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DE L'HOMME DU CAMEROUN

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CAMEROON HUMAN  
RIGHTS COMMISSION

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**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION  
TO MARK THE 5TH INTERNATIONAL DAY OF EDUCATION  
24 January 2023**

*To invest in people, prioritize education*

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* Resolution No. A/RES/73/25 of 3 December 2018 adopted at the conclusion of the 44th plenary meeting of the UN General Assembly, which proclaims 24 January as International Education Day, to underscore the role of education for peace and development,

*Considering* that by celebrating the 5th International Day of Education in 2023 under the theme *Invest in People, prioritize Education* the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appeals to the actors in the education chain to bear in mind that “education throughout life, from the earliest years of life, can break the cycle of poverty, improve health, prepare people for decent jobs with opportunities for retraining and upgrading, and mitigate the climate crisis”<sup>1</sup>,

*Further considering* that UNESCO justifies prioritising education by the need for States to recover from the learning losses caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and transform education so that it is more inclusive, relevant and resilient to future shocks<sup>2</sup>,

*Noting* that in its Resolution No. 70/1 of 25 September 2015 titled “Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development”, the UN General Assembly affirms that “education plays a key role in building sustainable and resilient societies and contributes to the

<sup>1</sup> UNESCO / Emily Pinna, Note conceptuelle, *Journée internationale de l'éducation 2023, Investir dans l'humain, faire de l'éducation une priorité*, p. 2.

<sup>2</sup> <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000379707.local=em>, UNESCO, *Reimagining our future together, a new social contract for education*, consultée le 7 janvier 2023.

achievement of all of the other Sustainable Development Goals" in its three economic, social and environmental dimensions<sup>3</sup>,

**Noting further** that in its concept note relative to celebrating the 5th International Education Day, UNESCO calls on States and development partners and Civil Society actors to be accountable for their commitments to implementing Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 4, Article 13 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR), as well as the six global initiatives adopted at the UN Transformation of Education Summit (TES), held on 16, 17 and 19 September 2022 in New York,

**Recalling** that SDG 4 aims to "ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all",

**Recalling** finally that the six global initiatives adopted at the above-mentioned TES Summit cover the following areas<sup>4</sup>:

1. Basic education by making schools inclusive, equitable, safe and healthy and by investing in teachers, teaching and the profession
2. the green revolution by enhancing learning and skills for living, working and promoting sustainable development
3. the digital transition by promoting digital learning and transformation
4. gender equality by promoting the empowerment of individuals that helps women and men, then empowered with knowledge and skills, to make informed choices in their professional and personal lives
5. the education crisis by identifying priorities and developing crisis-responsive education plans and curricula that meet immediate needs and build resilience in children
6. the funding of education by taking stock of the different budget allocation items to meet the identified needs equitably and covering school construction, equipment, training and remuneration of teaching staff, acquisition of didactic tools, and assistance in acquiring textbooks, while allocating a sufficient share to primary education, to achieve free education.

Recalling finally that the ICESCR Committee refers to the strong statements in Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights to explain the meaning of Article 13 (2) of the ICESCR, which highlights the criteria for measuring the implementation by States of the full attainment of the right to education at all levels as follows:

- Primary education has two specific characteristics: it is "compulsory" and "accessible free of charge to all"<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Resolution n° A/RES/73/25 of 3 December 2018, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> United Nations General Secretariat, Transforming Education Summit, 16-19 September 2022, Concept Note and Programme Overview.

<sup>5</sup> General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the Right to Education, p. 4.



- Secondary education, like higher education, in its various forms - general, technical and vocational - "*shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and particularly by the progressive introduction of free education*"<sup>6</sup>
- Basic education "*shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education*"<sup>7</sup>
- The right to receive education also implies "*developing a school network at all levels, establishing an adequate system of scholarships and continuously improving the material conditions of teaching staff*"<sup>8</sup>,

*Noting* that under General Comment No. 13 on the Right to Education, the ICESCR Committee reminds States that the *Right to Education* must meet the *interrelated and essential characteristics of infrastructure facilities*<sup>9</sup>, *access*<sup>10</sup>, *acceptability*<sup>11</sup> and *adaptability*<sup>12</sup>,

Noting further that the Committee recalls, in the same General Comment, that implementing the right to education is governed by the principles of non-discrimination and equality of treatment, school discipline, academic freedom and the autonomy of educational institutions,

Considering that the Preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon of 18 January 1996 states that "the State shall guarantee the right of the child 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 that the right to education is recognised in many regional and international human rights instruments to which Cameroon is a party, including the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ACHPR), the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), which all emphasize:

- the importance of education in developing the child's personality, talents and mental and physical abilities to their fullest potential
- the responsibility of States Parties to promote and ensure respect for the right to education through teaching, education and information.

