



General Assembly

Distr.
GENERAL

A/HRC/WG.6/4/CMR/1
11 December 2008

ENGLISH
Original: FRENCH

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL
Working Group on the Universal Periodic Review
Fourth session
Geneva, 2-13 February 2009

**NATIONAL REPORT SUBMITTED IN ACCORDANCE WITH PARAGRAPH 15 (A)
OF THE ANNEX TO HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL RESOLUTION 5/1***

Cameroon

* The present document was not edited before being sent to the United Nations translation services.

I. METHODOLOGY

1. Since Cameroon achieved independence and asserted its sovereignty at the international level, its successive constitutions have proclaimed its people's commitment to human rights as set out in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.

2. It is therefore fitting that the current Constitution of 18 January 1996 grants constitutional status to all international legal instruments duly ratified by Cameroon, giving them precedence over domestic legislation.

3. This report has been prepared in accordance with United Nations General Assembly resolution 60/251 of 15 March 2006 and Human Rights Council resolution 5/1 of 18 June 2007 and is the result of a consultative process in which ministries, public bodies and civil society organizations working in the human rights field participated. It seeks to provide the clearest possible picture of the human rights situation in Cameroon, recalling the historical, sociological and environmental context for the exercise of these rights and highlighting related difficulties and obstacles. It also outlines the measures to be pursued by the Government of Cameroon in the future to fully realize these rights.

4. It was difficult to select the issues to review in the report with a view to keeping the report within the prescribed page limit. The solution adopted was to deal with the issues that are priorities for the population, in particular access to justice, the right to an adequate standard of living, citizens' participation in the conduct of public affairs, good governance, education, health, employment and culture.

II. NORMATIVE AND INSTITUTIONAL FRAMEWORK

5. Cameroon has incorporated the 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights as well as the international conventions to which it is a party into its Constitution with a view to ensuring the promotion and protection of human rights. The Government of Cameroon has also established bodies to regulate and monitor the implementation of the rights guaranteed under international, regional, subregional and domestic instruments.

A. Normative framework

1. International level

6. Cameroon is a party to the six principal international human rights instruments adopted by the United Nations:

(a) International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and its First Optional Protocol (accession 27 June 1984);

(b) International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (accession 27 June 1984);

(c) International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (ratification 24 June 1971);

(d) Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (ratification 23 August 1994) and its Optional Protocol (accession 1 November 2004);

(e) Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (accession 19 December 1986);

(f) Convention on the Rights of the Child (signature 27 September 1990, ratification 11 January 1993).

2. African regional and subregional levels

7. Cameroon is a party to the major African regional and subregional human rights instruments, including:

- (a) African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (ratification 21 October 1986);
- (b) Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CAEMC) Accord on Non-Aggression and Mutual Assistance in Defence (adoption 28 January 2004);
- (c) CAEMC agreement on judicial cooperation (ratification 25 December 2005);
- (d) CAEMC extradition agreement (ratification 30 January 2006).

3. National level

8. At the national level, the preamble to the Constitution declares the Cameroonian people's commitment to the following universal values and principles, which are guaranteed to all citizens by the State without distinction based on sex or race:

- Equal rights and obligations for all
- Protection of minorities
- Protection of indigenous peoples
- Freedom and security for all
- Right to settle in any location and freedom of movement
- Inviolability of the home
- Inviolability of private correspondence
- Prohibition of all illegal orders or command
- Legality of offences and penalties
- Non-retroactivity of the law
- Right to a fair trial
- Presumption of innocence
- Right to life and to physical and moral integrity

- Right to security
- Freedom of opinion and of belief
- A secular State
- Freedom of worship
- Freedom of communication, expression and the press
- Freedom of assembly and of association
- Right to organize and join trade unions and to strike
- Protection of the family
- Protection of women, young people, the elderly and persons with disabilities
- Children's right to an education
- Compulsory primary education
- Right to own property
- Right to a healthy environment
- Right to work

