

RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN  
Paix – Travail – Patrie

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



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON  
Peace – Work – Fatherland

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 WORLD ENVIRONMENT DAY

On the theme “Beat Plastic Pollution”

5 June 2023

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter: “the Commission”), created by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019 and established on 29 April 2021 following the swearing-in of its members before the Supreme Court sitting in Combined Chambers,

*Bearing in mind* Paragraph 4 of Resolution No. 2994/XXVII of the UN General Assembly on environment of 15 December 1972, which “designates 5 June as World Environment Day” to commemorate the date of the start of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment held in Stockholm from 5 to 16 June 1972, also known as the “Stockholm Conference”,

*Noting* in the same paragraph 4, the said General Assembly “urges Governments and the organizations in the United Nations system to undertake on that day every year world-wide activities reaffirming their concern for the preservation and enhancement of the environment, with a view to deepening environmental awareness and to pursuing the determination expressed at the Conference”,

*Recalling* that the Stockholm Conference was the first in the adoption of a set of principles “for sound management of the environment” and also marked the beginning of the dialogue between industrialised and developing countries on the conflict of interests between



*“economic growth, the pollution of the air, water, and oceans and the well-being of people around the world”<sup>1</sup>*, thus making the environment a major global issue,

**Noting** that the 26 principles emanating from the Conference constitute the basis for calling the attention of Governments and peoples to the need to consistently take stock of the transformative power of man over his natural environment which, *“if used wisely, can bring to all peoples the benefits of development and the opportunity to enhance the quality of life [but w]rongly or heedlessly applied, the same power can do incalculable harm to human beings and the human environment”<sup>2</sup>*,

**Recalling** that these principles relate to States’ responsibility for developing and monitoring the implementation as well as sanctioning any failure to comply with the measures set out in the Environmental Action Plan, namely:

- the environment monitoring and assessment system, also known as Earthwatch (assessment and analysis, research, monitoring and information sharing)
- environment management (setting objectives and planning, as well as consultations and international agreements)
- support to the first two measures through :
  - o *education, vocational training and information* as regard environment assessment activities
  - o *organisation and funding* as for environment management and
  - o *technical cooperation* which applies to both aspects,

**Noting** that it is as part of technical and institutional cooperation that the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) was established by Resolution No. 2997 (XXVII) of the UN General Assembly of 15 December 1972<sup>3</sup> with a mandate covering six strategic areas of intervention, namely:

- i) climate change
- ii) disasters and conflicts
- iii) management of ecosystems
- iv) environmental governance
- v) toxic substances and
- vi) resource use,

---

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Conference on the Human Environment, 5-16 June 1972, Stockholm, <https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/stockholm1972>, accessed 1 June 2023.

<sup>2</sup> Declaration of the United Nations Conference on the Human Environment (Stockholm Declaration, 1972), paragraph 3, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> Resolution 2997 (XXVII) is titled *Institutional and financial arrangements for international environmental cooperation*.



**Mindful** of the fact that Resolution No. A/76/L.75 of the UN General Assembly adopted on 28 July 2022 indicates that the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment is a human right and is linked to other rights,

**Noting** that this same Resolution, in paragraph 19 of its preamble, states that “a vast majority of States have recognized some form of the right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment through international agreements, their national constitutions, legislation, laws or policies” and that “promotion of the human right to a clean, healthy and sustainable environment requires the full implementation of the multilateral environmental agreements under the principles of international environmental law”,

**Mindful** of the Cameroon Constitution of 18 January 1996 which states that “every person shall have a right to a healthy environment [that the] protection of the environment shall be the duty of every citizen [and that the] State shall ensure the protection and improvement of the environment”,

**Bearing in mind** that the State of Cameroon is a party to several specific instruments for the protection and promotion of the environment<sup>4</sup>,

**Noting** that the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) n° 1, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 15 specific to the environment combine the three dimensions of sustainable development: economic, social and environmental,

**Aware** that it is with the aim of curbing the triple global challenge of climate change, pollution and the deterioration of biodiversity that UNEP determines the themes for the celebration of World Environment Day, including those of the last five years, to wit:

- *Beating plastic pollution* in 2018
- *Air pollution* in 2019
- *Time for Nature* in 2020
- *Ecosystem Restoration* in 2021
- *Only One Earth* in 2022,

---

<sup>4</sup> These include the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change, adopted during the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro from 5 to 16 June 1992, ratified by Cameroon on 19 October of the same year and entered into force on 21 March 1994; the Convention on Biological Diversity adopted at the same Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, ratified by Cameroon on 14 June of the same year and entered into force on 29 December 1993; the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, adopted on 27 June 1981 in Nairobi, entered into force on 21 October 1986 and ratified by Cameroon on 20 June 1989; the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification, concluded in Rio de Janeiro on 5 June 1992 and ratified by Cameroon on 19 October 1994 before its entry into force on 17 January 1995; the Paris Agreement, adopted on 12 December 2015, ratified by Cameroon on 12 July 2016 and entered into force on 4 November of the same year.



