

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN  
*Paix – Travail – Patrie*

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DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON  
*Peace – Work – Fatherland*

CAMEROON HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

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## STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO MARK THE 37<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

**"EQUALITY BETWEEN WOMEN AND MEN TODAY FOR A SUSTAINABLE TOMORROW"**

**8 March 2022**

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

*Bearing in mind* that in 1977, the United Nations General Assembly made official the international women's day through General Assembly Resolution 32/142, which invited member States to proclaim March 8 as the United Nations Day for women's rights and world peace,

*Considering* that the 37<sup>th</sup> edition of the International Women's Day in Cameroon is placed under the theme: "Equality between women and men today for a sustainable tomorrow"<sup>1</sup>,

*Bearing in mind* that the choice of this year's theme is prompted by the need to reduce all forms of discrimination against women and girls and to strengthen the measures aimed at achieving gender equality and women's empowerment,

*Recalling* that achieving a sustainable future includes tackling climate change and biodiversity loss so as to protect ecosystems and preserve natural resources for future generations<sup>2</sup>,

*Recognizing* that climate change affects men and women disproportionately due to differences in productive, reproductive and community roles (triple role); inequality in access and control of resources as well as practical and strategic needs,

*Considering also* that this theme calls on States to recognize and enhance the contribution of women and girls across the world in climate change adaptation and mitigating with a view to building a sustainable future for all<sup>3</sup>, given that women play a key role in the management, conservation, exploitation and utilization of natural resources<sup>4</sup>,

<sup>1</sup> Terms of reference for IWD 2022 by the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family.

<sup>2</sup> [https://wwwf.panda.org/discover/our\\_focus/governance/sustainable\\_development\\_goals/](https://wwwf.panda.org/discover/our_focus/governance/sustainable_development_goals/), consulted on 2/1/2022.

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

<sup>4</sup> [Oig.cepal.org/default/files](http://Oig.cepal.org/default/files), consulted on 2/1/2022.

**Bearing in mind** that the impact of climate change is mostly felt by the poor and marginalized populations especially women, children and persons with disability, who depend on natural resources such as soil and water most threatened by climate change,

**Knowing** that in the Sahel region, women make up for 80% of the agricultural labour force and are thus at the front line experiencing the effect of climate change within their communities<sup>5</sup>,

**Noting** that inequalities prevent women from adapting to and mitigating the effect of climate change due to poor access and control of land and their marginalization from governance of natural resources as well as the fact that they are underrepresented in informative sessions and decision making processes, even in sectors where they are the main actors like agriculture, and that most women have been reduced to exploiters of only small parcels of land and natural resources for subsistence despite their large numbers,

**Considering** that while 39 % of the national population lives below the poverty line, this rate rises to 51.5% for women with only 1.6% owning a house titled in their name, 32.5% of women over 25 having some level of secondary education against 39.2% for men, 43.2% of women in union facing domestic violence and women spending on average 8.2 hours more per week than men on unpaid household tasks,

**Bearing in mind** that Cameroon is considered a low emitter of carbon dioxide with an emission of 9 454 331 tons in 2016 and a yearly change of +2.21%, contributing 0.03% to the global share<sup>6</sup>, with the tons per capita<sup>7</sup> being 0.04, and that the country is however witnessing the consequences of climate change with the key vulnerabilities to be addressed being temperature rise, heat waves, droughts, floods, sea level rise and landslides<sup>8</sup>,

**Considering** that the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) predicts that agricultural yields will fall by 20% per decade by the end of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in some areas of the Sahel<sup>9</sup>,

**Bearing in mind** that despite their vulnerability, many women and girls are effective and powerful leaders and change-makers for climate adaptation and mitigation. They are involved in sustainability initiatives around the world and their participation and leadership results in more effective climate action,

**Considering** the 1996 constitution of the Republic of Cameroon whose preamble declares that “the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights”,

**Noting** that the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted on 27 June 1981 in Nairobi, Kenya, entered into force on 21 October 1986 and ratified by Cameroon on 20 June 1989 provides in article 18 that “[t]he State shall ensure the elimination of every discrimination against women and also ensure the protection of the rights of women and the child as stipulated in international declarations and conventions”,

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<sup>5</sup> Why women in the Sahel region are particularly vulnerable to climate change, <https://www.theiwi.org/gpr-reports/women-in-sahel>, consulted on 3 February 2022.

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.worldometers.info/co2-emissions/co2-emissions-by-country/>, consulted on 29 January 2022.