9. In addition to the preamble, a number of legislative and regulatory measures strengthen and ensure the realization of the rights and freedoms set out in the Constitution and the international and regional instruments mentioned above, for example:

(a) Act No. 83/013 of 21 July 1983 on the Protection of Disabled Persons and its implementing Decree No. 90/1516 of 16 November 1990;

(b) Act No. 90/052 of 19 December 1990 concerning the freedom of social communication, amended by Act No. 96/0 of 16 January 1996;

(c) Act No. 90/053 of 19 December 1990 concerning freedom of association;

(d) Act No. 90/055 of 19 December 1990 regulating public meetings and demonstrations;

(e) Act No. 90/056 concerning political parties;

(f) Act No. 97/009 of 10 January 1997 inserting new article 132 bis, entitled "Torture", into the Criminal Code;

(g) Act No. 97/012 of 10 January 1997 establishing the conditions governing foreigners' entry to, residence in and departure from Cameroon;

(h) Act No. 99/14 of 22 December 1999 regulating non-governmental organizations;

- (i) Act No. 2004/004 of 21 April 2004 concerning the organization and functioning of the Constitutional Council;
- (j) Act No. 2004/005 of 21 April 2004 concerning the status of the members of the Constitutional Council;
- (k) Act No. 2004/016 of 22 July 2004 on the creation, organization and functioning of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms and its implementing Decree No. 2005/254 of 7 July 2005;
- (l) Act No. 2005/006 of 27 July 2005 concerning the status of refugees;
- (m) Act No. 2005/007 of 27 July on the Code of Criminal Procedure;
- (n) Act No. 2005/015 of 29 December 2005 on trafficking and trading in children;
- (o) Act No. 2006/003 of 25 April 2006 on the declaration of property and assets;
- (p) Act No. 2006/011 of 29 December 2006 on the establishment, organization and functioning of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) and its implementing Decree No. 2008/372 of 11 November 2008;
- (q) Act No. 2006/015 of 29 December 2006 on the organization of the judicial system.

B. Institutional framework

10. Some examples of measures aimed at significantly improving the human rights situation in Cameroon are: the establishment of the Constitutional Council;¹ the transformation of the National Committee on Human Rights and Freedoms into the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms; the transfer of prison administration to the Ministry of Justice; the establishment of a Department of Human Rights and International Cooperation in the Ministry of Justice; and the creation of a Special Division for Oversight of the Police (the so-called “police police”) in the Department of National Security.

11. The same applies in respect of electoral transparency, with the establishment of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) by Act No. 2006/011 of 29 December 2006.²

III. IMPLEMENTATION OF UNIVERSALLY RECOGNIZED RIGHTS

A. Promotion and protection of civil and political rights

1. Right to a fair trial

12. The right to a fair trial is substantially guaranteed by the following texts: the Constitution of 18 January 1996; the Code of Criminal Procedure, adopted under Act No. 2005/007 of 27 July 2005; and Act No. 2006/015 of 29 December 2006 concerning the organization of the judicial system.

13. The presumption of innocence, the very foundation of the right to a fair trial, is enshrined in the preamble to the Constitution and is referred to in the Code of Criminal Procedure at every stage of criminal proceedings. During the investigation phase, the suspect has the right to remain silent, to have legal counsel and to be informed of the charges against them. During the prosecution phase the

burden of proof lies with the party that initiated proceedings, and the accused has the last word, after the prosecution has demonstrated guilt. The presumption of innocence is also evident in the fact that detention is declared to be an exceptional measure, the emphasis being on the right to remain free, as illustrated by the widespread use of release with or without bail, from the police investigation phase through to the court's decision, and by the six-month limit on remand in custody during the investigation phase, renewable once for a minor offence and twice for a serious crime.

