

**Refugee Review Tribunal
AUSTRALIA**

RRT RESEARCH RESPONSE

Research Response Number: CMR35532
Country: Cameroon
Date: 7 October 2009

Keywords: Cameroon – Cameroon Ecological Movement – Mouvement des Ecologistes du Cameroun

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Questions

Please provide information on the MEC: history, leader, policies, profile, election results.

RESPONSE

The Mouvement des Ecologistes du Cameroun or Movement of Cameroon Ecologists (Ecologists' Movement of Cameroon) appears to have been formed in 1998 under the leadership of Fritz Pierre Ngo. Its registered office is based in Douala (Republic of Cameroon, Prime Minister's Office (undated), Portrait of the Government – Political Party Search, <http://www.spm.gov.cm/rechpartisp.php?lang=en&pg=7&cbolistan> – Accessed 30 September 2009 - Attachment 1).

Limited information was found on the organisation and its recent activity. It is one of a number of small opposition parties in Cameroon which receives low levels of support at elections.

In an interview during the 2004 presidential election campaign, Mr Ngo outlined a general political campaign agenda concerned with greater attention to sustainability and environmental protection. The introduction of compulsory education to the age of 18 and development of physical infrastructure including roads and hospitals were also mentioned;

According to Ngo, of the six-year-old MEC, human society that depends on ecological resources must guarantee and preserve the ecosystems, which provides life.

Nationwide environmental impact assessment; conduct of an inventory of state's sustainable resources; systematic control of polluting companies and payment of eco-tax by defaulters, fight against desertification and strict application of the 1998 law on management of forests; etc, are some of the pressing environmental issues on Ngo's campaign agenda for the presidency.

Like other opposition candidates, development of infrastructures such as hospitals and roads, work to attract foreign investment, obligatory education up to the age of 18 for all, complete ban of imported frozen products declared toxic and so on, are some of Ngo's preoccupations

According to the same article Mr Ngo was educated in Europe, obtaining qualifications in communication and accountancy, and had substantial experience at senior levels in the private sector as well as in government before entering politics;

From 1985 to 1989 he was in charge of overseeing the distribution of foodstuffs in the northern part of Cameroon; 1990-1991 Ngo was auxiliary intern in charge of public relations at the Belgium-based European Union Economic and Social Committee. In 1991, he was assistant intern to the Representative of Africa, Caribbean and Pacific, ACP, countries at the European Union and in 1992 he moved to Belgian Verdict Communication Agency as sales advertiser of Coca-Cola, sprite and Fanta.

In 1993, he was Groom Advertiser at Chaine de Magasins de Luxe City 2 in Belgium and moved in 1994 to another Belgian company, Groupe Media le Vif-Express de Bruxelles, as Marketing Delegate. In 1995, Ngo returned to Cameroon and created the Générale de Communication et d'information ('Cameroon: The Presidential Hopefuls' 2004, *Postwatch*, 8 October, published at http://www.postnewsline.com/2004/10/presidential_ho.html?cid=2373914 – Accessed 1 October 2009 - Attachment 2).

In a separate news report the previous month it was stated that the party had ten provincial co-ordinating committees;

The up coming presidential election will be the second political outing for the party, after the 2002 twin election during which the party registered a 1.58% score (which placed them twenty-third among the political parties that took part in the election). A score which party barons believe is, a good motivating ingredient to clamour for victory come October.

Speaking during the convention, MEC presidential candidate and national president of the party, Ngo Fritz, said, Cameroon is a very rich country, but unfortunately these rich resources have been confiscated by certain individuals to the detriment of the masses. He condemned the illegal exploitation of Cameroon natural resources by foreigners, the pollution of rivers with industrial waste, the importation of contaminated frozen chicken, the lack of a veritable political debate in Cameroon two months to the election and the dormant attitude of the opposition coalition who have not been able to present a single candidate since 1992. "There cannot be social justice without environmental justice and environmental justice without social justice" added ('MEC elects presidential candidate' 2004, *All Africa* [source: Cameroon Tribune], 17 September –Attachment 3).