**Aware** that the 2023 World Environment Day, which is being celebrated on the theme “**Beat Plastic Pollution**”, is a logical step in UNEP's commitment to curb the triple challenge of the planet in its aspect of fight against pollution,

**Considering** “*Plastic means a solid material which contains as an essential ingredient one or more high-molecular-mass polymers and which is formed (shaped) during either manufacture of the polymer or the fabrication into a finished product by heat and/or pressure*”<sup>5</sup>,

**While** ‘waste’ “*shall mean any residue from a process of production, processing, or anything abandoned or set to be discarded*”<sup>6</sup> and “[t]he packaging sector is the largest generator of plastic waste (46 per cent), followed by the textile (15 per cent), consumer products (12 per cent), transportation (6 per cent), building and construction (4 per cent) and electrical (4 per cent) sectors”<sup>7</sup>,

**Bearing in mind** that “40 per cent of all plastic packaging waste ended up in landfills, 32 per cent was lost into the environment, 14 per cent was incinerated and 10 per cent was recycled (8 per cent into lower value applications and 2 per cent into similar applications); an additional 4 per cent was sent to recycling but was lost in the process”<sup>8</sup>,

**Noting** that “plastic pollution is defined broadly as the negative effects and emissions resulting from [...] plastic waste that is mismanaged (e.g., open-burned and dumped in uncontrolled dumpsites) and leakage and accumulation of plastic objects and particles that can adversely affect humans and the living and non-living environment”<sup>9</sup>,

**Noting** also that the harmful effects of this pollution are manifested throughout the life cycle of plastics<sup>10</sup> – from extraction to disposal – by the following characteristics:

- when extracted from oil and gas, through direct emissions from fuel combustion, methane leaks and flames which can have a “[negative impact on the neurological, reproductive and immune systems and cause certain cancers]”<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> UNEP/PP/INC.1/6 *Glossary of key terms* used in Environment Assembly resolution 5/14 that have definitions adopted or endorsed by the Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment in its first session, held in Punta del Este, Uruguay, from 28 November–2 December 2022, p. 4.

<sup>6</sup> PRACTICAL GUIDE FOR INSPECTORS AND CONTROLLERS OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT AND PROTECTION OF NATURE, *LEGAL-TEXTS-COMPILATION*, 12 December 2018, p. 593.

<sup>7</sup> UNEP/PP/INC.1/7, *Plastic science*, First session of the Intergovernmental negotiating committee to develop an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, Punta del Este, Uruguay, 28 November–2 December 2022, p. 6.

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

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>10</sup> *Mesurer et réduire les plastiques dans le secteur des soins de santé*, published by Health Care Without Harm, Brussels, 2021, p. 8 [translated].



- its refining and manufacturing by energy-intensive processes produce large quantities of emissions and toxic chemicals
- its use, through the release of microplastics, microfibres and additives into the environment, has negative effects on terrestrial and marine ecosystems
- for non-recyclable plastic products, the disposal flows produce:
  - o during incineration, emissions of carbon, gas and toxic ashes, which generate the most CO<sub>2</sub>
  - o when disposed of in the environment, deposits that can persist for hundreds of years, leading to “[the leakage of toxic chemicals and microplastics into the soil and water occupying large areas of land]”<sup>12</sup>,

**Stressing** that the plastic life cycle of extract, manufacture and dispose – the main feature of the linear plastic economy – remains at the heart of the problems posed by plastic pollution<sup>13</sup>,

**Affirming**, along with UNEP Executive Director Inger ANDERSEN, that the UNEP report entitled *Turning off the Tap: How the world can end plastic pollution and create a circular economy* offers solutions to reduce the risks by calling “for three market shifts – reuse, recycle and reorient and diversify products”<sup>14</sup>,

**Noting** that this Report highlights “four strategic goals” for the transition from a linear to a circular plastics economy, as cited below:

- (i) *reduce the size of the problem by eliminating and substituting problematic and unnecessary plastic items, including hazardous additives;*
- (ii) *ensure that plastic products are designed to be circular (reusable as a first priority, and recyclable or compostable after multiple uses at the end of their useful life)*
- (iii) *close the loop of plastics in the economy by ensuring that plastic products are circulated in practice (reused, recycled or composted [by mechanical and chemical recycling]); and*
- (iv) *manage plastics that cannot be reused or recycled (including existing pollution) in an environmentally responsible manner”<sup>15</sup>,*

**Noting** that UNEP proposes other solutions, both preventive and curative, including

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> UNEP/PP/INC.1/7, *Plastic science*, First session of the Intergovernmental negotiating committee, *op. cit.*

<sup>14</sup> UN roadmap outlines solutions to cut global plastic pollution, <https://www.unep.org/news-and-stories/press-release/un-roadmap-outlines-solutions-cut-global-plastic-pollution>, accessed on 1 June 2023.