14. The rights of the accused, as set out in article 14, paragraph 3 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, are guaranteed during all phases of a criminal procedure. During the investigation phase, depending on the kind of action being taken, the accused is informed of the charges against them either by summons or service of process if they are still at liberty, or verbally by a police officer if they have been arrested. During the investigation the accused has the right to remain silent and be assisted by legal counsel of their choice, and may only be held in custody if they cannot provide proof of residence, except in cases of a serious crime or flagrante delicto. The accused must be examined by a doctor at the beginning and end of a period of custody; custody cannot be ordered on a Saturday, a Sunday or a legal holiday, except in cases of flagrante delicto, and the limit of 48 hours, renewable once, is strictly applied, subject to exemptions authorized by the Prosecutor.

15. During the investigation a suspect who chooses to make a statement, in the presence of counsel or otherwise, must be allowed breaks during the hearings. A suspect who has appointed a counsel has the right to communicate with counsel and must be heard in counsel's presence.

16. During the judicial inquiries the investigating judge must inform the accused of the acts of which they are accused and of their right to remain silent. On completion of the inquiries the accused must be informed, for example in the notice of order to proceed to trial, of any charges filed. The case file must be made available to counsel at least 24 hours before any interview or questioning to permit preparation of their client's defence and counsel has free access to the accused during regular working hours.

17. During the trial phase, and whatever the method of referral to the court, the judge must read the charges against the accused at the first hearing. In order to avoid excessive delays in the trial phase, a decision must be handed down either immediately on conclusion of the hearings or within 15 days; the decision must be written out in full before being read out in court. The accused must be tried in their presence, hence the requirement to appear before the court in person except in application to vacate judgement in cases of conviction in absentia, and certain other circumstances where an appearance in person is not required. The accused may plead guilty or not guilty. In the event of a not guilty plea the accused may question the prosecution witnesses through the mechanisms of examination in chief, cross examination and re-examination.

18. In recognition of the special circumstances of cases involving minors, the Code of Criminal Procedure requires the presence of additional judges at both trial and appeal courts when the accused is a minor. An accused minor must have legal counsel and hearings are held in camera.

19. The Code of Criminal Procedure establishes three levels of court, thereby guaranteeing any individual found guilty of an offence the possibility of having their case reconsidered right up to the Supreme Court, the highest judicial body.

20. Redress can be obtained for miscarriages of justice where release or acquittal follows wrongful pretrial detention or police custody, and the Code provides for the establishment of a compensation commission.
21. The Code of Criminal Procedure allows any individual who believes they have been detained illegally or unlawfully to invoke the principle of habeas corpus, whereby the president of the superior court can be asked to order their immediate release, including in cases of administrative detention.
22. The Code establishes the authority and binding force of *res judicata*.
23. Despite the strengthening of the right to a fair trial in the Code of Criminal Procedure, mob justice has been on the rise since 2006. The authorities have adopted various measures to curb this tendency, notably the publication by the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms of a human rights teaching manual and a national human rights action plan, and the organization by the Ministry of Justice of two nationwide awareness campaigns on the Code of Criminal Procedure. On a more practical level, the Department of National Security has established community policing mechanisms such as the Diplomatic Protection Corps, rapid response teams and police units in marketplaces, near major intersections and in heavily populated neighbourhoods.
24. Prison conditions have greatly improved since the entry into force of the Code of Criminal Procedure. Minors are now held separately from adults and women separately from men.