Bearing in mind Law No. 98/004 of 14 April to Lay down Guidelines for Education in Cameroon, which stipulates in its Articles 4 and 5 that "*the general mission of education is to*

<sup>6</sup> The term "*progressive introduction of free education*" means that States must give priority to free primary education. However, they equally have *an obligation to take concrete measures to ensure that secondary and higher education is free in the long term*. See General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the Right to Education, p. 5.

<sup>7</sup> General Comment No. 13 of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on the Right to Education, p. 7.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> This refers not only to the availability of buildings but also other structures which provide shelter from natural elements, but also trained teachers who receive competitive domestic salaries and teaching kits, etc.

<sup>10</sup> There are three overlapping dimensions to accessibility: non-discrimination, physical access and economic access.

<sup>11</sup> Acceptability refers to the form and content of education, including curricula and teaching methods that must be acceptable.

<sup>12</sup> Adaptability means that education must be flexible so that it can be adapted to the needs of changing societies and communities, and to the needs of learners in their own social and cultural settings.



train children for their intellectual, physical, civic and moral development and for their harmonious integration into society while bearing in mind economic, socio-cultural, political and moral factors"<sup>13</sup>,

Bearing in mind also that Cameroon has adopted the principle of equal opportunities for access to education as set out in Article 7 of the above-mentioned Law on the Guidelines of Education and Article 11 of Law No. 2001/005 of 16 April 2001 on the Orientation of Higher Education, according to which "[a]ccess to education and training shall be guaranteed to all by the State irrespective of sex, political, philosophical and religious opinion, social, cultural, linguistic or geographical origin",

The Commission commends Government efforts to invest in people to transform education, to effectively combat inequalities and foster the construction of a peaceful, modern and just society through:

- The implementation of the instructions of the President of the Republic of Cameroon relating to the special recruitment of 2000 PhD/PHD teachers in the State Universities of Cameroon was spread over a period of three years, starting from the FY2019 i.e. 1000 teachers in 2019, 500 in 2020 and 500 in 2021 which resulted in:
  - o the signing of Order No. 132/CAB/PM of 10 December 2018 establishing the organic framework of the special recruitment operation of teachers in State Universities for FY 2019-2021
  - o the signing of Press Releases No. 001, 002 and 002/SG/PM of 13 December 2019, 03 May 2021 and 21 November 2022 respectively announcing the results of the first, second and third phases of the special recruitment operations of 1,237<sup>14</sup> and 549<sup>15</sup> teaching posts in the eight State Universities of Cameroon for the period 2019 to 2022
  - o the signing of Press Release No.002/SG/PM OF 21 November 2022 to publish the results of the third phase of the special recruitment operations for 573 teaching positions in the eleven (11) State Universities of Cameroon for the academic year 2022-2023
  - o the authorization, by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, of the launching, for the years 2023, 2024 and 2025, of a special recruitment of four hundred and fifty (450) new teachers, exclusively for the benefit of the three (3) new State Universities of Bertoua, Ebolowa and Garoua; the authorization made public in the above-mentioned Press Release No. 002/SG/PM of 21 November 2022.

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<sup>13</sup> 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)*, Volume-3 |Publication-6 October 2019, pp. 902-913, <https://www.ijtsrd.com/papers/ijtsrd29264.pdf>.

<sup>14</sup> The 1237 teaching positions distributed among the eight State Universities of Cameroon for the period 2019 to 2021 are as follows: Bamenda (166), Buea (164), Douala (162), Dschang (144), Maroua (137), Ngaoundere (165), University of Yaounde I (164), University of Yaounde II (135).

