

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

**SOUS-COMMISSION CHARGÉE
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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

**CAMEROON HUMAN
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**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION
TO MARK THE 137th INTERNATIONAL LABOUR DAY**

**On the theme Resilience and Decent Work: Working together in the World of
Work for the Improvement of living conditions and social inclusion**

1 May 2023

**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
Combined Chambers,**

Bearing in mind that May Day marks, since May 1, 1884, the remembrance of the
thousands of American workers who died or were injured in strike actions undertaken to
demand better working conditions and the reduction of the daily working time to eight
hours¹,

Bearing in mind also that May Day is celebrated as International Workers' Day or Labour
Day, as the annual celebration of the achievement of eight hours of work on 1 May 1886,
the result of the above-mentioned strike actions initiated by the trade union movement in
the United States of America,

Bearing in mind that, according to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), the
employment relationship "is a legal notion widely used [...] to refer to the relationship
between a person called an 'employee' (frequently

¹ <https://www.journee-mondiale.com/2/journée-mondiale-du-travail.html>, accessed on 17 April 2023

referred to as a worker') and an 'employer' for whom the 'employee' performs work under certain conditions in return for remuneration", and that "this is the main vehicle by which workers gain access to the rights and benefits associated with employment in the areas of labour law and social security"²,

Recalling also that under Articles 6 and 7 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, which was adopted on 16 December 1966, entered into force on 3 January 1976 and was ratified by Cameroon on 27 June 1984, "the right of everyone to the enjoyment of just and favourable conditions of work which ensure, in particular:

- a) Remuneration which provides all workers, as a minimum, with:
 - i) Fair wages and equal remuneration for work of equal value without distinction of any kind [...];
 - ii) A decent living for themselves and their families [...];
- b) Safe and healthy working conditions;
- c) Equal opportunity for everyone to be promoted in his employment to an appropriate higher level, subject to no considerations other than those of seniority and competence;
- d) Rest, leisure and reasonable limitation of working hours and periodic holidays with pay, as well as remuneration for public holidays.

Welcoming the fact that the 137th International Labour Day will be celebrated on 1 May 2023 on the theme Resilience and Decent Work: Working Together in the World of Work for the Improvement of living conditions and social inclusion, according to the Ministry of Labour and Social Security's Radio-Press Release No. 000050 of 9 March 2023

Bearing in mind that the theme is in line with the one chosen for the 136th Day, celebrated under the theme World of Work: Fight against Covid-19, protection of jobs and productivity,

Stressing that, according to the provisions of Article 2(b) of ILO Recommendation No. 205 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience, adopted on 16 June 2017 by the International Labour Conference at its 106th Session on 5 June 2017, "the term 'resilience' means the ability of a system, community or society exposed to hazards to resist, absorb, accommodate, adapt to, transform and recover from the effects of a hazard in a timely and efficient manner, including through the preservation and restoration of its essential basic structures and functions through risk management",

Stressing also that decent work, Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 8, implies "work that meets people's basic aspirations, not only in terms of income, but also in terms

² International Labour Office (ILO) Report on the Employment Relationship, Geneva, 2006, p. 3.

*of security for themselves and their families, without discrimination, and that ensures equal treatment between men and women"*³,

Bearing in mind that several other factors have impeded or are impeding the full achievement of economic and social rights as much as particularly the right to work, such as:

- the outbreak of the Covid-19 pandemic, which, according to the ILO statistics, has severely affected the world's workforce with more than 300 million jobs lost and 64.5 per cent of businesses in Cameroon reduced their business hours. A total of 50.1 per cent of businesses laid off workers and 43.3% of businesses reduced employee salaries between April and May 2021, and job loss or discontinuance affected approximately three out of five households in July 2021⁴
- the security situation in the North-West and South-West where secessionist terrorists were still imposing boycotts of education, public and private service, and economic activities, especially on Mondays. The situation forced players in these sectors of activity to operate periodically or minimally or even to close some establishments, particularly those that were not destroyed
- the unemployment rate in Cameroon, which was 7.4 per cent in the second quarter of 2022, according to the ILO
- inflationary pressures and structural vulnerabilities caused by the conflict in Ukraine, which have hindered the economic recovery of Africa and particularly Cameroon ⁵,

