

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

20 November 2024

Theme. Listen to the future. *Stand up for children's rights.*

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter "the Commission" or "the CHRC"), established by Law No. 2019/014 of 19 July 2019 and rendered operational on 29 April 2021, following the swearing in of its Commissioners before the Supreme Court sitting in joint benches,

Bearing in mind that in the aftermath of the Second World War, famine and disease were widespread in Europe and the other war-torn continents. The most vulnerable groups, particularly children, are more severely affected,

Bearing in mind also that it is due to this situation that the United Nations Relief and Rehabilitation Administration (UNRRA) established the International Children's Emergency Fund (ICEF) on 11 December 1946, in response to the needs of children affected by the Second World War¹,

Bearing further in mind that in 1953, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) resolved to renew the mandate of the International Children Emergency Fund (ICEF), which had previously achieved favourable outcomes. This resulted in ICEF becoming a specialised agency of the United Nations, known as the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF),

Recalling that in 1954, the UNGA recommended that all countries of the world establish a Universal Children's Day, to be observed as a day of worldwide fraternity and understanding between children and activities devoted to promoting the welfare of children of the world²,

¹ See UNICEF, "75 years of UNICEF", <https://www.unicef.ch/en/lunicef/international/lunicef-75-ans/histoire>, accessed on 1 November 2024.

² See United Nations, "World Children's Day, 20 November", <https://www.un.org/en/observances/world-childrens-day/background>, accessed on 1 November 2024.

Considering that the *World Children's Day (WCD)* commemorates both the adoption of the *Declaration on the Rights of the Child* by UN General Assembly Resolution No. A/RES/1386 (XIV) of 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 and was ratified by Cameroon on 11 January 1993,

Considering further "that the child, by reason of his [or her] physical and mental immaturity, needs special safeguards and care, including appropriate legal protection, before as well as after birth".³,

Noting that the WCD is a means;

- to raise public awareness about the significance of acknowledging and upholding all the rights of the child, "upholding children's rights [being] the compass to a better world – today, tomorrow and into the future"⁴
- to urge all parties involved in the protection of the rights of the child to prioritise the importance of "listening to the voices of children and youths today is essential for a future that upholds children's rights"⁵,

Welcoming the theme of the 2024 World Children's Day, *Listen to the future. Stand up for children's rights*. Through this theme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) calls on States and all concerned stakeholders to fulfil children's rights to express themselves, and also to "ask children about their ideas, priorities and dreams for the future [and] build a better world [by taking into consideration children's priorities] in our actions today"⁶,

Recalling that according to Article 1 of the International Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the term "child means "every human being below the age of 18 years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier" ⁷,

Noting that the rights of the child refer to "all the rights to which the minor is entitled [or] the specific rights granted to the child" ⁸,

Considering that according to the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française* "to listen" means "to be attentive and rather sympathetic to a person's requests or suggestions" ⁹, to listen and understand what someone is saying,

Considering also that according to the same dictionary the term "future" still refers to "future generations" and "posterity"¹⁰,

³ See United Nations General Assembly, Fourteenth Session, Resolution 1386 (XIV) of 20 November 1959 on the Declaration of the Rights of the Child, <https://www.humanium.org/en/normes/declaration-1959/texte-integral-declaration-droits-enfant-1959/>, accessed on 14 November 2024.

⁴ See UNICEF, "World Children's Day 2024, <https://www.unicef.org/en/journee-mondiale-de-lenfance>, accessed on 6 November 2024.

⁵ See MY UNICEF, "20 novembre 2024 : Journée mondiale de l'enfance", <https://my.unicef.fr/article/20-novembre-2024-journee-mondiale-de-lenfance/>, accessed on 24 October 2024.

⁶ Ibid.

⁷ Pierre Esaïe Mpile, *Les Droits de la femme et de l'enfant, Entre universalisme et africanisme*, L'Harmattan, 2012, p. 15.

⁸ See Adeline Gouttenoire, « *Enfant* », in Joël Andriantsimnazovina et al. (dir.), *Dictionnaire des Droits de l'homme*, Paris, Quadrige/Presses Universitaires de France, 2012, pp. 367-371, esp. p. 376.