<sup>7</sup> Quantity of emission per inhabitant of a population of 23 926 551 in 2016.

<sup>8</sup> As indicated in Cameroon's National Plan for Adaptation to Climate Change drafted in 2015, [https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Pages/Cameroon\\_NAP.aspx](https://www4.unfccc.int/sites/NAPC/Pages/Cameroon_NAP.aspx) consulted on 3 February 2022.

<sup>9</sup> The Sahel in the midst of climate change, <https://reliefweb.int/report/chad/sahel-midst-climate-change>, consulted on 29 January 2022.



**Recalling** that Article 2 (1) of the Protocol to this Charter on women's rights in Africa (Maputo Protocol) adopted in Mozambique on 11 July 2003 and ratified on 13 September 2012 by Cameroon calls on State Parties to combat all forms of discrimination against women through appropriate legislative, institutional and other measures,

**Recalling** Article 19 (a, b and c) of the same protocol in which States Parties are called to "*take all appropriate measures to introduce the gender perspective in the national development planning procedures; ensure participation of women at all levels in the conceptualization, decision-making, implementation and evaluation of development policies and programmes [and] promote women's access to and control over productive resources such as land and guarantee their right to property*",

**Recalling** the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) adopted on 18 December 1979 by the General Assembly of the United Nations and ratified by Cameroon on 23 August 1994, which sets down the human rights obligation to eliminate sex-based discrimination against women and also the range of actions that must be undertaken to achieve equality,

**Aware** of the global challenges involved in achieving equality including obnoxious traditional practices, lack of awareness of human rights, impunity for abuse of women's rights and the poor implementation of commitments to end discrimination,

**Taking note** of Article 4.1(i) of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change adopted in 21 March 1994 and ratified by Cameroon on 19 October 1994, whereby States took the commitment to promote and cooperate in education, training and public awareness related to climate change and encourage the widest participation in this process, including that of non-governmental organizations,

**Recalling** the Paris Agreement on climate change adopted at the 21<sup>st</sup> Conference of Parties (COP 21) on 12 December 2015 and ratified by Cameroon on 29 July 2016, which calls on parties to respect, promote and consider their respective obligations on human rights, when taking action to address climate change including in the area of gender equality, empowerment of women and intergenerational equity,

**Considering** Sustainable Development Goal 5 aimed at achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls by 2030 which considers gender equality as not only a fundamental human right but a necessary foundation for a peaceful, prosperous and sustainable world,

**Recalling** the African Union Agenda 2063 – a plan for the structural transformation of Africa which was approved by the Heads of State and Government of the African Union (AU) in January 2015 and aims, inter alia, to attain *full equality between men and women* in all spheres of life on the continent – whose paragraph 17 dwells on Africa's coordinated contribution to global climate change mitigation efforts,

**Bearing in mind** that one of the strategic objectives of Cameroon's 2035 vision is to intensify adaptation and mitigation measures against the effects of climate change and environmental management so as to ensure economic growth as well as sustainable and inclusive development<sup>10</sup>,

**The Commission observes** that climate change leads to dwindling natural resources and has fueled many inter-community clashes between herders, fishermen and farmers such as the clashes of 5

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<sup>10</sup> National Development Strategy 2020-2030 p.37.

December 2021 between the Massa, Mousgoum and Choua Arabs in the Logone Birni sub-division in the Logone and Chari Division of the Far North region;

*The Commission notes* that, due to the above-mentioned conflict, about 40 000 people went without shelter and 30 000 persons mostly women and children fled to Chad, while 15 000 were displaced in localities south of Logone and Chari and 3500 in Diamare Division<sup>11</sup>;

*The Commission notes* that with the inequalities in income and education between men and women, the bad effects of climate change exposes women to poverty especially in the northern regions of Cameroon;

*The Commission also notes* that climate change exacerbates existing health problems leading to low productivity, limits raw materials for industries, leads to poor food security and causes stagnating welfare of persons especially the vulnerable;

*The Commission lauds* the commitment of government in reducing inequalities among men and women and promoting policies and plans for women's adaptability to climate change by:

- taking specific measures to ensure the equality for boys and girls by instituting compulsory<sup>12</sup> as well as free<sup>13</sup> primary education
- instituting initiatives to empower women through organizations and institutions defending the rights of women
- updating the national policy on gender (2010-2020), a policy guide to address and fight inequalities in all its forms
- accompanying rural women to use best agricultural practices and providing equal access to funding for agro pastoral projects through projects and programmes of the Ministry of Agriculture
- funding of civil society organizations through their platform on climate change and the indigenous peoples in order to build the capacity of local and indigenous communities so that they can effectively participate in the Reduction of Emissions due to Deforestation and Degradation (REDD+)<sup>14</sup> process in Cameroon
- adopting a strategic intervention plan (2016-2025) and the reviewing of the five year plan (2015-2020) in December 2021 and making sure it is gender transformative
- adopting the National REDD+ Strategy in July 2014
- updating Cameroon's first Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC), setting an unconditional greenhouse gas emission target of 12% and a conditional reduction target of 35% by 2030
- organizing capacity building workshops on climate change adaptation for rural populations including women such as the practical workshop organized by the Ministry of Transport and its partners for farmers in Meri in the Diamare Division of the North Region on weather, climate and agriculture in August 2021

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<sup>11</sup> OCHA report of 14 December 2021, reliefweb.int, consulted on 7/1/2022.

<sup>12</sup> Section 9 of law n°98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon.

<sup>13</sup> Introduced by the finance law 2000/08 of June 30, 2000.

<sup>14</sup> Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and forest Degradation plus the sustainable management of forests, and the conservation and enhancement of forest carbon stocks.



- producing weather forecasts by the National Climate Change Observatory<sup>15</sup>;

*The Commission also lauds* the effort of international and private actors including United Nations agencies, non-governmental organizations and civil society organizations who accompany and support women to adapt to climate change by taking sustainable development initiatives in local communities including tree planting, training in various fields such as agroforestry, alternate fuel sources and climate monitoring;

*The Commission recognizes* the fight by women's rights defenders against discrimination in all its forms so that women are able to access and control natural resources, participate in decision making and undertake actions to better mitigate the effects of climate change;

*The Commission recommends* more investment on girls' and women's education so as to strengthen their participation in climate change policy making at all levels and in all capacities;

*The Commission recommends* that innovative ways of collecting and sharing climatic data should be developed for the information of populations in agricultural areas as well as those in areas prone to flooding due to rise in sea or river level as well as areas facing dryness and water shortage, so that they can take measures to better adapt their activities;

*The Commission recommends* that women including indigenous women and grassroots groups, should be included and supported in the development and implementation of climate resilient development plans and policies making as they master the impact of climate change on the resources on which they depend;

*The Commission recommends* the enforcement of land rights for girls and women; this will include putting in place or reinforcing measures to abolish traditions which sustain discrimination, preventing them from obtaining right to land to help secure their livelihoods as well as their families, their status, a high bargaining power in all productive transactions and reduce domestic violence;

*The Commission recommends* more capacity building interventions for the rural population especially women on methods of adaptation to climate change such as sustainable agricultural methods, alternative ways of energy production, agro forestry in adaptable plant species; education to transform and provoke a change in behavior and ways of life so as to protect our ecosystems and address discriminations in all its forms;

*The Commission recommends* the regulation of over exploitation and pollution of natural land and sea resources such as forests and soil on which women depend for climate change adaptation;

*The Commission recommends* a gender analysis of environmental projects to determine their impact on women and girls as well as to ensure equitable inclusion and redress of gender issues for all potential beneficiaries;

*The Commission recommends* more investment in technologies that enhance renewable and clean energy sources; and women's participation in their development and use should be promoted and supported;

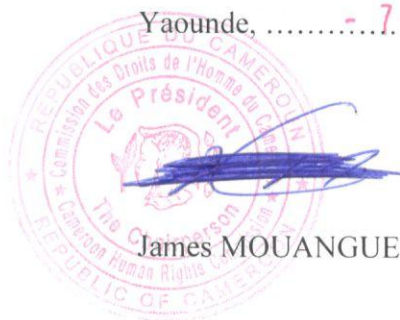
*The Commission recommends* that CSOs should work in collaboration with the government concerning the problems faced by women by creating networks.

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<sup>15</sup> 11<sup>th</sup> edition of the *Seasonal Climate Change bulletin* for the months of June, July, August 2020.

While recognizing the numerous challenges faced by women and girls in working towards a sustainable future as a result of discrimination, the **Cameroon Human Rights Commission** remains committed to promoting the full-scale gender approach through training, advocacy, investigation, complaint management as well as through the prevention of torture.

Yaounde, ..... - 7 MARS 2022



James MOUANGUE KOBILA