

**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**

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## STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO MARK THE 35<sup>th</sup> WORLD AIDS DAY

**Theme: *Equalize***

**1 December 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,**

***Recalling*** that the creation of a World AIDS Day was first discussed during the World Summit of Ministers of Health on Programmes for AIDS Prevention in 1988,

***Bearing in mind*** that it was on 8 April 1988 that the WHO officially announced that World AIDS Day would be celebrated on 1 December of that year, a decision later endorsed by resolution A/43/15 of the UN General Assembly to make it an annual event<sup>1</sup>,

***Noting*** that on World AIDS Day, the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) calls on every one of us to tackle the inequalities hampering progress towards ending AIDS<sup>2</sup>,

***Considering*** this year’s theme, *Equalize*, which calls for action on concrete measures confirmed necessary to combat inequality and thus end AIDS<sup>3</sup>, such as:

- strengthening the availability, quality and compliance with HIV/AIDS treatment, testing and prevention services, giving everyone access to them
- reforming laws, policies and practices to combat the stigma and exclusion people living with HIV/AIDS encounter, so that everyone is respected and welcomed
- ensuring technology exchange between communities and between the South and the North enabling equal access to the best scientific findings on HIV/AIDS
- raising awareness amongst communities on this year's theme to highlight the inequalities they experience and encourage actions to tackle them.

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.education.gouv.fr/1er-decembre-journee-mondiale-de-lutte-contre-le-sida-7604>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.unaids.org/fr/2022-world-aids-day#:~:text=Le%20slogan%20%C2%AB%20Poussons>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibidem*.



**Affirming** that the rights of people living with HIV/AIDS are recognised and protected at national, regional and international levels, owing to the vulnerability and social stigma they experience,

**Noting** that the People of Cameroon, in the Preamble to the Constitution of 18 January 1996, states that “*the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights*” and that “*all persons shall have equal rights and obligations. The State shall provide all its citizens with the conditions necessary for their development*”,

**Recalling** the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights of 27 June 1981, which entered into force on 21 October 1986 and ratified by the State of Cameroon on 20 June 1989, states in Article 16 (1) and (20) that “*Every individual shall have the right to enjoy the best attainable state of physical and mental health*” and that “*State Parties to the present Charter shall take the necessary measures to protect the health of their people and to ensure that they receive medical attention when they are sick*”,

**Recalling also** that Articles 7 and 25 (1) of the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights state that all people “*are entitled to equal protection against any discrimination in violation of this Declaration and against any incitement to such discrimination*” and that “*Everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for the health and well-being of himself and of his family, including food, clothing, housing and medical care and necessary social services*”,

**Bearing in mind** that people living with HIV/AIDS are likely to be exposed to a range of human rights violations in specialised institutions and traditional treatment centres, and in communities, especially in families, through inadequate care and treatment, torture and cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment and discrimination,

**Recalling** UNAIDS data on the global response to HIV/AIDS shows a slowdown in progress in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and a decrease in available resources over the last two years marked by Covid-19 and other global crises<sup>4</sup>,

**Noting** that in Cameroon, out of the 499,330 people living with the disease, nearly 400,000 were put on antiretroviral in June 2022 as against 312,217 in 2019<sup>5</sup>,

**Noting further** that based on the 2021 National AIDS Control Committee (NACC) statistics, the HIV/AIDS prevalence stands at 2.9 per cent, with 4.3 per cent among women and 1.89 per cent among men<sup>6</sup>,

**Recalling** that according to the National Strategic Plan 2021-2023, adopted in September 2021, Cameroon aims to reduce new infections by 60 per cent, HIV-related mortality by 70 per cent, the quality of life of people infected and/or affected by HIV/AIDS by 50 per cent and improve the quality of the national response by 50 per cent by 2030<sup>7</sup>,

<sup>4</sup> *Idem.*

<sup>5</sup> <https://chretiens.info/monde/afrique/cameroun/sante-499-333-personnes-sont-atteintes-du-ida-au-cameroun/2022>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibidem.*

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



**Bearing in mind** UNAIDS 2021 global statistics on the status of the AIDS pandemic <sup>8</sup>, reveals that:

- 38.4 million people living with HIV
- 1.5 million people were newly infected
- 650,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses
- 28.7 million people had access to antiretroviral therapy.