⁹ See *Dictionnaire de l'Académie française*, 9^e édition, <https://www.dictionnaire-academie.fr/article/A9E0333?history=5>, accessed on 24 October 2024.

¹⁰ Ibid.

Applying the above-mentioned definitions to the context of this Statement, the phrase "Listen to the future" takes on its full meaning as UNICEF invites all stakeholders involved in child protection to join in:

- giving children a voice to the children and encouraging them to express themselves freely on issues that affect them
- taking into account their ideas and considering their opinions legitimate and relevant
- involving children in decision-making processes and providing them with inclusive opportunities to participate in nation-building,

Emphasizing that, through this invitation, UNICEF is calling for a paradigm shift among stakeholders, as it is no longer just a question of protecting children but also of providing them with the appropriate means to become agents of their own future in a fast-growing society,

Considering the preamble of the Constitution of Cameroon of 18 January 1996, which provides that:

the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief, possesses inalienable and sacred rights, [that] all persons shall have equal rights and obligations [and also] the Nation shall protect and promote the family which is the natural foundation of human society, [the State] shall [particularly] protect [and] provide all its citizens with the conditions necessary for their [harmonious] development. [However] the freedom of communication, [and] of expression, shall be guaranteed under the conditions fixed by law,

Bearing in mind that Article 9 of the African Charter on Human and People's Rights (AChHPR) adopted on 27 June 1981, entered into force on 22 October 1986 and ratified by Cameroon on 20 June 1989, provides that: "[e]very individual [including children] shall have the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the law [in force in his/her country of origin or residence]",

Considering Article 3 of the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACRWC), adopted on 1 July 1990, entered into force on 29 November 1999 and ratified by Cameroon on 5 September 1997, which provides that "[e]very child shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in this Charter", and Article 7, which provides that "[e]very child who is capable of communicating his or her own views shall be assured the rights to express his opinions freely in all matters and to disseminate his opinions subject to such restrictions as are prescribed by laws",

Acknowledging that the Protocol to the AChHPR on the Rights of Women (also known as the Maputo Protocol) – adopted on 11 July 2003, entered into force on 25 November 2005 and ratified by Cameroon on 13 September 2012 - through Article 14(1), on "health and reproductive rights" protects women, including, the girl child, and particularly states in subparagraph (b) that they have "the right to decide whether to have children, the number of children and the spacing of children",

Emphasizing that numerous universal human rights instruments relating to civil and political rights and economic, social and cultural rights, to which the CRC is linked, emphasize the following rights of the child:

- the right to a name, a nationality and an identity
- the right to information, expression and association
- the right to the protection of his/her health, to a sufficient and balanced diet
- the right to education
- the right to be protected from violence, maltreatment and all forms of abuse or exploitation
- the right to be protected from all forms of discrimination

- the right not to wage war, or to be subjected to it
- the right to shelter, assistance and decent living conditions
- the right to play and engage in leisure activity
- the right to a family, to be surrounded and loved,

Emphasizing also that Article 2(2), of the same Convention recommends that States parties take all appropriate measures to fulfil all the rights set forth therein, particularly the right to freedom of information, expression and association,

Bearing in mind that the Cameroonian Penal Code punishes violations of the rights of the child, in particular:

- "assault on children" punished by Section 350(1), which provides for: "*death [sentence] or imprisonment for life respectively where the offence [murder, deadly blows] are committed against a person under 15 (fifteen) years of age, [meanwhile] the penalties prescribed by Section 279(1) [assault occasioning grievous harm] 280 [simple harm] and 281 [slight harm] shall be doubled*"
- "interference with the right to education" of children is punished by Section 355(1) of the Penal Code, which provides that: "*any parent with sufficient means who refuses to send his child to school, shall be punished with fine of from 50 000 (fifty thousand) to 500 000 (five hundred thousand). The punishment shall be imprisonment for from 1 (one) year to 2 (two) years where the offence is repeated*",

Bearing in mind that the Declaration of the Rights of the Child adopted on 20 November 1959 by the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) enshrines four major fundamental principles relating to the rights of the child:

- the principle of non-discrimination
- the principle of the best interests of the child
- the right to life, survival and development and
- the right to express views, which should be taken into account in accordance with the age and maturity of the child¹¹,

