowa and Garoua by presidential decree No. 2022/003 of 5 January 2022²³.

The Commission is aware that the adult literacy²⁴ rate in Cameroon in 2018 was 77.07 %²⁵, with the male literacy rate being 82.63 % and the female 71.59 %²⁶.

The Commission recalls that in the framework of its human rights promotion mission, it implemented a programme to teach human rights in schools and universities as well as in professional schools. This was done by drafting a manual and guide for use by teachers at the primary and secondary levels. It also experimented the teaching of human rights in 80 pilot schools throughout the national territory between 2008 and 2012. The programme is on-going with the revision of didactic material as well as the envisaged drafting of training modules for university and other training schools.

The Commission notes the challenges involved in the educational system in Cameroon which include educational inequalities characterised by marked disparities in access to educational opportunities between rural and urban areas, well-off and disadvantaged families, girls and boys, women and men as well as the between abled and persons with disabilities.

The Commission notes that the education in force does not prepare all Cameroonians for well-being because they are confronted with two challenges: that of equity in access to education (with some being excluded from it) and that of the quality of the educational offer, which is not always adapted to the current political and socio-economic environment and in particular to the job market ²⁷ or to self-employment.

The Commission notes with regret that free primary education has resulted in the abolition of payable registration fees only and that this measure remains insufficient, as it has not succeeded in making schooling accessible to all households which live in a precarious state because of the maintenance of other direct and indirect costs related to schooling, such as examination fees, the purchase of textbooks and school supplies and school uniforms which are still at parents' expenses, as well as contributions to the PTA (Parents Teacher's Association) which is compulsory²⁸.

The Commission notes that Cameroonians leave secondary school and several classic university faculties without acquiring the skills and attitudes necessary for environmental and democratic issues and this does not facilitate the harmonious social and political integration of the graduates of the training system. Indeed, the series and training courses are not always adapted to the exploitation and transformation of natural resources of the country (oil, minerals, coffee, cocoa, wood, etc.) so as to accelerate the development of the country²⁹.

The Commission notes an insufficient professionalization of secondary education on the structural and material levels because the number of technical and vocational secondary

²³ This brings the number of state universities to eleven, with two of them in Yaounde (Yaounde I and Yaounde 2, Soa).

²⁴ Percentage of the population aged 15 and above who can read and write a short phrase and make simple arithmetic calculations, kroema.fr, consulted on 16/1/2022.

²⁵ According to the World Bank collection of development indicators, <https://tradingeconomics.com/cameroon/literacy-rate-adult-total-percent-of-people-ages-15-and-above-wb-data.html>, consulted on 16/1/2022.

²⁶ Cameroon literacy rate, www.countryeconomy.com, consulted on 17/1/2021.

²⁷ Jérôme Francis WANDJI K, *le droit à l'éducation, vecteur de bonheur ou de bien-être au Cameroun*, JANUS N° 9, December 2020 - May 2021, Cameroon Journal of Law and Political Sciences, p.89.

²⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁹ *Ibid.*

educational establishments providing this know-how is insufficient to cover the whole territory and to meet the demand. Those that exist suffer from multiple drawbacks, notably the lack of partnership with the professional world, the lack of premises, and the lack of teaching material.

The Commission notes that the recovery plan for education after the Covid-19 pandemic focuses on three priority areas which are: bringing all children back to schools, recovering learning losses and preparing and supporting teachers³⁰.

The Commission takes note of an incomplete professionalization with regard to the evolution of the teaching profession because teachers already in the field have not been familiarized with the new professional practice so as to instill in learners, the know-how necessary for the exercise of specific professions on one hand, and that the current teaching staff does not always correspond to the human resource needs of the national education system on the other hand.

The Commission notes and deplores the prevailing security situation in the Far North, North West and South West regions characterized by attacks on Education mainly perpetrated by those who deliberately target school children and teachers and which have left many schools still closed, impacting over 700 000³¹ children in the North West and South West and over 100 000³² in the Far North region.

The Commission notes that collaborative education for all is hampered by too much time dedicated to individual work which limits key opportunities for co-construction, cooperation, and problem-solving.

The Commission recommends that universities and other institutions of higher learning should continue to develop didactic strategies beyond the passive traditional lecture used to deliver content and embrace active methods that promote student engagement and foster critical thinking.

The Commission recommends more cooperative work between students, the development of more research projects, problem-solving, seminar dialogue, field study, action research and work on community projects for learners at all educational levels in Cameroon in order that education should be seen as a common good.

The Commission recommends that quality in education should be encouraged by giving greater value to the work of teachers and supporting their didactic learning and growth especially by improving upon the teaching environment and providing opportunities for their continuous capacity building especially the use of digital teaching resources.

The Commission recommends that education should foster ethics and create greater awareness of the learner's civic and environmental responsibilities. Key didactic objectives should include the appreciation of cultural diversity, awareness of human rights, and the fight against intolerance for discrimination in all forms and tolerance for peace.

The Commission recommends the promotion of non-formal education beyond the classroom as well as adult education.

³⁰ *A state of the Global Education Crisis, a path to recovery*, a joint UNICEF, UNESCO and World Bank Report, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/the-state-of-the-global-education-crisis-a-path-to-recovery>, consulted on 17/1/2022.

³¹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/violence-impacts-over-700000-children-due-school-closures-cameroon>, consulted on 17/1/2022.

³² <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-calls-immediate-release-abducted-school-children-north-west-cameroon>, consulted on 17/1/2022.

The Commission recommends that teachers and students should embrace technology-enabled teaching and learning (e-learning, distance learning, tutorials), using the devices in appropriate ways to improve upon their didactic methods.

The Commission recommends that inequalities in education especially for women and girls should be continuously addressed.

The Commission recommends more collaboration between the Cameroon Human Rights Commission and ministerial departments in charge of education to enhance work on the National Programme for the Teaching of Human Rights in the formal setting which began with the primary and secondary levels of education.

On its part, while encouraging the transformation of education to reduce inequalities, and to have more skillful and responsible citizens ready to transform our future, **the Cameroon Human Rights Commission** remains committed to the full realisation of the right to education in Cameroon through its mission of human rights promotion, protection as well as the prevention of torture.

Done in Yaounde, 24 JAN 2022



James MOUANGUE KOBILA