2. Combating impunity for law enforcement personnel

25. The Government remains concerned at the issue of impunity for law enforcement personnel, which it is endeavouring to curb with the help of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, civil society and other partners. Claims of human rights violations usually relate to: the right to safety, the right to life, the right to physical, bodily and mental integrity and above all the right not to suffer torture or inhuman, degrading and cruel treatment. In the context of these efforts to combat impunity, several cases of murder, fatal assault, injury, torture, arrest and abduction involving, among others, police officers, the gendarmerie, prison personnel, and traditional chiefs have been brought before the courts. Twelve police officers and 4 traditional chiefs were convicted in 2005; 21 police officers and senior law enforcement officials and 5 traditional chiefs were convicted in 2006; and 7 police officers, 3 traditional chiefs and 2 prison warders were convicted in 2007. Several other cases are still before the courts.
26. During the same period administrative penalties, including removal from post or suspension without pay for periods of up to six months, have been imposed on State officials for actions found to be unethical or in breach of the regulations. Ten judges were sanctioned in 2007 and disciplinary sanctions were imposed on another nine, two of whom were removed from the bench, in 2008. Other statistics relating to sanctions imposed on law enforcement personnel are as follows: 15 penitentiary system employees, 15 police officers and 4 gendarmes in 2005; 47 police officers and 25 gendarmes in 2006; and 13 police officers and 17 gendarmes in 2007.

3. Right to participate in elections

27. The right to take part in the conduct of public affairs, directly or through chosen representatives, is guaranteed by numerous human rights-related instruments and the Government has worked to reform the electoral process to make it more modern, transparent and free. Specifically, numerous political parties have been authorized, an awareness campaign on the electoral process has been initiated and various electoral laws have been promulgated.

28. Advances in the democratic process were particularly obvious during the combined parliamentary and municipal elections held on 22 July 2007. A number of institutional measures aimed at improving the electoral system have been instituted:

(a) Measures to make Elections Cameroon (ELECAM) fully operational;

(b) The establishment of new administrative units and decentralized and devolved territorial communities;

(c) The authorization of new political parties to further strengthen political pluralism, a prerequisite for equal opportunity in a democratic State.

29. Furthermore a major electoral dispute was submitted to the competent authority and was resolved in a fully independent and impartial manner. New elections were held in the districts where the initial vote had been declared invalid.

4. Freedom of communication

30. Freedom of expression and of the press, which are guaranteed by the Constitution, and regulated by Act No. 90/052 of 19 December 1990, on the freedom of the media, as amended by Act No. 96/04 of 16 January 1996, have increased significantly. The legal and institutional framework established by the Government has encouraged the emergence of print and audio-visual media.

31. Public subsidies for the private media sector have been included in the State budget since 2000. Licences for advertising agencies are granted annually. Following the signing of the Decree of 3 April 2000 establishing the criteria for the establishment and operation of audio-visual communications enterprises, the private audio-visual sector took a major step forward in 2007 with the issuance of audio-visual licences to certain media outlets on 30 August.

B. Promotion and protection of economic, social and cultural rights

1. Promotion of good governance

32. The Government has made the promotion of good governance a priority. In order to achieve that objective, it established a National Governance Programme centred on the following four areas:

(a) Promotion of public/private/civil society partnership;

(b) Strengthening of the rule of law and the judicial system;

(c) Promotion of a culture of genuine responsibility in the conduct of public affairs;

(d) Greater transparency in the apparatus of the State and a determined stand against corruption.

33. To that end, in recent years awareness, information and training campaigns have been organized for officials who manage public funds or work in the judicial system, in order to improve their skills. The mechanism for oversight of management of public funds has been strengthened, efforts to combat corruption have been reinforced and responsive governance has been developed.

34. Such institutions as the National Financial Investigation Agency and the Public Markets Regulatory Agency have been established as part of the mechanism for oversight of management of public funds. An Audit Division of the Supreme Court and regional accounts tribunals have been established. Furthermore the aims of the State Audit Office, a branch of the Office of the President of the Republic established by Decree No. 098/273 of 22 October 1998, are to increase transparency in the administration of public funds and to combat corruption and the embezzlement of public assets, and it therefore runs an annual programme to monitor the implementation of the advice and support provided to management. The Act of 26 December 2007 on the financial structure of the State, promulgated with a view to ensuring results-based management, sets performance indicators for the administration. In addition, Act No. 2006/003 of 25 April 2006 on declaration of property and assets applies to those responsible for managing public assets.