Bearing in mind that "*in too many places today, children's rights are misunderstood, disregarded or even denied and attacked*"¹² and that the United Nations General Assembly Committee on Social, Humanitarian and Cultural Affairs, at its 78th session on 5 October 2023, drew "*a bleak picture of the situation of children, marked by an increase in the number of young victims of armed conflict, [...] and the emergence of new threats, particularly digital threats*"¹³,

Considering that children are highly attuned to their surroundings and rapidly discern the myriad elements within their environment, including other individuals, animals, objects, customs, locations, and so forth, while concurrently developing an awareness of their own identity, autonomy, and the capacity make choices and express their desires, emotions and ideas through a range of means including gestures and conventional oral or written language, it is evident that children are capable of perceiving and processing a vast array of information.

Bearing in mind that the United Nations Committee on the Rights of the Child encourages States Parties to implement all appropriate to ensure the respect of children's

¹¹ See UNICEF, "International Convention on the Rights of the Child", <https://www.unicef.fr/convention-droits-enfants/>, accessed on 20 October 2024.

¹² See UNICEF, "world Children's Day 2024", *op. cit.*

¹³ See UNO, *La Troisième Commission fait le constat d'une régression des Droits des enfants face à des menaces en constante progression*, <https://press.un.org/fr/2023/agshc4377.doc.htm>, accessed on 7 November 2023.

freedom to express their views and their right to be consulted on matters affecting them, and to acknowledge this right at an early age, with due consideration of the evolving capacities, best interests and right to protection from harmful experiences of the young child,

Bearing in mind also that the right to express their views and feelings should be fully respected in the child's daily life at home (including, where appropriate, in the extended family), in health services, in child care, in the school setting, in legal proceedings and in the development and implementation of public policies, including through research and consultation,

Eager to listen to children in order to better promote their rights and defend their future, the CHRC designed a questionnaire to gather relevant information in the following key areas below:

- children's knowledge of child rights (the normative framework and the practices observed)
- the rights that children consider to be most violated and their main concerns in this regard
- their expectations for better protection of their rights (recommendations),

Noting that at the end of the study conducted by the CHRC from 6 to 7 November 2024 on a sample of 400 children in four public and private primary school pupils and secondary school pupils in the French and English sub-systems¹⁴, the results were as follows:

- a total of 92.25 per cent of pupils are aware of the basic rights of the child, i.e., 80 per cent of primary school pupils and 99.6 per cent of students in secondary school pupils
- concerning the rights that children consider to be most violated, the CHRC notes that *violence in all its forms, prohibited forms of child labour and the right to education were the three main concerns of children*, with:
 - o a total of 62.66 per cent of pupils in primary school, who expressed the need for protection from violence, 56.66 per cent asked for protection from child labour and 41.33 per cent protested against the violation of their right to education
 - o a total of 62 per cent of secondary school students asked for protection from violence, 58.4 per cent denounced the lack of protection from child labour and 35.6 per cent felt that children's right to education was not sufficiently respected in Cameroon,

While calling on all relevant parties to take appropriate measures to ensure that the *voices of children everywhere are heard throughout Cameroon and that all their rights are better respected*, to allow them to participate fully in decisions affecting them and to promote freedom of expression, opinion and association, and the culture of harmonious coexistence among children in society,

The Commission commends the efforts of the Parliament of Cameroon in this regard, particularly the holding of the *25th session of the Children's Parliament of Cameroon in the Tripartite Room of the Yaoundé Conference Centre on 26 June 2024*. During this session, the 180

¹⁴ Government Bilingual High School Essos, Saint Benedict Catholic College, Linda et les Chatons nursery and primary school, Hillside primary school.

young parliamentarians put forth a series of recommendations aimed at addressing the most pressing concerns facing children throughout the country. These include "[c]ybercrime, failure to register births at the civil registry office, child labour, failure to comply with standards for the accommodation of the disabled in certain schools, forced displacement, child labour in mines, association of children with armed forces and/or groups, violence, exploitation and sexual abuse on the Internet and in everyday life"¹⁵,