Other issues raised by Mr Ngo prior to the 2004 election included the provision of scholarships for disabled students and improving the standards of conduct of public competitive examinations for entrance to police and teacher training;

Most of these exams, he said, are sold to the highest payer. "A lot of fraud prevails as mediocre students pass at the expense of the meritorious students", he noted. To that effect, Mr. Fritz Ngo proposed to put in place an independent national public examination observatory, to give equal opportunity to students during competitive public examinations. He said, the university tuition paid by students would be used in providing school pamphlets as well as basic health care.

Mr. Ngo reiterated the need to eradicate poverty in the country. He acknowledged the role of the woman in the fight against poverty and other societal ills. He said his programme would place the woman folk at the centre of his plan of action because they are "the nucleus of the society". He promised above all, to guarantee social peace ('Cameroon: Pierre Fritz Ngo, Mr Clean' 2004, *All Africa* [source: Cameroon Tribune], 4 October, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200410041250.html> - Accessed 1 October 2009 –Attachment 4).

Mr Ngo contested the 11 October 2004 presidential election campaign, receiving 13,122 votes, comprising 0.35% of the total. According to an African elections database, approximately 82% of registered voters recorded a vote at that election (African Elections Database, undated, 'Elections in Cameroon', <http://africanelections.tripod.com/cm.html> - Accessed 30 September 2009 – Attachment 5).

In March 2005, *The Post* published an article in which Mr Ngo stated he still hoped that the President could still offer him a Ministry. A new Ministry of Environment was created separately after the election. Asked why his party had been so quiet after the 2004 election, Mr Ngo said that the need for reflection following the election, plus the difficulty of organising substantial activities with limited funding were the causes. The party did plan to have a forum on the environment in Yaounde, but funding difficulties had prevented that from proceeding;

He said it is unfortunate that the government has not put in a place any mechanism to enable opposition parties benefit from certain advantages like annual state subventions. "Look at the situation in which we are. We do not have the financial means, and it counts a lot in politics.

Without the financial means, a political party cannot operate effectively, no matter its programme, ideology or policy. As for me, politics or MEC has drained almost everything from my small business", Ngo said.

The MEC leader expressed further disappointment that even the second and last instalment of state subventions, which was promised candidates of the October 11 Presidential, by government, has till date not been given.

Going back to the forum which MEC is planning for Yaounde, Ngo said the party does not yet have the funds to organise it, which he says is estimated at FCFA 5 million.

"So, you see as I earlier said that MEC's problem is not the lack of good ideas or our intellectual ability to take initiatives, rather the lack of financial means to implement these ideas," said Ngo ('Cameroon: MEC still hoping for ministerial appointment' 2005, *All Africa* [source: The Post], 25 March, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200503250040.html> - Accessed 1 October 2009 – Attachment 6).

The organisation was due to receive a payment under the government's subvention provisions for political campaigns, as a result of the MEC's participation in the July 2007 legislative elections, which was an amount similar to 21 other contenders of approximately \$A3,200 (UN Human Rights Committee 2009, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant : International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights : 4th periodic reports of States parties : Cameroon*, 11 May, pp. 154-55 - Attachment 7) . There was little information available on the 2007 elections relating to the MEC. An *Africa Confidential* article reported in August 2007 that following the landslide victory by President Paul Biya at the 22nd July election, the Supreme Court had received over 100 petitions against fraud and irregularities. Voter turnout was reportedly low, but official figures are not available. The disputing opposition parties presented no serious challenge to the ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (RDPC/CPDM) ('Cameroon. No Contest' 2007, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 48 No. 16, <http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/2269/No-contest> - Accessed 5 October 2009 – Attachment 8).

In March 2007, Mr Ngo described the preparedness of his party for the July election, whereby it had organised a 'special convention.'

"We have already held a special convention. Delegations came from all provinces to prepare for our participation in the forthcoming elections. Wherever there is a consensus list, it does. Where it is necessary to make investiture by a primary election, we do well. And where there IS no consensus list, or primary election, it lists the candidates who seems to have the best profile to defend the colors of the party. Our only problem lies in the mobilization of financial resources as we continue to seek the rest. We want to do everything so that there is an environmental group in the National Assembly after the next elections. Environmental issues are very important around the world and Cameroon can not be content with mere bystander in this vital area for mankind. "

"We are mobilizing our supporters" (Note: this is a Google automated translation of extract from 'Cameroon: Political parties intensify preparations for elections 2007, *All Africa* [source: Cameroon Tribune], 20 March, <http://allafrica.com/stories/200703200710.html?viewall=1> – Accessed 1 October 2009 – Attachment 9 (translation at Attachment 10).