<sup>15</sup> UNEP/PP/INC.1/7, *Plastic science*, First session of the Intergovernmental negotiating committee, *op. cit.*



- the waste hierarchy, the most important action of which, alongside the reduction, replacement or recycling of plastic, consists of refusing certain plastic products by stepping up controls on internal production and the entry of certain of these products at land borders, and
- Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR), which “involves producers taking responsibility for the management of products after they become waste, including: collection; pre-treatment, e.g., sorting, dismantling or depollution; (preparation for) reuse; recovery (including recycling and energy recovery) or final disposal”<sup>16</sup>,

**The Commission commends** the efforts of the State, civil society actors, structures and organisations at the African regional level and at the universal level, particularly:

- the organisation of hygiene and sanitation campaigns in the form of a competition called “Clean Cities”
- obtaining funding of 582,740 euros (382,277,440 CFA francs) to carry out a territorial and feasibility study for building waste sorting infrastructures in twenty-seven (27) secondary towns in Cameroon: Kousseri, Mokolo, Loum, Kumba, Nkongsamba, Mbouda, Foumban, Guider, Fombot, Bafang, Yagoua, Mbalmayo, Meiganga, Bali, Bafia, Wum, Bangangté, Tiko, Mora, Sangmélina, Kumbo, Mbanga, Obala, Nanga-Eboko, Soa, Kye-Ossi and Bonalea<sup>17</sup>
- the “PLASTIC Récup” and “Ecogreen” citizen projects, launched by the Government, Hysacam, the decentralised local authorities and certain partner companies that produce plastic containers; these projects aimed at raising awareness of the issues at stake in the recycling of plastic and plastic bottles in particular
- the project to build a unit to transform plastic waste into ecological paving stones in Kousseri, in the Far North
- the call for expressions of interest No. 0003 of 02 March 2022 issued by the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) for the recruitment of a consultant to draw up the national strategy to combat plastic pollution
- the introduction of a tax scheme, a special excise duty, of roughly 1% of the taxable value of all imported goods, from 1 January 2022, to fund the disposal of waste by local authorities<sup>18</sup>

<sup>16</sup> UNEP *Glossary of key terms* used in Environment Assembly resolution 5/14, *op. cit.*, p: 3.

<sup>17</sup> Speech by Mrs COURTES née KETCHA Célestine, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, on Tuesday 31 May 2022, at the signing ceremony for the Memorandum of Understanding between MINH DU and SETEC Énergie Environnement/SETEC Cameroun and the launch of the territorial and feasibility study for waste sorting infrastructures in Cameroon's secondary towns.

<sup>18</sup> “La propreté est un bien public”, article published at <https://hysacam-proprete.com/fr/article/252>, accessed on 22 May 2023.



- the adoption of Resolution No. 5/14 of 2 March 2022 of the United Nations Environment Assembly of the United Nations Environment Programme, which aims to put an end to plastic pollution by means of an international legally binding instrument on plastic pollution, including in the marine environment, Article 1 of which “[r]equests the Executive Director to convene an intergovernmental negotiating committee, to begin its work during the second half of 2022, with the ambition of completing its work by the end of 2024”
- the holding of a meeting of an ad hoc open-ended working group in Dakar, Senegal, from 30 May to 1 June 2022, to prepare the work of this Intergovernmental negotiating committee
- the holding of the 2<sup>nd</sup> session of the same Intergovernmental Negotiating Committee (INC-2) in Paris, France, from 29 May to 2 June 2023
- the growing number of private initiatives for the pre-collection of household waste and the processing of plastic and other waste into charcoal;

**Bearing in mind** that ‘waste’ also means “*substances or objects which are disposed of or are intended to be disposed of or are required to be disposed of by the provisions of national law*”<sup>19</sup>, the **Commission regrets**:

- the poor application of the legal and regulatory framework for the promotion and protection of the environment from waste in Cameroon, which includes:
  - o Article 82 of the Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 relating to environmental management, which states that “[a]ny person having polluted, or degraded soils and sub-soils, altered the quality of air and waters in violation of the provisions of this law shall be, liable to a fine of 1,000,000 (one million) to 5.000.000 (five million) CFA francs and a prison sentence of 6 (six) months to 1 (one) year or only one of these two”
  - o Article 10 of Decree No. 2013/0171/PM of 14 February 2013 to lay down the methodology for conducting environmental and social impact assessments
  - o Article 2 of Decree No.2015/1373/PM of 8 June 2015 to lay down rules for exercising certain powers on environment transferred by the state to councils, which states that “*Councils shall exercise the powers transferred*” by “*defining modes of management of plastic, toxic and dangerous wastes as well as determining their method of treatment and defining specific conditions for managing industrial waste*”
  - o MINEPDED Orders No. 001, No. 002 and No. 003 of 15 October 2012, respectively to lay down:

<sup>19</sup> UNEP Glossary of key terms used in Environment Assembly resolution 5/14, *op. cit.*, p. 3.



- requirements for obtaining an environmental permit concerning waste management
- specific conditions on the management of toxic and/or hazardous industrial waste
- specific conditions for managing medical and pharmaceutical waste
- joint MINEPDED/MINCOMMERCE Orders No. 004 and No. 005 of 24 October 2012:
  - relating to the manufacture, importation and commercialisation of non biodegradable packages
  - regulating specific conditions for the management of electrical and electronic equipment and also the final elimination of waste resulting from these equipment
- Circular Letter No. 096/C/CAB/MINEPDED of 10 April 2014 to check compliance and punish offenders with regard to Joint Order No. 004/MINEPDED/ MINCOMMERCE of 24 October 2012 on, inter alia, the ban of plastic packaging less than 61 microns in thick
- the poor dissemination of the legal and regulatory framework for environmental protection, which reduces everyone's access to information about hazardous substances
- the poor control of products imported by Cameroon at land and sea borders
- the insignificant progress in the area of appropriate waste management<sup>20</sup>, particularly in terms of
  - deployment of the essential infrastructure needed for proper waste management and, more specifically, the installation of waste sorting and recovery systems
  - the limited capacity of local councils to carry out the technical and economic studies needed to prepare applications for funding to build the infrastructure;

**Knowing** that the impact of plastic pollution is felt differently by population groups whose vulnerability to environmental damage results *from regular and continuous exposure to waste*<sup>21</sup>, the **Commission also deplores**:

- *the uncivil behaviour by the people in managing waste and maintaining gutters*
- *the laxity of local authorities in dealing with the continuing proliferation of huge waste piles – which contain a lot of plastic refuse of all kinds – at certain crossroads and along certain streets in major towns;*

<sup>20</sup> Speech by Mrs COURTRES née KETCHA Célestine, Minister of Housing and Urban Development, *op. cit.*

<sup>21</sup> FRAMEWORK PRINCIPLES ON HUMAN RIGHTS AND THE ENVIRONMENT, The main human rights obligations relating to the enjoyment of a safe, clean, healthy and sustainable environment, 2018.



While recognising the important role plastics play in society and the need to promote a circular economy for plastics,

***The Commission recommends*** that the public authorities put an end to administrative tolerance when it comes to applying the provisions and terms of the texts in force.

In particular, ***the Commission recommends***

- to the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development and to the Ministry of Housing and Urban Development:
  - to step up controls to ensure that the aspect of financial investment in waste management is systematically factored in before an environmental permit is granted
  - to systematically require companies producing plastic containers to take responsibility for the management of their products once they have become waste, from collection to recycling or final disposal
  - to effectively sanction any offenders in this area;
- to the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development to enhance support to local authorities in strengthening
  - their capacities in terms of knowledge of the laws in force on waste management
  - the capacities of those involved in the informal plastic waste collection sector in terms of waste management methods
- to the Ministry of Trade and the Customs Department to step up controls on goods entering the country at border crossings so as to gradually reduce imports of disposable products on first use
- to the Ministry of Public Health to reduce the one-off use of disposable plastic products and to step up monitoring of plastic waste, from collection to final disposal
- to civil society organisations to step up activities to popularise the laws in force and to increase public education and awareness of environmental issues;

***The Commission invites:***

- *the decentralised local authorities* to properly exercise their prerogatives with regard to the environment in general and the management of plastic, toxic and hazardous waste in particular



- *the population at large* to show greater civic-mindedness, in order to reduce as much as possible the use of disposable products at the first use, through daily gestures and actions likely to protect the environment in the interest of all;

For its part, the ***Commission will spare no effort*** to continue to promote and protect human rights in general and the right to a healthy environment in particular, through training workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, fact-finding missions, as well as through the handling of complaints and self-referrals.

***The Commission calls on*** anyone who is a victim or witness of a human rights violation in general – and of a violation of the right to a healthy environment in particular – to report such, including through its **toll-free number, 1523**.

Yaounde, 02 JUIN 2023

**Pour le Président  
et par Ordre**