The Commission also commends the measures taken by public authorities and their partners to promote and protect child rights, including:

- the East Regional Office of BUNEC provided invaluable assistance between January and October 2024, facilitating the establishment of birth certificates for approximately 2,000 children in remote areas and the creation of 27 advanced civil status posts across the four Divisions of the East Region
- the celebration of the 34th Day of the African Child, organised by the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS) in collaboration with the Ministry of Women Empowerment and the Family (MINPROFF) on 16 June 2024 and
- the official launch, on 12 June 2024, of the series of activities to mark the fourth *Cameroon Children's Month (MCE)*, an event associated with the first session of the National Commission for the Protection of Children at Moral Risk, Delinquents or Abandoned Children for 2024, "a month free from violence, abuse, exploitation and neglect, and above all a month to reflect on the conditions of children"¹⁶
- the payment, between September 2023 and June 2024 by the NGO *Plan Cameroon*, of school fees of 2,852 refugee children in the East Region, for the 2023-2024 academic year, i.e., 2,474 at the primary level and 378 at the secondary level¹⁷,

The Commission is pleased to raise awareness of activities of child rights through the publication of 13 statements to mark the following days since 22 November 2023:

- International Day of Education, 24 January
- International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation, 6 February
- Day of the African Child, 16 June
- World Refugee Day, 20 June
- International Day Against Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking, 26 June
- International Day of the World's Indigenous Peoples, 9 August
- African Civil Registration and Vital Statistics Day, 10 August
- International Day for Universal Access to Information, 28 September
- International Day to Protect Education from Attack, 9 September
- International Day of Peace, 21 September
- International Day of Sign Languages, 23 September
- Global Handwashing Day, 15 October
- African Human Rights Day, 21 October,

The Commission is gratified by its endeavours, to safeguard the rights of the child in Cameroon, undertaken through its branches. This included:

¹⁵ See *Actualité du Cameroun*, "Parlement des enfants: les recommandations des députés juniors au Cameroun", <https://actualiteducameroun.net/parlement-des-enfants-les-recommandations-des-deputes-juniors-au-cameroun/>, accessed 7 November 2024.

¹⁶ See MINAS – *Notre plateforme d'informations*, "La 4ème édition du Mois Camerounais de l'enfance (MCE) est lancée", https://www.facebook.com/permalink.php?story_fbid=122164074920223331&id=61556699934772&locale=nn_NO, accessed 7 November 2024.

¹⁷ See *Plan Cameroon*, Annual Report on Education, Plan Cameroon 2024.

- the organisation of 15 educational conferences in the youth environment, held over a six-month period, from 1 January to 30 June 2024 in the East Region, aimed at promoting and protecting the rights of girls, in collaboration with various civil society organisations (CSOs) such as the *Foyer d'accueil pour jeunes filles mères (FAJEFIM)* and Mind Spark
- the organisation of an investigative mission to examine the prevalence of child labour at gold mining sites in Batouri, Bétaré-Oya and Garoua-Boulai, situated in the East Region, which was conducted between 14 and 18 June 2024. The investigation revealed the presence of approximately 331 children engaged in labour within the gold mines, comprising 150 boys and 181 girls, some of whom were accompanied by their parents,

Aware of the fresh challenges faced by children because of the undervaluing of their opinions and the inadequate consideration of their urgent concerns,

The Commission reaffirms the need to promote and support the resilience of children with special needs must be encouraged and supported through the effective and systematic implementation of the physical, technical and financial accessibility to public services for this vulnerable group, particularly *by adapting infrastructure and communication facilities to better meet their needs*,

The Commission is pleased that children's rights concerns were raised during the 43rd and 44th Ordinary Sessions of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), held in Maseru, Lesotho, from 15 to 25 April 2024 and 2 to 12 October 2024. These will be the subject of in-depth studies over the next two years¹⁸, particularly focusing on:

- children without parental protection
- female genital mutilation
- children whose parent (mother, father or any other family member) taking care of them is imprisoned
- children in conflict situation
- violence against children in Africa and
- the socio-economic vulnerability of children with disabilities,

The Commission also welcomes the adoption of the following documents:

- The Child Safeguarding Policy of the Organisation of African Unity (OAU), was adopted by the 26th Assembly of Heads of State and Government of the Organisation of the pan African organisation, in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, in July 1990
- The Optional Protocols to the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
 - o on the involvement of children in armed conflict, signed in New York (United States) on 25 May 2000 and entered into force on 12 February 2002
 - o on the sale of children, child prostitution and child pornography, signed in New York (United States) on 25 May 2000, entered into force on 18 January 2002
 - o on the establishment of a communication procedure to enable child victims of serious violations of their rights to report these violations to the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child, and a communication system for child victims of serious violations of their rights. These mechanisms were both established on 19 December 2011 in New York (United States) and entered into force on 14 April 2014

¹⁸ See African Union – African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC), *Communique of the 43rd Ordinary Session of the African Committee on the Rights and Welfare of the Child from 25 April 2024*, 5 pp., spéc. pp. 4 and 5.

- The Revision to the Guidelines for Granting Affiliate Status to National Human Rights Institutions (NHRIs) in Africa of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC). These guidelines help to improve the promotion and protection of rights of the child in Africa by strengthening cooperation between NHRIs and ACERWC,

The Commission is concerned about the ongoing phenomenon of street children in many major cities across Cameroon. This issue can be attributed to the lack of access to education and appropriate supervision, which has resulted to the exposure of these children to various dangers. These include the consumption of alcohol, drugs and other psychotropic substances, early sexual activity, unwanted pregnancies among young girls, sexual exploitation, and exposure to toxic chemicals such as mercury. In the East Region, during the initial six-month period of 2024, the *Centre d'accueil pour mineurs de Bertoua* (CAMB)—an institution under the Ministry of Social Affairs (MINAS), which specialises in the care and rehabilitation of socially vulnerable minors—documented that it provided care for 43 abandoned children, including one female¹⁹,

The Commission regrets to note the alarming increase in domestic violence against children, particularly in the Adamawa Region, where such violence has resulted in severe injuries and psychological trauma for the victims,

The Commission is deeply concerned about the continued prevalence of early marriages, which are often forced upon young girls by those who are supposed to protect them. Furthermore, the Commission is appalled by the persistence of child labour in all its forms,

The Commission also notes the persistence of egregious violations of the rights of the child in regions experiencing instability. These violations are primarily perpetrated by the Boko Haram terrorist group in the Far North Region and by secessionist terrorists in the North-West and South-West Regions. These violations include:

- the killing and mutilation of children, such as the discovery, on 24 September 2024, of a little girl of less than five years of age, living in Douala, in the Littoral region, who had been the victim of constant ill-treatment (beatings, burns with a knife and an iron on her forehead, neck, back, stomach and legs) by her aunt who took care of her. The girl's life was saved thanks to the intervention of the housekeeper and the neighbours, who reported the perpetrator
- forced and early marriage of under-aged girls e.g., the case of violation of the moral integrity and right to health of Rachida, 13 years old, resident of Faadah village, Meiganga Sub-division, Mbéré Division, Adamawa region, following her forced marriage to Daouro, about 50 years old, who is also said to suffer from an incurable and contagious pathology, under the influence of His Majesty Saïdou ARDO, chief of the said village and cousin of the groom. The Adamawa Branch of the CHRC referred the case by letter dated 29 April 2024 to the public prosecutor of the courts of Meiganga and Mbéré. Despite the referral, the wedding took place and the girl was taken to Yaoundé, the husband's residence. However, she is said to have left the matrimonial home on 10 May 2024, leaving her family without any news since
- attacks on schools, places of worship, and hospitals such as the attack on the Blangoua primary school in the Logone-et-Chari Division, on 30 July 2024, in which three pupils were killed,

¹⁹ See *Rapport semestriel du CAMB 2024*.

