



45TH ORDINARY SESSION OF THE AFRICAN COMMITTEE OF EXPERT ON THE RIGHTS AND WELFARE OF THE CHILD

Maseru-Kingdom of Lesotho
From 7 to 12 April 2025

Statement by the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)

Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen, all protocol duly observed,

It is with great pleasure that I have the opportunity once again to address this distinguished audience once again on behalf of the Cameroon Human Rights Commission (hereinafter referred to as the CHRC) at this 45th session of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child. This session, under the banner of concerted action, is of great importance, particularly because of the presentation of the *study on the implementation of the Committee's decisions and recommendations*, and the *study on climate change and the rights of the child in Africa*. The CHRC will also closely consider the discussions on the sensitive issue of *children in conflict situations*, the *elimination of harmful practices* and the *prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation of children on our continent*.

Due to time constraints, I do not wish to dwell on tributes, which the Committee does not require, for its remarkable work on behalf of what is most dear to us, our children.

The focus of this presentation is an overview of the situation of the rights of the child in Cameroon during the intersessional period. Major advances and

challenges will be mentioned, and the presentation will conclude with some recommendations.

In relation to the situation of the rights of the child in Cameroon during the intersessional period...

The CHRC acknowledges the ongoing endeavours of the State in implementing the rights of the child:

- Firstly, the State adopted and promulgated the Law of 23 December 2024 organising the civil status registration system. This followed the CHRC's advocacy to facilitate the issuance of birth certificates, on 28 March 2022. The law introduces two significant innovations: Firstly, the extension of the time limit for declaring a birth from 30 to 90 days, and, secondly, the extension of the time limit for the State Counsel to request a birth registration from 6 to 12 months
- Secondly, the multisector validation of the national policy on inclusive assessment in Yaoundé, on 8 October 2024
- Finally, the intense activity of the CHRC on issues related to the rights of the child is particularly pertinent, as it led the Chairperson of the CHRC to hold a working session with the UNICEF Country Representative in Cameroon on 18 February 2025.

The Commission has expressed particular satisfaction with the measures undertaken to promote the rights of the child through the publication of seven awareness-raising statements on the African and Universal Human Rights Days on the rights of the child since November 2024.

In addition, on 29 May 2024, the CHRC disseminated the six recommendations on the rights of the child to 12 State structures and 169 civil society organisations. These recommendations were among the 220 that were accepted by the State on 26 March 2024, following the adoption of the report of Cameroon after undergoing the 4th cycle of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR).

During the preparation of its statement to commemorate the World Children's Day on 20 November 2024, the CHRC conducted a consultation process involving 400 children from four primary and secondary schools within the French-speaking and English-speaking subsystems, both public and private.

The objective of this consultation was twofold: firstly, to assess the children's understanding of their rights as outlined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC), and secondly, to identify any violations that they perceive to be the most prevalent. Additionally, their expectations for enhanced protection of their rights were documented. The results obtained from this study are as follows:

- A total of 92.25 per cent of pupils and students are familiar with the fundamental rights of the child
- Violence in all its forms, prohibited forms of child labour and the right to education are the three main concerns of children.

The CHRC emphasises that, as part of its mandate to protect human rights, it recorded and investigated 75 allegations of child rights violations between January and March 2025. The majority of these were recorded in the North-West Region, which has been severely affected by attacks by secessionist terrorists.

In terms of challenges, the CHRC remains concerned about the resurgence of violence against children, particularly in the three (out of 10) regions of the country plagued by insecurity. While suffering and nobility are a universal experience, the repeated attacks by the Boko-Haram in the Far North Region and by secessionist terrorists in the North-West and South-West Regions continue to cause significant hardship for children, who are often overwhelmed by despair.

The CHRC also regrets to note that, in addition to the core issue of birth certificates, four major challenges remain:

- i) Poor implementation of the right to education for children with disabilities
- ii) Domestic violence against children
- iii) The persistence of early and forced marriages
- iv) The government's weak commitment to eradicating female genital mutilation.

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In the aforementioned statements, the CHRC made 68 recommendations to State actors and civil society organisations, with a particular emphasis on the promotion of broad and inclusive access to education and to quality education, the systematic registration of births and other civil status events, and the systematic condemnation of perpetrators of female genital mutilation and early marriage.

Therefore, the National Human Rights Institution of Cameroon firmly believes that the Committee should:

- encourage all relevant parties to persist in raising awareness among the population and actors in the judicial chain, with a view to ensuring that every child born in Africa is automatically granted a birth certificate
- combat all violations of the rights of the child, including those of the girl child
- urge all relevant actors to continue implementing measures aimed at accelerating free and inclusive access to quality education for all during this final year of the Continental Education Strategy for Africa 2016-2025.

Honourable members of the Committee,

The CHRC was re-accredited with A status on 9 May 2024 and officially received its accreditation certificate on 11 March 2025 during the General Assembly of the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions in Geneva. This distinction is not unrelated to its constant and close cooperation with African human rights mechanisms, such as this Committee. I would therefore like to reiterate to you the CHRC's unequivocal commitment to maintain its pre-eminent position as the first NHRI affiliated to the Committee by carrying out its daily work with a view to strengthening the achievement of all the rights of the child in Cameroon and throughout Africa.