35. Examples of the results of the work of these monitoring bodies include the following: in 2006 the National Financial Investigation Agency referred 26 cases, involving a total of approximately 31 billion CFA francs,³ to the appropriate prosecutors; in 2007 34 cases representing a total of 57,568,576,956 CFA francs were referred.

36. The Audit Division of the Supreme Court which began work on 1 January 2006, had audited 164 State accounts as of 31 December 2007, as a result of which it issued 85 requests for further information from various officials, produced 29 investigation reports and took 10 decisions, which were communicated to those concerned. It compiled a list of irregularities discovered and made 31 recommendations, and organized training seminars to address the lack of coverage and poor quality of the accounting. The Division's first report on its activities, covering 2006 and 2007, has been submitted to the President of the Republic and to the President of the National Assembly, as required by law.

37. Efforts to combat corruption include both preventive and punitive measures. On the prevention front, several institutions, including the various ministry anti-corruption units and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC), are running awareness-raising campaigns at all levels of society to highlight the adverse effects of corruption on the economy, on the well-being of ordinary people, and on development, the main aim being to bring about a change in attitudes. Punitive measures include increased penalties: between 1996 and 2008, for example, severe disciplinary sanctions, including five dismissals, were imposed on judges for corruption or acts tantamount to corruption. Between 12 March 2003 and 28 April 2004, 95 officials from five ministries were dismissed. In 2007, 78 officials were dismissed from the Ministry of Basic Education alone. Many individuals from the highest levels of State, including former ministers and directors-general of State enterprises, have been prosecuted as part of what the press have dubbed the "Epervier" operation, and some have been sentenced to lengthy prison terms.

2. Right to an adequate standard of living

38. Realization of the right to an adequate standard of living for the population is one of the Government's main objectives. To that end concrete measures have been adopted to increase purchasing power and guarantee the right to decent housing. Steps have also been taken to stabilize the price of basic necessities, with the assistance of economic operators.

39. In 2007 the Government undertook to implement Order No. 2006/001 of 28 September 2006 modifying the tax on certain basic necessities, identify ways of preventing interruptions in the supply chain and to lay the groundwork for a campaign to boost sales of basic commodities, including kitchen salt, rice, frozen fish, beef, pork, palm oil, poultry and sugar.

40. The measures adopted by the Government could not prevent the social crisis that rocked the country in February 2008, caused by the strike called by the National Urban and Inter-city Transport Union to demand, among other things, a reduction in the price of petrol. The transport strike unleashed a wave of discontent that degenerated into looting and vandalism and brought several cities to a standstill, with disastrous results: more than 40 dead and tens of billions of CFA francs in damage. The Government's efforts to control the situation stressed dialogue and consultation with the unions, and security forces were deployed only gradually. Following the crisis, measures were adopted to increase purchasing power, for example by adjusting the pay of certain civilian and military personnel and suspending customs duties on various basic necessities. Those responsible for acts of vandalism were prosecuted but most of those convicted were granted full or partial remission of sentence by the Head of State to mark the national holiday, 20 May 2008. These measures helped restore calm.

41. Large numbers of complaints from consumers about the drinking water and electricity supply and access to telephone services have prompted the Government to make a greater effort to improve the situation. The right of access to water and electricity is one of the preconditions for the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living. In the electricity sector for example, the Electricity Regulatory Agency is working to reduce supply charges for consumers.

42. Guaranteeing the right to decent housing is a prerequisite for improving the standard of living of the population. To that end efforts have been made to improve housing by promoting the use of local materials through the Local Materials Promotion Office. In addition, the Cameroon Property Company has increased its supply of housing. On this point, the following may be noted:

(a) The construction by the Cameroon Property Company of 160 apartments in the Mfandena neighbourhood in Yaoundé and plans for the construction of 1,000 housing units in the cities of Douala and Yaoundé in 2009;

(b) The social component of the Limbe oil yard project, which will fund the construction of 2,500 housing units for yard workers;

(c) The completion in 2007 of a programme undertaken by the Douala Development Company (SAD), a company established by the municipality of Douala, to construct 500 low-cost housing units;

(d) The municipality of Douala's Sawa Beach project to build 10,000 housing units, 40 per cent of which will be allocated to the most disadvantaged families;

(e) The preparation of rehabilitated housing plots in designated development zones (ZAC) created in partnership with the customary owners of the land, examples are the ZAC created for the Douala III town planning project, the Bonamatoumbe ZAC at Doula IV, and the ZAC planned at Lendi, which cover 168, 300 and 360 hectares respectively.