The Commission strongly condemns any actions that violate the fundamental rights of the child, particularly their freedom of expression and opinion,

The Commission expresses its deep concern regarding the recurrence of natural disasters, including:

- the devastating floodings that occurred between July and September 2024 in the Mayo-danay and Logone-and-chari Divisions in the Far North Region. This event affected a significant number of individuals, exceeding 459,000 people, with 74,000 of them being children²⁰. Furthermore, approximately 262 educational establishments, representing almost one-third of the total number of schools in the 18 Sub-Divisions, were affected. In particular, the damage or lack of accessibility to school facilities impeded the delivery of educational services to approximately 104,000 pupils and students and more than 1,500 educators
- the 2 dreadful landslides in the Dschang cliffs, West region, on 5 November 2024, which killed 12 people and blocked roads, thereby preventing children's access to education and health care²¹,

The Children, through the CHRC and following the survey of 400 primary and secondary school children carried out on 6 to 7 November 2024, *recommend* that, the Government should:

- guarantee and ensure that children are involved in the decision-making on matters that affect them
- increase the number of reception and protection centres for street and abandoned children
- carry out unannounced home inspections to prevent violence and abuse against children
- continue to combat the child trafficking, trade and exploitation
- continue to raise parents' awareness of children's rights, in particular the prohibition of physical abuse
- continue to adapt education systems to new employment opportunities and business creation
- introduce the presence of psychologists in schools for the psychological monitoring of pupils
- take more systematic action against schools and school authorities that continue to use corporal punishment as disciplinary sanctions
- continue to prohibit the broadcasting of violent and pornographic television programmes accessible to the public
- raise public awareness among the population of the possibility of using the services of court-appointed lawyers
- publicise the toll-free number provided by the CHRC and the Ministry of Social Affairs for the reporting of abuse and violations of children's rights
- raising awareness among children to report any acts of violence of which they are victims,

²⁰ See *Actu Cameroun*, « Les inondations dans l'Extrême-Nord du Cameroun menacent l'éducation de 74 000 enfants », <https://actu cameroun.com/2024/09/07/les-inondations-dans-lextreme-nord-du-cameroun-menacent-leducation-de-74-000-enfants/>, on 11 November 2024.

²¹ See *Journal du Cameroun*, « Cameroun : 12 morts dans le double éboulement à la falaise de Dschang », <https://fr.journalducameroun.com/cameroun-12-morts-dans-le-double-eboulement-a-la-falaise-de-dschang/>, accessed on 11 November 2024.

Children also recommend that parents should:

- respect children's rights
- give children attention and affection, listen to them and engage in dialogue with them
- ensure the education of all their children without discrimination based on gender or disability
- ensure that children receive sufficient quantity and quality of food, with at least one full meal a day
- ensure the safety of children on their way to school
- prioritize seeking advice from guidance counsellors and dialogue to improve children's school and career prospects
- include sexuality in children's education
- respect freedom of expression while strengthening parental control over their children,

The Commission reiterates its recommendations to the Government, made on the occasion of the 2023 World Children's Day, as follows:

- Endorse the Oslo Declaration on Safe Schools in Armed Conflict, to better guarantee children's right to education in areas affected by insecurity and to uphold the sanctity of schools
- Adopt new exceptional measures to facilitate access to education for internally displaced children in cities hosting internally displaced persons and provide enhanced protection for internally displaced children, particularly those with disabilities, to promote inclusion for all children,

The Commission notes that, of the 220 recommendations accepted by the State during the adoption of Cameroon's report after undergoing the fourth cycle Universal Periodic Review (UPR) on 26 March 2024, six directly concern the rights of the child. These recommendations have been transmitted by the CHRC to the relevant ministries and civil society organisations (CSOs), each, as they are concerned as follow:

- The recommendation to "*complete the adoption process for the draft Child Protection Code*" addressed to *the Prime Minister's Office, to the Ministry of Justice (MINJUSTICE), MINAS, the CHRC, the Cameroon Bar Association, and CSOs*
- The recommendation to "*accelerate the adoption of the Child Protection Code*" addressed to *the Prime Minister's Office, MINJUSTICE, the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (MINDDEVEL), MINPROFF, MINAS, the General Delegation for National Security (DGSN), BUNEC, the CHRC, and CSOs*
- The recommendation to "*undertake new measures to strengthen the protection of children's rights*" has been addressed to *MINJUSTICE, MINAS and MINPROFF*
- The recommendation to "*continue implementing the National Child Protection Policy (2017-2026)*" addressed to *the Ministry of Defence (MINDEF), to the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development (MINMIDT), MINAS, MINPROFF, the Ministry of Basic Education (MINEDUB), to Ministry of Secondary Education (MINESEC), and CSOs*
- The recommendation to "*enhance protection for children in conflict-affected areas, monitor all cases of serious violations of children's rights, and investigate these incidents*" addressed to *MINDEF, MINAS, MINAT as well as to divisional and traditional authorities, DGSN, Secretary of State for Defence in charge of the National Gendarmerie (SED),*

