

COMMISSION DES DROITS
DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

Sous-Commission chargée
de la promotion des droits de l'homme

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CAMEROON HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMISSION

SUB-COMMISSION IN CHARGE
OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION

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STATEMENT BY CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

TO MARK THE INTERNATIONAL DAY OF PEACE

"End racism. Build peace"

21 September 2022

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter: "the Commission"), established by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019 and set up on 29 April 2021, following the swearing-in of Commissioners before the Supreme Court sitting in chambers,

Bearing in mind the UN General Assembly Resolution A/RES/55/282 of 28 September 1981 which proclaimed 21 September as the *International Day of Peace*,

Recalling that twenty years later, in 2001, the UN General Assembly decided, by a unanimous vote, that it should be a day of *non-violence and ceasefire*.

Noting that during the year 2022, the United Nations calls upon all nations and peoples to observe a truce to commemorate this day through education and public awareness of peace-related issues,

Aware that all humanity claims peace as a universal value and a social reality that is constantly being constructed,

Considering that the theme of this year's International Day of Peace is *End Racism. Build peace*,

Bearing in mind that issues of inequality, injustice and exclusion are at the core of many conflicts that lead to the disruption of peace,

Bearing equally in mind that peace-building approaches, including dialogue and participation, are among the indispensable tools for achieving Goal 16 of the new Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which is to "*promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development*",

Bearing in mind that for several decades, "racism has been corroding societies, normalising discrimination and fuelling violence [We must therefore] *combat racism by combating hate speech, promoting dialogue and addressing the root causes of inequality*",¹

¹ SG/SM/21318, 13 June 2022, UN Secretary-General appeals for an end to racism and protection of human rights on 100 days of International Day of Peace

Observing that the theme chosen for the Day, *"End Racism. Build Peace"* requires that in 2022, as the world gradually recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, we work together *"to protect the human rights of all people and build peaceful and inclusive societies. Together we can contribute to a world free from racism and racial discrimination"*²,

Aware that people in conflict situations are especially vulnerable because of the physical and mental insecurity and instability they encounter,

Underlining that for several decades, *"racism has been corroding societies, normalising discrimination and fuelling violence. [We must therefore fight it by combating hate speech, promoting dialogue and tackling the root causes of inequality]"*,

Noting that the theme chosen for this day, *"End Racism. Build Peace"* requires that in 2022, as the world gradually recovers from the Covid-19 pandemic, we must *"work to protect the human rights of all people and to build peaceful and inclusive societies. Together we can contribute to a world free from racism and racial discrimination,"*

Bearing in mind that people in conflict situations are particularly vulnerable because of the physical and mental insecurity and instability they face,

Mindful that the Preamble to the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon of 18 January 1996 provides that *"The Cameroonian people [...] Jealous of our hard-won independence and resolved to preserve same; convinced that the salvation of Africa lies in forging ever-growing bonds of solidarity among African Peoples, affirm our desire to contribute to the advent of a united and free Africa while maintaining peaceful and brotherly relations with the other nations of the World, under the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations"*;

Recalling further that the first word in *"the motto of the Republic of Cameroon 'Peace-Work-Fatherland'"* is PEACE,

Bearing in mind Article 23 (1) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which stresses that *"All peoples shall have the right to national and international peace and security. The principles of solidarity and friendly relations implicitly affirmed by the Charter of the United Nations and reaffirmed by that of the Organisation [now the African Union] of African Unity shall govern relations between States"*,

Noting that the Declaration on the Rights of Peoples to Peace, adopted by the United Nations General Assembly on 19 December 2016, affirms in its articles 1 and 2 that *"Everyone has the right to enjoy peace such that all human rights are promoted and protected and development is fully realized."*

To achieve this, *" States should respect, implement and promote equality and non-discrimination, justice and the rule of law, and guarantee freedom from fear and want as a means to build peace within and between societies "*³,

Considering the Preamble of UNESCO which states that *"since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed"*,

Bearing in mind the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) which enshrine the interdependence of all human rights, including the sacred right to peace and sustainable development,

² Ibid.

³ Resolution No. 35/4 related to the promotion of the right to peace adopted by the Human Rights Council on 22 June 2017

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

Considering the African Union's Agenda 2063, Aspiration 4 states that "*Africa will be a continent living in peace and stability, with harmony among its grassroots communities. The management of our diversity will be a source of wealth, social transformation and accelerated economic growth, rather than a source of conflict*",

Stressing that this vision of the African Union through Agenda 2063, rooted in Pan-Africanism and the African Renaissance, aims at accelerating Africa's economic growth and development, and promoting the common identity of Africans by celebrating their history and dynamic culture,

Noting that of the 14 flagship projects of this Agenda referring to key programmes and initiatives adopted to accelerate Africa's economic growth and development, the priority is "*silencing the guns by 2020*",

Bearing in mind UN Security Council Resolutions 1325 (2000) and 2250 (2015) on peace and security, which respectively call for the participation of women in peace processes, and the involvement of youth in decision-making,

Noting that the International Monitoring Centre for the Study of Terrorism (IMST)⁴ underlines, in its latest yearbook on jihadist terrorism, that Cameroon ranks 5th with nearly 129 terrorist attacks in 2021 and that in 2022, Boko Haram and secessionist terrorists are still committing atrocities, especially in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions, thus hindering the return to peace that the Head of State advocated in his speech to the Nation on 31 December 2021,