43. Realization of the right to housing has been a particularly controversial issue in Cameroon over the past two years because of compulsory purchase expropriations and the expulsion of people living in areas unfit for human habitation. In recognition of the fact that the legal framework did not sufficiently protect those without legal title to land, the Government, under Decree No. 2008/0738/PM of 23 April 2008 setting out land use procedures and mechanisms, has taken corrective measures that are being implemented in stages.

3. Right to education

44. The preamble to the Constitution enshrines the right to education and makes primary education an obligation towards children. Three ministries are responsible for the education sector: the Ministry of Basic Education, the Ministry of Secondary Education and the Ministry of Higher Education. Generally speaking the quality and quantity of services provided by these ministries has improved.

45. In the area of basic education, the expansion of the service is reflected in the introduction of free primary education, attempts to reduce disparities between boys and girls, the construction of new schools and new infrastructure,⁴ and the recruitment of new teachers with a view to achieving a pupil-teacher ratio of 40 to 1 by 2015. An Education Sector Strategy was drafted in 2006 with the aim of increasing access to education while eliminating disparities; improving the effectiveness and quality of the education service; developing an effective partnership with the various sectors of society; and strengthening management and governance in the education system.

46. Efforts to improve quality include such measures as reducing the number of students repeating a year and applying the class graduation system, the use of a range of complementary teaching methods, and the addition of human rights to the primary curriculum. A teacher's guide to human rights education at all levels (primary, secondary and higher) has been prepared at the suggestion of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms. It will be introduced gradually, beginning in the 2008/09 school year in 50 selected pilot primary schools across Cameroon's 10 provinces, once Ministry of Education educators have been trained.

47. At the secondary level access has been increased by improving the distribution of schools, building and opening new ones and renovating existing ones. The Ministry of Secondary Education and the Ministry of Social Affairs have worked to meet the specific needs of persons with disabilities and the children of parents with disabilities by means of a joint circular exempting them from school fees. Experiments have also been carried out with inclusive schools that admit disabled students who are capable of attending classes with able-bodied children in order to make them feel less marginalized. Qualitative improvements include the strengthening of teaching methods and evaluation systems, the promotion and revitalization of counselling services, the establishment of multimedia centres and improvements in the curriculum.

48. In the higher education sector there have been quantitative and qualitative improvements to the service offered. In quantitative terms, a new university has opened in Maroua, for which 55 teachers will be hired; new departments have been created in existing universities; and 66 private higher education institutes have opened. In qualitative terms, the international style Bachelor's/Master's/Doctorate system will make for more standardized courses, the aim being to thoroughly rethink university education, the curriculum and teaching methods. The BA/MA/PhD system provides a three-phase structure for higher education, research and professional training. Similarly, digital campuses have been established to promote distance learning. A Department for Dialogue and University Solidarity has been established to strengthen dialogue and participatory democracy.

