

**COMMISSION DES DROITS
DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN**

**SOUS-COMMISSION CHARGÉE
DE LA PROMOTION DES DROITS DE L'HOMME**

Secrétariat Permanent

Division de la Protection et de la
Promotion des Droits de l'Homme

B.P./ P.O. Box 20317, Yaoundé
Fax : (237) 222-22-60-82

Numéro Vert : 1523



**CAMEROON HUMAN
RIGHTS COMMISSION**

**SUB-COMMISSION IN CHARGE
OF HUMAN RIGHTS PROMOTION**

Permanent Secretariat

Human Rights Protection
and Promotion Division

Tel.: (237) 222-22-61-17 / 691 12 86 70

e-mail: chrc.cdhc2019@yahoo.com

Web: www.cdhc.cm

Toll-Free Number: 1523

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

Theme: *Inclusion, for every child*

20 November 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 its members before the Supreme Court sitting in joint chambers,

Bearing in mind that the celebration of World Children's Day on every 20 November coincides with the adoption of the Declaration of the Rights of the Child by Resolution No. A/RES/1386 (XIV) of the UN General Assembly on 20 November 1959 and the adoption of the Convention on the Rights of the Child on 20 November 1989, which entered into force on 2 September 1990,

Considering that, on 11 January 1993, Cameroon ratified the Convention, which specifically sets out the following rights of the Child: the right to have a name, a nationality, an identity, the right to care, protection from disease, adequate and balanced nutrition, the right to education, the right to protection from violence, maltreatment and all forms of abuse and exploitation, the right to be free from all forms of discrimination freedom from war and being subjected to war, the right to shelter, relief and decent living conditions, the right to recreation and leisure, the right to freedom of information, expression and participation, the right to have a family, to be cared for and loved,

Recalling that, according to Article 1 of the Convention, "a child means every human being below the age of 18 years unless, under the law applicable to the child, the majority is attained earlier",

Recalling that the above-mentioned Convention, in its Article 2 (2), calls upon States Parties to take all appropriate measures to implement all the rights contained therein by reference to the principles enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, which are grouped around four main fundamental principles, namely (i) the principle of non-discrimination, (ii) the principle of the best interests of the child, (iii) the right to life, survival

and development, and (iv) the right to express views that are appropriate to their age and maturity¹,

Recognising that the Committee on the Rights of the Child issued 25 general comments to States Parties between 2001 and 2021², on various themes, the last six of which were developed between 2016 and 2021 and concern:

- Children's rights concerning the digital environment (No. 25 in 2021)
- Children's rights in the child justice system (No. 24 in 2019);
- General principles on the Rights of the child in the context of international migration (No. 23 in 2017);
- States Parties' obligations on the Rights of the child in the context of international migration in general and, concerning countries of transit and destination, in particular (No 22 in 2017)
- Street children (No. 21 in 2017)
- Implementing the Rights of the child during adolescence (No. 20 in 2016).

Considering the theme of this year's celebration of World Children's Day, which is **Inclusion for every child**, urges States to mobilise for a more equal and inclusive world, through parents, teachers, caregivers, administrative, traditional and religious authorities, business leaders, media professionals, promoters of civil society organisations, as well as young people and children themselves,

Recalling that, according to the Larousse Dictionary, the definition of the term "*inclusion*", which refers to the action of including, is made more explicit by its qualifying adjective, which considers the term "*inclusive*" as anything "*that integrates a person or group by ending their exclusion*"³,

Considering that combining the words "inclusion" and "child" most often refers to the challenge of including children with disabilities ⁴ and specifically to "*inclusive education*" which, according to UNICEF, refers to "*education that excludes no one, whether because of disability, language, gender, social class, ethnicity or any other barrier that prevents a child from accessing, participating in and benefiting from education*",

Reminding that it is in this sense that the theme of the World Day of the Child in 2022 was chosen by UNICEF to urge States to focus more on implementing concrete actions rather than debates and abstract ideas, since "*the number of learning children with disabilities remains extremely low and prospects of increasing it may seem remote*"; all of which, together with the lack of coherence in the actions already taken, constitute factors "*that prevent and hinder the path towards more inclusive schools and better educational experiences for children with disabilities*",

¹ <https://www.unicef.fr/convention-droits-enfants/>, consultée le 10 October 2022.

² <https://www.ohchr.org/fr/treaty-bodies/crc/general-comments>, consultée le 13 octobre 2022.

³ Dictionnaire Larousse, la Référence, éditions 2022, p. 712.

⁴ <https://www.unicef.org/file/EducationThinkPieces-7DisabilityInclusion-FR.pdf>, consultée le 26 October 2022.