Noting that the impact of these crises is felt "*disproportionately by the most vulnerable people groups, such as children, youth, women and displaced persons, who are caught in a downward spiral of increasing poverty and vulnerability.*"⁶,

Noting that the ILO defines inclusion "*such as the personal feeling of individuals in the workplace, whether they feel valued for who they are, the skills and experience they bring, and whether they have a strong sense of belonging to others in the workplace.*"⁷,

³ Decent work: A goal for youth and trade unions, ILO, Geneva, published on the website <https://www.ilo.org/global/topics/decent-work/WCMS079193/lang--fr/index.htm>, accessed on 20 April 2023.

⁴ CHRC Statement to mark the 136th International Labour Day on 1 May 2022, p. 4.

⁵ Opening Remarks by Minister Salaheddine MEZOUAR, Minister of Economy and Finance of Morocco, at the Retreat of the 15 Finance Ministers of the African Union (Rabat, 13-14 June 2022), organised on the theme Beyond the VIC-19 Pandemic and the Ukrainian Conflict: Strengthening the Resilience of African Economies and the Financial Sustainability of the African Union, quoted in the CHRC Statement to mark African Human Rights Day, 21 October 2022, p. 4.

⁶ ILO Recommendation No. 205 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience, p. 3.

⁷ ILO Recommendation No. 205 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience published on the website https://www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/newsroom/news/WCMS_841334/lang--fr/index, accessed on 20 April 2023.

Finally, **noting** that, according to the ILO, “*women, persons with disabilities and people from ethnic/racial/religious minorities are more likely to be grouped together and often blocked at the lowest levels of company staff.*”⁸,

Noting that the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, through the call "Acting Together" in choosing the theme for the celebration of the 137th International Labour Day, wishes to stress the fact that it is difficult to maintain the achievements of living conditions in the world of work at the close of crises without the involvement of all the actors or tripartite constituents of the world of work the representatives of the governments, those of employers and workers,

Noting that such tripartite collaboration, according to the ILO, refers to the holding of regular consultations during which “*governments can ensure that ILO standards are developed, applied and monitored with the participation of employers and workers*”⁹,

Inspired by the “*Guiding Principles for Taking Targeted Action on Job Creation and Decent Work in Crisis Situations, and a Multidimensional Phased Approach to Promoting Peace, Preventing Crises, Enabling Recovery and Building Resilience*”¹⁰, some 14 guiding principles, according to Article 7 of ILO Recommendation 205,

Considering that the State of Cameroon is a party to several instruments and that it is committed by other specific texts to promote and protect the rights of workers in general and of the child, workers with disability and particularly women workers, including the Preamble of the Constitution, which forms an integral part of it, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (1981), the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (1966), the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Sustainable Development Goal 8 (SDG 8) 2030,

Considering also that as a member of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) since 7 June 1960, Cameroon is a party to several conventions on workers' rights,

The Commission commends Government efforts to ensure better living conditions for workers, the ultimate beneficiaries of the measures taken to this effect, [Faisons preuve de logique : ce segment de phrase ne peut faire sens que si les bénéficiaires initiaux étaient différents des bénéficiaires finaux ; or, tel n'est pas le cas. Ce segment est par conséquent absurde] especially by:

⁸ Executive Summary of the ILO Report Transforming Business through Diversity and Inclusion, 2022 p. 5.

⁹ Consultations tripartite published on the website: <https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/subjects-covered-by-international-labour-standards/tripartite-consultation/lang--fr/index/htm>, accessed on 20 April 2023.

¹⁰ ILO Recommendation No. 205 of 16 June 2017 on employment and decent work for peace and resilience, p. 4.