<sup>15</sup> The 549 teaching positions distributed in the eight State Universities of Cameroon for 2021 to 2022 are as follows: Bamenda (75), Buea (75), Douala (74), Dschang (63), Maroua (57), Ngaoundere (73), University of Yaounde I (75), University of Yaounde II (57)



- the organisation of an international conference on violence in schools by the Ministry of Secondary Education in collaboration with the UN system in Cameroon, from 20 to 21 December 2022 at the Yaounde Hilton Hotel
- the Radio Press Release n° 03/23/MINESEC/CAB of 16 January 2023 which reiterates the prohibition of corporal punishment as per Article 5 of Law n° 98/004 of 14 April 1998 to lay down guidelines for education in Cameroon
- the official launching of the Third edition of the free distribution of school books [more than 1,800,000 books of level 3 (CM1, CM2, Class 5 and Class 6)] by Professor Laurent Serge ÉTOUNDI NGOA, the Minister of Basic Education, on 7 October 2022 at the Bastos School Complex, an operation carried out with the support of the World Bank through its School Reform Support Project (PAREC) aimed at increasing access and availability of school books in schools
- the audience granted on 15 June 2022 by the Minister of Basic Education to a delegation from the Islamic Development Bank (IDB) led by Mr Mayoro, during which the bases for implementing the new Support Project for Schooling in Priority Education Zones (PASZEP) were laid down, i.e. the construction and equipping of 100 public primary schools and 50 kindergartens for a total of about 60 billion CFA francs
- the audience granted by the Minister of Basic Education to Mr LO MOUSTAPHA, Senior Educator at the World Bank, on 27 October 2022, during which options were decided in favour of covering the costs of certain employees by the funds of the MINEDUB - World Bank cooperation, as part of implementing the above-mentioned PAREC project
- the Radio Press Release No. Di/22/199/CRP/MINFOPRA of 2 October 2021 concerning the recruitment operation, for the year 2021, of contractual primary and nursery school teachers and contract teachers - Wave 2010.

***The Commission further applauds*** the education recovery plan undertaken by the Prime Minister's Office, MINEDUB and MINESUP, following the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which focuses on three priority areas, such as: (i) getting all children back to school (ii) recovering learning losses, and (iii) preparing and supporting teachers<sup>16</sup>,

***The Commission wishes to highlight*** that, as part of its mission to promote human rights, it is further developing its program to update teaching materials, guides and training modules for universities and training schools,

***The Commission shall also continue to monitor*** the implementation of programmes aimed at promoting human rights education in schools and universities, and vocational training schools, as well as the effective practice of human rights education in 80 pilot schools throughout the country, launched between 2008 and 2012,

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<sup>16</sup> A state of the Global Education Crisis: A path to recovery, a joint report of UNICEF, UNESCO and the World Bank, <https://www.worldbank.org/en/topic/education/publication/the-state-of-the-global-education-crisis-a-path-to-recovery>, accessed on 17/1/2022.



*The Commission notes*, however, that there are many challenges and factors that slow down to fully implementing the investment in people and making education a priority in Cameroon,

*The Commission notes* the results of the situation of the implementation indicators of the two targets of SDG 4 published by the National Institute of Statistics,<sup>17</sup> which present the humanitarian situation caused by insecurity, especially in some localities of the Far-North, North-West and South-West Regions, as the main factor explaining the drop in the school enrolment rate, in that it has led to an influx of refugees and IDPs,

*The Commission further notes* the prevalence of Boko Haram's propaganda against education in the Far-North Region, which means "*forbidden Western education*" in Hausa, and which is demonstrated by the recruitment of children into armed groups to be used as human bombs or sexual objects,

*The Commission is concerned* about the decline in birth registration in the Far-North Region, following repeated attacks by the terrorist sect. More than 400,900 pupils, including 37,000 who were expected to take the *Certificat d'Etudes Primaires*, were left without birth certificates in April 2022, according to statistics available at the National Civil Registration Office,

*The Commission also notes* that 126 schools were affected by floods in the Mayo-Danay, Mayo-Tsanaga and Logone et Chari Divisions in September 2022, leaving about 38,813 students, including 15,826 girls, without education<sup>18</sup>,

*The Commission notes* that free primary education only involves abolishing the registration fees charged, while other costs such as examination fees, purchasing textbooks and school supplies, and school uniforms remain the responsibility of the parents, as do the APEE contributions which are still compulsory,

*The Commission also notes* the increase in registration fees for examinations (*Certificat d'études primaires* and First School Leaving Certificate) and competitive examinations (*concours d'entrée* en 6e and Common Entrance) for the year 2023, these fees will increase from 5000 FCFA to 6000 FCFA, following the entry into force, on 1 January 2023, of the new finance law (Law No. 2022/020 of 27 December 2022), which increases the amount of the tax stamp,