4. Right to work and right to social security

49. Cameroon has ratified the eight core International Labour Organization (ILO) conventions. With a view to ensuring the effective realization of the right to work and the right to social security, it has reviewed its institutional framework and three ministries are now responsible for these issues: the Ministry of Employment and Vocational Training, the Ministry for Small and Medium-Sized

Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts, and the Ministry of Labour and Social Security. A National Employment Strategy (PNE) was approved in 2007, aimed at promoting growth and economic development, improving the population's standard of living, developing human resources to meet the demand for labour and addressing the problems of unemployment and underemployment. In addition mechanisms such as the National Employment and Vocational Training Monitoring Centre and the National Labour Advisory Commission have been established alongside the National Employment Fund to promote access to employment. The Fund itself provided self-employment training to more than 1,823 individuals between 2005 and 2007 and found paid work for approximately 10,921 job-seekers. It also provided funding for 907 enterprise start-ups and 1,120 micro-projects in rural areas.

50. In the public sector, 13,549 individuals were recruited in 2006 by five ministries, 13,400 of them in education. State vocational schools providing training for the civil service admitted 2,180 students in the 2006/07 school year. In February 2008 the Head of State authorized a special three-year recruitment drive for Ministry of Justice posts at a rate of 500 prison staff, 150 judges, 200 deputy court clerks, 100 court clerks and 100 secretaries each year. He also authorized the hiring of 20,000 persons at all levels and in all branches of the civil service in the 2008 budget year and the issuance of contracts to temporary employees currently working in the administration.

51. The right to form trade unions and its corollary, the right to strike, are guaranteed by the Constitution and various legal texts. Workers are free to organize or join unions. Any impairment of that freedom will be punished by the courts. The Supreme Court, for example, in ruling No. 64/04-05 of 23 March 2005, overturned a ministerial decision authorizing the dismissal of a staff representative after union action. The number of unions is increasing: 46 were registered in 2006 and 27 in 2007. The Government has opted for dialogue with social partners in order to limit strikes and promote good relations in companies.

52. In the area of social security, Cameroon ratified the Inter-African Conference on Social Security (CIPRES) Treaty in 1995. A mutual insurance code will be drafted to widen social security coverage, which is currently only available to workers in the formal sector. An advisory committee on the modernization of the social security system was established pursuant to order No. 2008/159/PM of 4 November 2008. In addition, the joint recovery of social security contributions by the social security and tax authorities in partnership has yielded encouraging results; as of 31 December receipts were on the order of 69,468,322,121 CFA francs.⁵ The partnership is to be extended to the Customs Service.

5. Right to health

53. The right to health is a fundamental right recognized by Cameroon. In order to realize that right the State has adopted a Health Sector Strategy with eight components: combating illness; reproductive health; health promotion; access to medicines and essential medical consumables; administration; improved health coverage; health funding; and institutional development.

54. With regard to access to medicines, prices have been cut by 65 per cent overall, while tuberculosis and antiretroviral drugs are provided free of charge.

55. In terms of hospital infrastructure development, 406 construction projects financed with funds from the heavily indebted poor countries (HIPC) Initiative and the Public Investment Budget were launched in 2007. The projects include quarantine facilities; integrated health centres; neighbourhood medical centres; and improvements to wells. In addition to the faculty of medicine at the University of Yaoundé, new medical faculties have been established at the universities of

Buea and Douala to help address the low doctor-patient ratio. In 2007, 1,200 health-care workers were accredited and 2,480 recruited, recruitment having been previously and only sporadically covered by HIPC funding. Back pay owing since 2004 was disbursed to 600 health staff and 15 doctors received specialization scholarships.

56. In 2007 the budget for equipment was 2,300,000,000 CFA francs,⁶ as against 2,031,000,000 CFA francs⁷ in 2006, an increase of 13 per cent. In terms of service provision, a package of basic service and a package of supplementary service have been identified and updated for health centres and district hospitals.

57. Efforts have been made to rehabilitate traditional medicine. Special programmes to combat such diseases as malaria, HIV/AIDS and tuberculosis have been implemented.

58. The Ministry of Health has developed a strategy to subsidize NGOs and associations working in the health sector. To that end, three agreements were signed on 12 October 2007 on Debt Development Contract (C2D) resources.

