



**SPEECH BY THE CHAIRPERSON OF THE NCHRF ON THE OCCASION
OF THE 24th ORDINARY SESSION
8 May 2018**

Honourable Members of the Commission,
The Secretary General of the Commission,
Distinguished Media Representatives here present,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

On this important occasion of the opening of the 24th Ordinary Session of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, It is with great pleasure that I take the floor first of all to welcome you all and secondly to brief you on issues that have taken place since our last session in December 2017.

We are holding this session amid national human rights challenges, paramount of which is upholding the right to security of persons manifested in internal and external displacement. Security threats also lead to a degrading economic situation characterized by the inability of populations to circulate and undertake activities freely.

It is difficult for a National Human Rights Institution which is a human rights defender to operate in a crisis situation like the one in Cameroon now where some government officials and some other individuals give diabolic orientations to the population thereby instilling generalized fear and promoting a state of insecurity. Orientation asking the population to leave their homes for safer environments and orientation pertaining to ghost towns and the closure of schools are diabolic.

Some government officials also take measures in violation of the laws of the State in denying the right to information, in restricting movements and in denying the rights of suspects. They are also becoming unable to adequately assure the

security of the lives and property of innocent and patriotic citizens. We regret the death of civilians and members of the armed forces and the unprecedented massive displacement of people with thousands becoming refugees out of the country. All of this is happening now in a world of advanced Information and Communication Technology.

That is why, as a human rights defender, our National Human Rights Institution which is the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms has consistently advised against violence and war and has stood for the promotion of peaceful dialogue. Greed is at the base of social ills. Peaceful dialogue is necessary for an objective search for ways and means of limiting the excessive accumulation of wealth by a few individuals and the promotion of the interest of all citizens.

Cameroon will be undergoing the Universal Periodic Review this May in Geneva and this requires the participation of all stakeholders in human rights in the country. As a NHRI, we have been contributing to this and will continue doing so.

Since the last session, with our individual and collective efforts we undertook several actions.

As regards the protection of human rights, the Commission continued treating complaints, initiated investigations on some cases and conducted field visits. In this connection, a delegation undertook a fact finding mission on the crisis situation in the Southwest and Northwest regions on 5-8 February 2018. Another mission was undertaken to the Far North region on 9-13 April 2018 to visit the population of Maga displaced by floods.

Prison visits were carried out in Monatele in the Centre region on 18 January 2018; in Bertoua, Doumé, Abong-mbang in the East region on 23-26 January 2018 as well as the Maroua in the Far North region.

It is however important to note that the NCHRF was refused access to some places of detention here in Yaounde, where we intended to visit suspects such as those who went on hunger strike, the forty seven suspects repatriated from Nigeria as well as a victim who was shot and hospitalized at the Yaounde Central hospital. This was done in violation of law No. 2004/016 of 22 July 2004 to set up the NCHRF.

As for the promotion of human rights, activities included:

- A Sensitization campaign on succession rights of women held in Mbalmayo on 6-7 March 2018;
- A brainstorming workshop to foster social dialogue and a human rights based approach in Business practices on 2 May 2018 in Yaounde and
- A consultation of civil society and public administrations on the NCHRF's report on the state of human rights in Cameroon for 2017 on 3 May 2018.

On another level, the Commission participated in various national and international meetings.

At the national level, it participated in:

- A meeting on the setting up of the National Preventive Mechanism on the Optional Protocol to the Convention against Torture at the Prime Minister's Office on 5 January 2018;
- A workshop on the implication of administrations in the process for the domestication of the Arms Trade Treaty organized by MINREX on 18-19 January 2018;
- A training workshop on statelessness organized by the United Nations High Commission for Refugees on 20 March 2018 in Yaounde and
- A roundtable discussion on the crisis in the Southwest and Northwest regions organized by the Embassy of the United States of America on 3 April 2018.

At the international level, the NCHRF was present at:

- the 3rd African Regional Congress on Death Penalty held in Abidjan Cote d'Ivoire on 9-10 April 2018;

- the Biennial meeting of the Commonwealth Forum of NHRIs and the Commonwealth Women's Forum held in London on 16-18 April 2018;
- the CSO networking workshop on child rights protection and promotion held in Bamako, Mali on 21-23 April 2018.
- the National Human Rights Institutions Workshop on the implementation of decisions of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights held in Nouakchott Mauritania on 23-24 April 2018.

In the area of cooperation, audience was granted to several personalities and delegations including:

- The Director of the United Nations Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa on 23 January 2018;
- the Canadian Federal Delegate on Plurilinguism, Mme Nicoletta MARIOLINI on 26 January 2018;
- the United Nations Assistant Secretary General incharge of Humanitarian Affairs, Mme Ursula Muller on 22 February 2018;
- The British High Commissioner, H. E. Rowan James Laxton on 14 March 2018;
- The first counselor at the Belgian Embassy, Mr Edwin Keijzer on 22 March 2018;
- A delegate from the Centre for Democratic Control of the Armed Forces Mme Sharon Anderes, on 28 March 2018 ;
- A member of the German Federal parliament Mr Frank HEINRICH, on 10 April 2018 and
- The Counselor at the United States Embassy in Yaounde incharge of the fight against terrorism Mr Brian Morgan, on 16 April 2018.

We undertook some administrative actions in the areas of capacity building, construction works and recruitment.

With regards to capacity building, the members and staff had a training on the theme “Good Governance and Human Rights” on 27 March 2018 in Yaounde and an educative talk was also organized for staff on the theme “Social Dialogue, a factor for promotion of decent work on 18 April 2018.

As for the construction works, the architectural and technical studies of the head office of the Commission were received by the committee on 3 April 2018 while the Far North Regional Branch Office was inaugurated of on 25 April 2018.

As for recruitment, we recruited five drivers, a translator and a senior jurist. Staff delegates were also elected and installed into function on 19 April 2018.

Honourable Members,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

During this session, we shall focus on:

- the implementation of the resolutions and recommendations of the 23rd ordinary session;
- the adoption of the 2017 annual reports;
- the election of Chairpersons and Rapporteurs of Working Groups and
- the examination of the Management and Administrative Accounts and
- the disposal of rolling stock and furniture.

To achieve this, I call on all to work with a collaborative spirit so that we can exhaust our agenda in time. On this note, I declare open the 24th Ordinary Session of the Commission.

Thank you for your kind attention.