*The Commission notes* the cost effects of distance learning through social networking platforms as a mitigating method to the social distancing measures put in place to limit the spread of the Covid-19 pandemic and maintained until the current year. This has further reduced learning opportunities for children from the most vulnerable families where lack of access to internet is a particular concern<sup>19</sup>,

*The Commission deplores* the fact that school promoters pay less attention to compliance with the regulations in force and, consequently, to the content of the training concerning the

<sup>17</sup> Indicators of sustainable development in Cameroon, 2021 edition of the National Institute of Statistics, p. 4

<sup>18</sup> Situation Report No. 25 of September 2022 by the 'United Nations Office for a coordination of humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), p.1.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*



quality of the teachers recruited and the teaching provided, and to the location of the schools in environments that are inappropriate and unsuitable for receiving teaching, either because of physical accessibility, the quality of the infrastructure, or because of the nuisance or delinquency around the sites,

*The Commission equally deplores* the increase in abuses in the school environment such as: violence, dropping out of school (especially due to unwanted pregnancies, including cases where teachers are the authors or due to lack of financial resources), the use of drugs and other psychotropic substances, harassment in all its forms, indecent exposure, etc.

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*The Commission recommends* that all public and private schools should be provided with up-to-date physical and digital libraries and well-equipped laboratories, guaranteeing quality training,

*The Commission recommends* that all relevant actors ensure that canteens and other restaurants of schools at all levels are functional and offer full meals to teachers at affordable prices, because academic success and performance also largely depend on brain nutrition,

*The Commission recommends* the progressive and methodical abolition, at the level of basic education, of other charges such as examination fees, purchase of textbooks and school supplies, school uniforms, Parents Teachers Association (APEE) contributions that are still compulsory,

*The Commission recommends* that compulsory charges such as examination fees and the purchase of textbooks, supplies and uniforms be reduced in secondary schools,

*The Commission recommends* that public authorities ensure the effective implementation of the post-Covid 19 Education Recovery Plan, with particular emphasis on the accessibility of tele-education for all, to reduce the digital divide among children from the most vulnerable families,

*The Commission recommends* to the officials of the Ministries of Education, Health and Training responsible for the formalities of granting authorisations for opening schools to an effective implementation of their awareness-raising missions, control and sanctions of all violators of the regulations in force,

*The Commission recommends* to the ministries in charge of education and employment that the work of teachers be further enhanced by supporting research and didactic development through in-depth training offers, continuous capacity building and the use of digital learning resources; *the Commission also recommends* the full respect of the teacher's right to remuneration, taking into account each of its components (allowances, advancements, benefits, examination fees etc.), including the settlement of arrears which still gives them cause for frustration and complaint;

*The Commission recommends* that those responsible for technical and vocational education and training institutions should place particular emphasis on research and development



– a source of innovation and social transformation – without omitting ethical issues, patriotic and living together that are too often overlooked or biased by political prisms,

*The commission recommends* the establishment of modern surveillance mechanisms (security gates, surveillance cameras, etc.) to prevent and combat violence and drug trafficking in schools,

*The commission recommends* the establishment of procedures for reporting cases of harassment in schools or the extension of these mechanisms where they already exist and frameworks for dialogue between learners (including through their representatives) and school or university administration, for example through the establishment of listening and support cells in schools and universities,

*The Commission recommends* that education promote ethics and increase learners' awareness of their civic, political and environmental responsibilities by taking on board cultural diversity, respect for human rights, tolerance, the fight against all forms of discrimination, and the development of a culture of peace and harmonious coexistence,

*The Commission calls on once again*, all actors involved in the education chain to assume their responsibilities:

- parents on the fact that the right to education is compulsory and not optional
- students, not only on the knowledge of their rights, but more on the respect of their responsibilities, including vis-à-vis teachers and
- teachers, on child protection, respect for the dignity of the girl and respect for the right to physical integrity of students and other learners

*The Commission strongly supports and encourages* public authorities, public and private companies, development partners and civil society to invest in people through education.

*The Cameroon Human Rights Commission remains committed* to the full fulfilment of the right to education, through its missions of promoting and protecting human rights and preventing of torture,

*The Commission invites once more* all persons who are victims or witnesses of violations of human rights in general – and violations of the right to education in particular – to contact its institution, including through the **toll- free number, 1523**.

Yaoundé, on 23 January 2023



James MOUANGUE KOBILA