Noting that the Committee on the Rights of the Child has noted in its General Comment No. 9 on the Rights of Children with Disabilities ⁵, *“and was the first human rights instrument to make explicit reference to disability (Article 2 on non-discrimination) and to devote an entire article (Article 23) to the rights and needs of children with disabilities”*,

Considering the Preamble of the Constitution of 18 January 1996 which states that *“the nation shall protect [...] the disabled”*,

Considering that the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights to which Cameroon is a party states in Article 18 (4) that *“persons with disabilities shall have the right to specific protection measures per their needs”*,

Considering that Article 23 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child stipulates that *“States Parties recognise that a mentally or physically disabled child should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity, promote self-reliance and facilitate the child's active participation in the community. [And that the assistance provided by these States] shall be designed to ensure that the disabled child has effective access to and receives education, training, health care services, rehabilitation services, preparation for employment and recreation opportunities in a manner conducive to the child's achieving the fullest possible social integration and individual development, including his or her cultural and spiritual development,”*

Considering that the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child, adopted on 11 July 1990, ratified by Cameroon on 5 September 1997 and entered into force on 29 November 1999, states in Article 3 that *“Every child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter irrespective of the child's or his/her parents' or legal guardians' race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinions, national and social origin, fortune, birth or another status”*,

Noting that the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, adopted on 13 December 2006, entered into force on 1 October 2008 and ratified on 28 December 2021 by Cameroon, recognises the equality between sign languages and spoken languages and commits States Parties to facilitate their use and learning,

Considering also Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and empowerment of persons with disabilities, Articles 25 (1) and 27 (3) of which state respectively that *“the State, the regional and local authorities, [...] shall set up inclusive educational structures and training institutions for trainers by type of disability”*, and that *“the socio-economic integration of persons with disabilities includes access to education and vocational training, access to information and cultural activities, access to infrastructure, shelter and transport, access to sport and leisure, and access to employment”*,

Noting that, according to statistics submitted by the Cameroon Organisation for the Development of the Deaf (OCDS) during the Symposium organised on 23 September 2019 in Yaounde to raise awareness among public authorities on the risks of isolation of persons with

⁵ CRC/C/GC/9 27 février 2007, observation générale n° 9 du Comité des Droits de l'enfant sur le Droit des enfants handicapés.

disabilities, there are more than 30,000 deaf people, 300,000 others suffering from hearing disorders and only 10 interpreters for 30,000 deaf persons⁶,

Considering that the situation of children remains a major concern in the world and particularly in Cameroon, the Commission deplores the fact that:

- children living with disabilities and particularly the blind and visually impaired are discriminated against and thus encounter difficulties in school, as they do not always have access to the necessary teaching materials to develop their intelligence and practical skills
- more than 3,000,000 girls are under-educated and out of school in Cameroon, mainly in the three northern regions of Cameroon⁷ ;

Concerning the specific themes developed by the Committee on the Rights of the Child, especially concerning:

- civil rights and freedoms (birth registration, access to appropriate information and media, accessible transport and public buildings)
- family background and alternative care (family support and parental responsibilities, abuse or neglect, family-type alternative care, institutions, periodic review of foster care)
- Special protection measures (administration of child justice, economic exploitation, street children, sexual exploitation, children affected by armed conflict, refugee and internally displaced children, children belonging to minorities and indigenous children)
- Specific rights of the child concerning the digital environment, the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography.

The Commission further deplores the fact that:

- 90 per cent of sexual violence against children of both sexes and young children is perpetrated within the family or among friends⁸ ;
- the consumption of drugs and other psychotropic substances is taking uncontrollable dimensions in our society and is therefore the cause of escalating violence among pupils and against teachers in schools
- young people aged 15 are affected by drug consumption and other psychotropic substances, with a 15 per cent higher rate of prevalence in the school environment
- more than 700,000 children in the North-West and South-West Regions⁹ and over 100,000 children in the Far North Region¹⁰ were affected by the conflicts

⁶ Cf. *Cameroon tribune* du 24 septembre 2019, consulté le 14 septembre 2022.

⁷ <https://www.humanium.org/fr/la-sous-scolarisation-des-jeunes-filles-au-cameroun/>, consultée le 17 septembre 2022.

⁸ <https://www.vooafrique.com/a/cameroun-la-justice-pour-les-enfants-victimes-de-violences-sexuelles>, consultée le 7 novembre 2022.

- approximately 441 homeless children living on the street in the city centres of Bafoussam, Buea, Douala, Maroua, Ngaoundéré and Yaoundé were recorded in 2019¹¹ ;
- approximately 1,000,000 Cameroonian children need protection from violence¹² .

The Commission firmly condemns all acts aimed at undermining fundamental rights of the child, including all forms of discrimination and violence, and reiterates its recommendations to authorities and families that perpetrators of such acts be arrested and brought before competent courts.