As has been suggested by one commentator (although published on his web log, has been published in a collection of essays), the proliferation of a relatively large number of registered political parties in Cameroon has arisen out of both the difficulty of obtaining recognition experienced by genuine civil society organisations and the inability to stand as an independent candidate. Citing a 2006 work by Churchill Ewumbue-Monono, Dibussi Tande stated that many civil associations have formed into political parties, as this reduces the perception that any criticisms made of the government are intentionally 'subversive';

To avoid harassment, therefore, most civil society organizations have merely registered as political parties. In effect, over 70% of the registered political parties in Cameroon as of 2004 are nothing short of civil society organizations in scope of activities and objectives dressed in party uniforms. Many civil society organizations aimed at empowering vulnerable groups like the youth, women, children and the handicapped, the elderly, and workers have been registered pure and simple as political parties, which explain the high number of parties in the country. (p. 137).

The result has been the “partitisation” of the civil society as civil society organizations simply morph into political parties in order to survive. This is the case, for example, of Fritz Pierre Ngo’s Cameroon Ecological Movement (environment), Tchoungui Francois-Xavier’s, Movement for Justice and Freedom (human rights), and Boniface Fobin’s Justice and Development Party (Anglophone minority rights) (Tande, Dibussi 2007, ‘Cameroon: Why so many political parties?’ , Scribbles from the Den (web log) http://www.dibussi.com/2007/06/cameroon_why_so.html#more – Accessed 30 September 2009 - Attachment 11).

There were 210 registered political parties in Cameroon in 2007 (list provided - Attachment 7, pp. 159-173).

List of Sources Consulted

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Immigration & Refugee Board of Canada <http://www.irb-cisr.gc.ca/>

UK Home Office <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/>

US Department of State <http://www.state.gov/>

International News & Politics

BBC News <http://www.bbc.co.uk>

The Times <http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/global/>

The Economist <http://www.economist.co.uk>

Non-Government Organisations

European Country of Origin Information Network <http://www.ecoi.net/>

UNHCR Refworld <http://www.refworld.org>

Human Rights Watch <http://www.hrw.org/>

Minority Rights Group International <http://www.minorityrights.org/>

Region Specific Links

All Africa.com <http://allafrica.com>

Africa Confidential <http://www.africa-confidential.com/home>

Africa Research Bulletin <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/journal.asp?ref=0001-9844>

Cameroon Tribune <http://www.cameroon-tribune.net/edition.php?lang=Fr&oled=j02102009>

Search Engines

Hakia <http://www.hakia.com>

Webcrawler <http://www.webcrawler.com>

Google Scholar <http://www.google.com>

Clusty <http://www.clusty.com>

Databases:

FACTIVA (news database)

BACIS (DIAC Country Information database)

REFINFO (IRBDC (Canada) Country Information database)

ISYS (RRT Research & Information database, including Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, US Department of State Reports)

MRT-RRT Library Catalogue

University of Melbourne Library Catalogue

List of Attachments

1. Republic of Cameroon, Prime Minister's Office (undated), Portrait of the Government – Political Party Search, <http://www.spm.gov.cm/rechpartisp.php?lang=en&pg=7&cbolistan> – Accessed 30 September 2009.
2. 'Cameroon: The Presidential Hopefuls' 2004, *Postwatch*, 8 October, published at http://www.postnewslines.com/2004/10/presidential_ho.html?cid=2373914 – Accessed 1 October 2009.
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7. UN Human Rights Committee 2009, *Consideration of reports submitted by States parties under article 40 of the Covenant : International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights : 4th periodic reports of States parties : Cameroon*, 11 May. (REFINFO)
8. 'Cameroon. No Contest' 2007, *Africa Confidential*, Vol. 48 No. 16, <http://www.africa-confidential.com/article/id/2269/No-contest> - Accessed 5 October 2009.
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