

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

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



**CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS
COMMISSION**

Permanent Secretariat

Human Rights Protection
and Promotion Division

Tel.: (237) 222-22-61-17 / e-mail : cdhlcndhl@yahoo.com

**STATEMENT BY THE CAMEROON HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION TO MARK
THE INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY**

8 March 2021

The Cameroon Human Rights Commission, hereinafter referred to as the Commission, created by Law N° 2019/014 of 19 July 2019,

Considering the resolution N° 32/142 adopted on 16 December 1977 by the United Nations' General Assembly calling upon States to proclaim, in accordance with their historic and national traditions and customs, any day of the year as United Nations Day for Women's Rights and to inform the Secretary General thereupon;

Recalling that the objective of this day is to recognize the fact that securing peace and social progress and the full enjoyment of human rights and fundamental freedoms require the active participation, equality and development of women and to acknowledge the contribution of women to the strengthening of international peace and security;

Considering the theme of this year's celebration, "Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 World";

Mindful of the Preamble to the 18 January 1996 Constitution, which provides that, "...the human person, without distinction as to race, religion, sex or belief possesses inalienable and sacred rights" and that "The nation shall protect and promote the family...it shall protect women...";

Mindful of the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, which provides that, "Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed...without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion...";

Taking into consideration the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights relating to the Rights of Women (Maputo Protocol) adopted on 11 July 2003 and in force since 25 November 2005 and ratified by Cameroon on 28 May 2009, which guarantees the rights of women to take part in political processes and to social equality with men;

Bearing in mind the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) and its additional protocol, adopted on 18 December 1979 and ratified by the State of Cameroon on the 23 August 1994 and 1 November 2004 respectively, which recommend that State Parties should combat all forms of discrimination against women and provides the basis for realizing equality between women and men through ensuring women's equal access to, and equal opportunities in political and public life including the right to vote and to stand for election as well as education, health and employment;

The Commission notes that although women make up more than 50% of the world's population, they are subject to various forms of discrimination and violations of their rights and statistics from UN reports show that:

- women earn 23% less than men;
- women occupy only 24% of parliamentary seats;
- 1 in 3 women have experienced physical or sexual violence and more than 200 million girls and women suffer from female genital mutilation around the world.

The Commission observes that with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic, women are taking lead positions to fight the pandemic as healthcare workers, community organizers, care givers, etc., and in the process they are at greater risk of contracting Covid-19 as they perform their triple role – as productive, reproductive and community workers – for the benefits of population at local and national levels.

The Commission is of the opinion that women are cushioning the effects of the pandemic on the State of Cameroon and underscores the centrality of women's agency, the need to further protect women and strengthen their astute leadership role in the fight against the Covid-19 pandemic and its implications.

The Commission acknowledges the Cameroon Government's effort in including women's interests in important developmental programs such as the 2035 Emergence vision and the 2020-2030 National Development Strategy, which has women empowerment as a main area of focus.

The Commission also commends efforts deployed to reduce the proportion of early marriages of young girls in Cameroon which has decreased from 47.2% in 2004 to 31% in 2014 and even lesser in 2020.

The Commission lauds the remarkable increase in the number of women in leadership positions in Cameroon, including in the new structure of Regional governance, notably with:

- an increase in the number of women in the senate with a 5% increase from 21 to 26 percent in the current legislature;
- an increase in the proportion of women in government from 7.3% in 1997 to 16.4% in 2019;
- a significant increase in the number of female councilors moving from 19.8% for the period 2007-2012 to 31.8% for the period 2013-2018;
- an increase number of women Mayors from 1 in 1995 to 39 in 2021.

*

The Commission regrettably notes that despite the effort of government and other stakeholders in fighting discrimination against women,

- gender equality and women's empowerment is still elusive in our communities and the nation at large. A plethora of gender gaps exist in many development spheres – social, economic, political, which are evident in the fact that women and girls continue to suffer more discriminations, oppressions, sexism and sexist stereotypes than their male counterparts in too many sectors in Cameroon; high maternal death rates are recorded; high level of gender based violence with serious physical and psychological trauma on women

and girls; high prevalence of domestic violence and other forms of gender based discrimination and abuse, to mention just a few.

- with the advent of the Covid-19 pandemic and the barrier measures introduced to curb the pandemic, many women in general – and in Cameroon in particular – are increasingly facing, unemployment, poverty and economic hardship.

The Commission recalls the Amman Declaration of 2012 and its Program of Action in which National Human Rights Institutions pledged to conduct inquiries into and investigate allegations of violations of the rights of women and girls.

The Commission also recalls that the theme for this 36th edition of the International Women's Day celebration which is **"Women in Leadership: Achieving an equal future in a COVID-19 World"** is an invitation, calling on stakeholders not to use this pandemic as a motive for not promoting women's right thereby undermining the important role women play for a better society.

The Commission observes that the building of a post-covid-19 world is not possible without the active participation of women.

*

The Commission therefore calls on government and stakeholders to ensure that all measures put in place to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic are gender responsive, ensuring that the specificities of women and girls are addressed.

The Commission deems it necessary to further address issues specific to women, which may hinder their participation to development and their rise to leadership positions, such as:

- the elimination of cultural barriers which prevents young girls especially in the Adamawa, East, North and Far North regions from getting access to formal education;
- the reduction of maternal mortality which is still high in Cameroon and stands at 529 deaths for 100 000 live births according to *Indexmundi 2020 Report*;
- the elimination of gender based violence which leads to physical and psychological trauma of the woman and the girl child;
- the fight against forced and early marriages, domestic violence and all forms of gender based discrimination.

The Commission invites Government to encourage women to take leadership positions and to get more involved in decision making processes.

The Commission urges the Government and stakeholders, including traditional rulers, to work more for the abolition of obnoxious traditions and customs, which engender discrimination and remain a hindrance to women getting to their full potential as regards education and their full participation in decision making at all levels.

The Commission encourages the adoption of conducive laws to women's access to more leadership positions in both elective and appointment positions, as well as scrupulous enforcement of such existing laws.

The Commission strongly reaffirms its engagement to spare no effort in promoting women's right and all related issues through education, awareness raising, advocacy, self-initiated investigations and the treatment of complaints on allegations of violation of such rights.

Yaounde, the 04 MARS 2021




James MOUANGUE KOBILA