The Commission however commends the efforts of the Cameroonian government concerning inclusion such as:

- signing of Decree No. 2018/6233/PM of 26 July 2018 to lay down the modalities for the implementation of Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities
- signing of Decree No. 2021/751 of 28 December 2021 to ratify the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities adopted on 13 December 2006
- signing of Decree No. 2021/753 of 28 December 2021 to ratify the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities in Africa adopted on 29 January 2018
- using sign language during the Head of State's speeches and by some administrations such as the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Public Health and Elections Cameroon, as part of their awareness-raising and/or information activities
- the organization by Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, in partnership with *Groupe Metaverse*, of an online workshop on child protection in Cameroon on 15 November 2022
- officially launching the National Civic Education Programme through Moral, Civic and Entrepreneurial Rearmament (PRONEC-REAMORCE) in Logone-Birni, on 3 February 2022.

The Commission also encourages multi-sector efforts of the Government, development partners and Civil Society Organisations, working relentlessly to promote and protect the rights of the child***

⁹ <https://reliefweb.int/report/cameroon/violence-impacts-over-700000-children-due-school-closures-cameroon>, consultée le 11 November 2022.

¹⁰ <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/unicef-calls-immediate-release-abducted-school-children-north-cameroon>, consultée le 11 November 2022.

¹¹ <https://www.Cameroon-Tribune.cm/article.html/31116/fr/enfants-de-la-rue-une-operation-coup-de-coeur>, consultée le 7 novembre 2022.

¹² Nations Unies, *Cameroon : plus de 855 000 enfants privés d'école par l'instabilité dans les régions anglophones (UNICEF)*, <https://www.unicef.org/fr/communiqu%C3%A9s-de-presse/les-attaques-et-les-enlevements-visant-des-enfants-dans-certaines-zones-de-l'Afrique-de-l'Ouest-et-du-Centre-suscitent-des-inquiétudes>, consultée le 7 novembre 2022.

Aware of the new challenges children and their families encounter, owing to the upsurge of armed conflicts and intensified violence in schools and households,

Determined to ensure that the child's rights to inclusive education are promoted, protected and guaranteed, providing them with balanced growth in society,

The Commission further **reiterates** that the resilience of children with special needs should be encouraged and supported by effectively implementing *physical, technical and financial accessibility of public services to this vulnerable group*, mainly by introducing *sign language in education, teaching and public services, and adapting environmental facilities*,

The Commission recommends that the Government introduce sign language assistance or information facilities in primary and secondary schools, hospitals, markets, and cultural and recreational areas for young people, to promote the inclusion of children at all levels of society where they may be present or represented,

The Commission also recommends that the Government endorses the Oslo Safe Schools Declaration in armed conflicts contexts, to better guarantee the right to education of children in conflict-affected regions,

The Commission recommends further that public authorities take special measures in host cities to facilitate access to education for internally displaced children, including those with disabilities, to promote inclusion for every child,

The Commission strongly recommends that the Ministries of Basic Education and Secondary Education ensure the effective implementation of inclusive schooling, to systematically overcome illiteracy and the stigma of children with disabilities,

The Commission recommends that the Ministry of Social Affairs firmly and continuously educate parents on the consequences of abandoning children on the street, the impact of such neglect on their physical and mental health, and the vulnerabilities of this group of people in our society,

The Commission recommends further that the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family spare no effort to promote all the rights of the girl child without discrimination,

The Commission reiterates its appeal to secessionist groups in the North-West and South-West Regions to lay down arms, allowing children to enjoy their right to education, their right to health, their right to leisure, their right to a family and their right to development,

The Commission reminds parents and other caregivers that parenting style significantly influences the development and inclusion of the child and that, as per the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child,

- they have the *primary responsibility* for the upbringing and development of the child
- they have to ensure that domestic discipline is administered with humanity and in a manner consistent with the inherent dignity of the child
- they retain the right to exercise reasonable control over the conduct of their child.

The Commission recommends that civil society organisations, and religious and traditional leaders increase awareness-raising activities to make parents understand the importance of their role in the healthy development of their child,

The Commission also recommends that human rights defenders carry out advocacy activities aimed at holding parents accountable in cases of clear negligence and at setting up specific monitoring mechanisms,

The Commission, on its part, will spare no effort in promoting the culture of inclusive childhood and protecting it, through workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, fact-finding missions and as part of handling complaints or self-initiated investigations.

The Commission also urges victims or witnesses of human rights violations, - especially child rights violations - to contact it, including through its **toll-free number, 1523**.

Yaounde, on **1.8 NOV 2022**

**Pour le Président
et par Ordre**



[Signature]

Dr Galega Gana Raphaël
Ministre Plénipotentiaire Hors Echelle