Also noting that according to the Global Terrorism Index (GTI) in 2022, Cameroon ranks 6th out of the 49 African countries most affected by terrorism⁵ ;

The Commission is concerned by the persistent outbreaks of tension that are making it hard to rebuild the three above-mentioned Regions, thereby hindering the return to peace,

The Commission commends the communities of the Far North, North West and South West Regions who, in favour of the return to peace, are exposing the terrorists camped in their communities and lending a helping hand to the Defence and Security Forces through the vigilance committees, thus making it possible to rout or disable many armed gangs

The Commission commends Government efforts to combat terrorism effectively and protect peace in Cameroon, by:

- having already organised 18 dialogues to find sustainable solutions to the security situation
- granting special status to the North-West and South-West regions through the promulgation of Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 to institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities

⁴ Indice mondial du terrorisme 2022 : L'Afrique subsaharienne émerge comme l'épicentre mondial du terrorisme, alors que le nombre de décès dans le monde diminue, <https://www.prnewswire.com/news-releases/indice-mondial-du-terrorisme-2022-l-afrique-subsaharienne-emerge-comme-l-epicentre-mondial-du-terrorisme-alors-que-le-nombre-de-deces-dans-le-monde-diminue-822592253.html>, consulté le 8 juillet 2022.

⁵ Le classement des pays africains les plus touchés par le terrorisme (Global Terrorism Index, 2022), <https://www.agenceecofin.com/multimedia/2004-96841-le-classement-des-pays-africains-les-plus-touchees-par-le-terrorisme-global-terrorism-index-2022>, consulté le 13 septembre 2022.

- recognising, by Decree No. 2019/3179/PM of 2 September 2019, of the status of Economically Disadvantaged Zone applicable to the Far North, North West and South West Regions
- signing Order No. 044/CAB/PM of 24 May 2022 relating to the establishment, organisation and functioning of the special programme for the reconstruction and development of the Far North Region
- setting up toll-free numbers 1500 and 1501 to report any excesses by the police or gendarmerie respectively
- introducing modules dedicated to the appropriation of human rights in the training programme of students at the National School of Penitentiary Administration
- MINREX organising a series of activities in the Far North Region in collaboration with the Governor of the said Region, as part of the "*Silencing the Guns in Africa 2020*" initiative, to encourage holders of illicit weapons to hand them over to the authorities⁶
- implementing the "*Keep Bamenda Clean*" operation, which consists of militarizing certain communities in the North-West Region, to neutralize the armed terrorist gangs and ensure the safety of the people
- granting special status to the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions, to ensure the harmonious and sustainable development of these Regions
- reorganising the operational command on a territorial basis in 2014 and 2018, with the creation of the 4th and 5th Joint Military Regions (RMIA) with Maroua and Bamenda as their command posts
- setting up the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration (CNDDR) by Decree No. 2018/719 of 30 November 2018
- establishing the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism by Decree No. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017
- promulgating Law No. 2014/028 of 23 December 2014 to repress acts of terrorism in Cameroon.

The Commission, for its part, organised an educational talk on 4 September 2020 that brought together about 30 journalists representing radio and television stations and the press, highlighting the effects of hate speech on the maintenance of peace and national security, in collaboration with the European Union and the Ministry of Communication,

The Commission has equally systematically urged armed gangs to lay down their arms and integrate the Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration Centres (CDDR),

Since the last Statement to mark the International Day of Peace 2021, the Commission has issued:

- a press release on the terrorist attack on a school in Ékondo-Titi in the South-West on 24 November 2021
- a press release on the armed attacks on civilians in Akwaya in the South West on 24 June 2022
- a statement to mark the International Day to Protect Education from Attack on 9 September 2022.

The Commission once again calls on non-state actors that are causing unrest to immediately cease their targeting of people and state institutions in the Far North, North West

⁶ https://m.facebook.com/minrex.cm/posts/3783223058394459?locale2=zh_HK accessed on 17 September 2022

and South West Regions, and abandon violence in favour of a permanent return to peace for the good of all,

The Commission recommends that the Government strengthen the role and contribution of women in reconstruction and peacebuilding operations in regions facing acute security challenges,

The Commission reiterates its recommendation to the Government to ensure that young people are actively involved in the peace-building and reconciliation process initiated through the inclusive dialogues in the three conflict-affected regions,

The Commission further recommends that the Government provide more assistance to all survivors of attacks and the communities that host them,

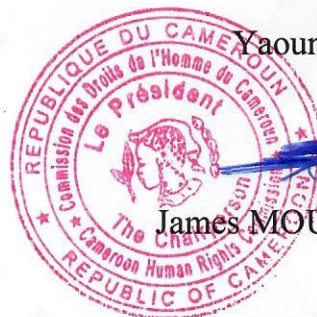
The Commission recommends that the Ministries of Basic and Secondary Education ensure that education policies and curriculum content do not exacerbate conflict, but rather promote restoration of peace,

The Commission also recommends that the judicial system continue to track down the perpetrators and sponsors of armed conflicts, wherever they may be hiding, and punish them to the full extent of the law,

The Commission, for its part, will spare no effort to keep on promoting and protecting human rights, and working for reconciliation and peace-building in crisis regions, through training workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, fact-finding missions, the handling of complaints, self-initiated investigations, and prevention of torture, through visits to all detention facilities and its **toll-free number 1523**.

21 SEPT 2022

Yaoundé,



James MOUANGUE KOBILA