- signing of Presidential Decree No. 2023/158 of 6 March 2023 to increase the basic monthly salary of civil and military servants at an average rate of 5.2 per cent
- signing of Decree of the prime minister head of Government No. 2023/00338/PM of 21 March 2023 setting the Guaranteed Minimum Wage (GMW) at:
 - o 41,875 CFA francs for civil servants covered by the Labour Code
 - o 45,000 CFA francs for the agricultural and related sectors
 - o 60,000 CFA francs for other sectors of activity, per month, throughout the national territory,
- organizing under the auspices of the 77th General Assembly of the United Nations opened at the Organization's headquarters in New York, a meeting titled "Acting Together" in Douala, on 23 September 2022: Implementing the Global Jobs and Social Protection Accelerator for Just Transitions. The meeting brought together Heads of State and Government, heads of UN agencies, international financial institutions and other leaders to discuss opportunities for concrete commitments of support
- holding the 2022 session of the National Committee for the Rehabilitation and Socio-Economic Reintegration of People with Disabilities (CONRHA) on 13 September 2022, to assess the level of mobilisation of stakeholders, inclusive actions and multisector perspectives for implementing government policy relating to persons with disabilities
- launching, by the Director General of the National Social Security Fund (CNPS), the registration of all domestic staff on 9 September 2022
- enacting Law No. 2022/010 of 14 July 2022 to authorise the President of the Republic to ratify the Multilateral Convention on Social Security of the Inter-African Conference on Social Security (CIPRES), adopted on 27 January 2006 in Dakar, Senegal
- signing Ministerial Order No. 040/PM of 19 May 2022 setting the terms and conditions for granting age exemptions to persons with disabilities in administrative competitive entrance exams and civil service recruitment.

The Commission is pleased to have addressed the issue of accessibility to public buildings for persons with disabilities by organising, from 22 to 25 November 2022:

- a capacity building workshop for Commissioners and CHRC staff on measures to monitor the accessibility of public buildings to persons with disabilities
- visits by monitoring teams to public buildings throughout the country.

However, *the Commission is still concerned* about:

- workers' ignorance of the risks they encounter in their workplaces
- the negative role of rogue employers who take advantage of people's ignorance and poverty levels by putting them in a dilemma between the scarcity of jobs and low salary offers
- irregular checks on labour inspectors, who are considered to be essential links in the control of decent work within companies.

The Commission once more recalls Section 27(3) of Law No. 2010/002 of 13 April 2010 on the protection and promotion of persons with disabilities, which states 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, housing and transport*
- - *access to sports and leisure*
- - *access to employment*".

The Commission recommends that for better protection and inclusion of workers' rights, the government should:

- adopt the Rawlsian concept of "equal opportunities", taking further concrete steps to facilitate the socio-economic integration of persons from vulnerable groups, including women and persons with disabilities
- strengthen the Labour Inspectorates with human, technical and logistical resources
- Ensure the implementation of the instructions given to labour inspectors to intensify company visits and make them effective and objective
- increase the monitoring of the effective and regular payment of employees' social security contributions
- increase the dissemination of information to workers on the mechanisms for protecting their rights, and the mechanisms enabling them to denounce any abuse of which they may be victims on the part of the employer;
- to reform the legal texts protecting workers from recruitment to retirement, as the majority of them date from the 1960s;

The Commission also recommends that Civil Society actors to raise awareness

- of the public and particularly of vulnerable groups to improve their knowledge of their rights in the workplace,

- of workers on the social protection they should benefit from and the different risks linked to the nature of their work, toward a full development in the professional environment,

The Commission, for its part, ***will make every effort to:***

- to multiply initiatives to bring its advocacy more effectively to the attention of the competent authorities, to revise and/or reform the enactments for the promotion and protection of workers, which have become obsolete
- to promote and protect human rights and particularly workers' rights, through training workshops, awareness and information campaigns, advocacy, investigative missions, handling complaints and self-initiated investigations,

The Commission, therefore, ***calls on*** any victim or witness of human rights violations and especially of workers' rights violations to contact it, including via its **toll-free number 1523**.

Yaoundé, 30 AVR 2023

Pour le Président
et par Ordre



Galega Gana Raphaël
Ministre Plénipotentiaire Hors Echelle