The Commission further recommends that the government should:

- take new measures to improve the quality of communication with children by ensuring continuous communication with them and taking into account their relevant opinions and ideas
- develop psychosocial support programmes for children affected by insecurity to help them overcome trauma and to encourage their mental wellbeing
- adhere to the Declaration on safe schools adopted by the Global Coalition to Protect Education from Attack on 15 November 2015, which has already been endorsed by 51 states, including 15 African States
- adopt the standard of 12 years of free education of which nine years are compulsory, including for children with disabilities and those living in rural, isolated or remote areas
- continue to implement effective measures to ensure the availability of systematic care services (physical and psychological) for children who have suffered physical, sexual or moral violence
- continue to protect children from violence that is perpetrated within the family or by friends by taking all necessary, appropriate and reasonable measures,

The Commission recommends that the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (MINDDDEVEL) and the National Civil Status Registration Office (BUNEC) should:

- intensify civil registration campaigns throughout the country, particularly in the Far North and East Regions and in regions that have received large numbers of refugees or internally displaced persons
- continue to bring civil status centres closer to people in rural areas
- encourage and support community mechanisms for civil status registration (through traditional chiefs and religious community leaders),

The Commission recommends that the Ministries of Public Health, Social Affairs, Women's Empowerment and the Family, Basic Education, Secondary Education and Higher Education should organise and intensify campaigns to raise awareness among school children and students, especially young girls, about the harmful effects of early sexuality, early pregnancy and abortion on maternal and reproductive health,

The Commission recommends that the Ministry of Social Affairs, the Ministry of Women's Empowerment and the Family, the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development (MINMIDT):

- intensify awareness-raising campaigns to inform parents and families of children working in mines of the harmful effects of removing children from the education system, especially in mining areas with a high risk of landslide
- establish mechanisms to monitor and protect children from hazards and all forms of exploitation at mining sites, ensuring regular visits to verify compliance with child protection requirements and regulations,

The Commission recommends that the Ministry of Social Affairs and civil society organisations:

- continue to raise parents' awareness about the importance of communicating with their children, listening to them and taking into account their opinions and ideas. This is in order to achieve a better development of the child as well as the full realisation of his or her potential

- Continue to work for the promotion and protection of all rights of the child,

The Commission reiterates its appeal to the armed terrorist and secessionist groups operating in the Far North, North-West and South-West Regions to lay down their arms so that every child can enjoy all his or her rights, particularly the right to prepare for the future by attending school in a peaceful environment, the right to freedom of expression and opinion and the right to participate in decision-making on matters that concerns them,

For its part, the Commission will spare no effort to continue the promotion and protection of all the rights of the child, with a particular focus on freedom of expression and opinion, through training workshops, awareness-raising campaigns, advocacy, fact-finding missions, the handling of complaints or self-initiated investigations and in the context of the prevention of torture, visits to all places of detention,

The commission therefore calls upon any person who is a victim or witness of Human rights violation and particularly the violation of child rights in particular, to contact the CHRC, including via its **toll-free number: 1523** (free call).

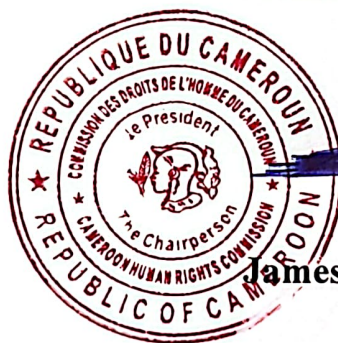
Contact the CHRC .-

Web site: www.cdhc.cm

Facebook and X (ex-Twitter): Cameroon Human Rights Commission

WhatsApp : 691 (99) 12 420 90

Yaoundé, 19 November 2024



James Mouangue Kobila