**The Commission commends** the decline in the country's prevalence from 5.6 per cent in 2004 to 2.7 per cent in 2020<sup>9</sup>,

**The Commission notes** that many people living with HIV in Cameroon are discriminated against in workplaces and health facilities,

**The Commission further notes** that reducing the incidence of HIV infection among the 15-24 age group should be one of the key priorities in the fight against AIDS,

**Mindful of** the new challenges in caring for people living with HIV under the health situation associated with the COVID-19 pandemic facing the world, especially Cameroon,

**The Commission commends** Government measures to support people living with HIV, including:

- adopting the Health Sector Strategy (HSS) 2016-2027, which gives new guidelines for developing the health sector in Cameroon
- holding the first statutory meeting of the NACC for 2022, which aimed to assess the progress and shortcomings observed in implementing the National Strategic Plan to combat HIV/AIDS for the 2021-2022 period.

**The Commission commends** the actions undertaken by the Ministry of Public Health (MINSANTE), which has set new guidelines as part of the priority interventions to be carried out in the response to HIV/AIDS. Such guidelines include:

- the voluntary adherence of more people to testing
- the availability and accessibility of tests to determine the viral load of patients
- intensifying the fight against stigma and discrimination.

**The Commission further commends** the actions undertaken by the NACC, including:

- the awareness campaign "Vacances sans Sida" for youths by youths, from 10 to 31 August 2022 aimed at contributing effectively to reducing HIV infection rates among young people aged 15 to 24<sup>10</sup>
- a media capacity-building workshop involving 30 journalists from the traditional and new media in disseminating the implementation of the User Fees policy through their respective media organs in Mbalmayo, from 20 to 21 July 2022.

<sup>8</sup> <https://unaids.org/fr/resources/fact-sheet>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>9</sup> <https://minsante.cm/site/?q=en/node/4092>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>10</sup> Newsletter du CNLS, n° 004 de juillet 2022, p. 3, accessed on 28 November 2022.

**The Commission encourages** development partners and Civil Society Organisations that work tirelessly to promote and protect the rights of People Living with HIV,

**The Commission takes this occasion to commend** the launch of the new UNAIDS, UNICEF and WHO alliance, joined by 12 countries including Cameroon, to ensure that no child living with HIV will be denied treatment, and to prevent new infants from being infected by 2030. This took place at the International Aids Conference in Montreal, Canada, on 29 July 2022<sup>11</sup>,

**The Commission urges** health facilities and actors to:

- improve the standards of living of patients in hospitals, such as the specific conditions of women and children
- embrace the logic of global solidarity and shared responsibility, to sustain HIV/AIDS services and achieve the targets set for 2030
- deliver health messages to the public by striving to overcome misconceptions and participating in raising public awareness
- improve community health actions by building the capacities of actors for them to contribute to the care of HIV-positive patients.

**The Commission urges** communities and families to:

- accept people living with HIV/AIDS
- assist them in their treatment
- respect the human dignity of the sick.

**The Commission urges** Civil Society Organisations to:

- educate communities on the causes, consequences and treatment of HIV/AIDS-related diseases
- actively advocate for the elimination of stigma and adherence to HIV/AIDS treatment.

**The Commission recalls** that sexual violence is the main risk factor for the transmission of HIV/AIDS, especially among women and girls. In Cameroon, 22,000 people were newly infected with HIV within a year - over 77 per cent of them women.<sup>12</sup>

**The Commission, therefore, urges all men to immediately end all forms of violence against women and girls**, as stated in the statement on the International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women, released on 25 November 2022

**The Commission**, celebrating the 35th World AIDS Day, **strongly emphasises** the need for action at the national, regional and global levels to focus on respect for the human rights of people living with HIV/AIDS

<sup>11</sup> <https://www.who.int/fr/news/item/02-08-2022-new-global-alliance-launched-to-end-aids-in-children-by-2030>, accessed on 28 November 2022.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.mission-21.org/en/fight-against-sexual-violence-and-for-gender-equality/>, accessed on 28 November 2022.



Yaoundé, on..... - 1 DEC 2022


**Pour le Président  
et par Ordre**  
*[Signature]*  
*x Galega Gana Raphaël*  
 Ministre Plénipotentiaire Hors Echelle