6. Right to culture

59. The cultural development programme is centred around the identification and preservation of Cameroon's cultural heritage and State support for cultural projects. The Ministry of Culture is working to improve the services offered by the national archives, establish the National Museum, promote regional languages and restore and preserve sites and monuments.

60. Additional examples of State support for cultural projects include: promotion of the film industry, audio-visual productions, the arts, shows and culture-related enterprises, and support for cultural events in the provinces. Thus, in addition to the National Festival of Arts and Culture, various communities hold festivals that enrich Cameroon's cultural life, including the Ngondo festival of the coastal Sawa people and the Ngouon festival of western Cameroon's Bamoon culture.

IV. DIFFICULTIES AND OBSTACLES

61. In implementing its human rights protection and promotion policy Cameroon comes up against certain realities that at times hinder the implementation of planned efforts, notably in areas relating to the right to a fair trial, corruption, and the realization of economic, social and cultural rights.

A. Difficulties in implementing the Code of Criminal Procedure

62. The new Code of Criminal Procedure has proved difficult to accommodate and has generated new needs in terms of human, financial, material and infrastructure resources.

63. Despite the authorities' efforts, it has become clear that certain minimum requirements will have to be met to ensure the implementation of the Code and fully meet the expectations of the population, including:

(a) A significant increase in staff (judges, court clerks, support staff, criminal investigation police and prison administration) and training;

(b) Construction and modernization of courtrooms and prisons;

- (c) Provision of IT equipment and vehicles for judicial districts, prisons and the police.

B. Difficulty of eradicating corruption

64. Good governance remains both a key component of the rule of law, and also a stage in the development of a democratic society,⁸ to the extent that it permits a fairer distribution of wealth and the realization of certain rights. As to the rule of law, good governance implies combating corruption, which, despite the progress made in recent years, remains a canker that the Government must excise.

65. While the State mounted an effective response to practices that hinder good governance, such as corruption, in 2007, the increasing complexity of the social and economic environment that is one of the consequences of responsive governance makes it harder for Cameroon - which wishes to lay the foundation of a State with the capacity to facilitate and regulate - to coordinate the various stakeholders and levels of government.

C. Obstacles to the realization of economic, social and cultural rights

1. Right to an adequate standard of living

66. While the State has tried to increase the availability of basic necessities for its citizens, the realization of the right to an adequate standard of living has been hampered by poorly functioning product distribution networks and the constraints of international trade.

2. Right to education: inadequate coverage

67. Despite the proclamation of the principle of free primary education, intended to ensure equality of opportunity for all children, in practice it is not implemented everywhere. Many children are therefore still not receiving free primary education.

3. Right to housing: management of demolition of housing

68. Efforts to eliminate squatting, which causes disorder in cities, and a concern to improve and enhance people's living environment, have led to compulsory purchase of land and the eviction of entire families. These families, usually disadvantaged, then have difficulty finding new accommodation because the sites intended to re-house evicted persons are not ready and compensation is paid only after they have left their land.

V. OUTLOOK

69. Cameroon has undertaken a number of measures to strengthen the promotion and protection of human rights.

70. In the electoral sphere, considerable improvement is expected thanks to the establishment of Elections Cameroon (ELECAM). Decree No. 2008/372 of 11 November 2008, which regulates ELECAM operations, is indicative of the Government's desire to ensure its effectiveness.

71. Improving governance remains a priority for the Government. It will continue its efforts to help Cameroonians accept the basic universal values necessary for a State based on the rule of law and for sustainable development, as championed by the Head of State. The approach adopted at the national level must also be in line with the requirements of the international community.

VI. CONCLUSION

72. Cameroon reiterates its commitment to the principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights and all the relevant international human rights instruments to which it is a party. It is firmly committed to guaranteeing dignity, well-being, human development and equality for all.

73. In pursuit of this ideal the Government of Cameroon is adopting concrete measures in all areas with a view to promoting and protecting human rights and ensuring no social group is excluded. Mindful of the need to fulfil all its commitments, it will guarantee to all citizens and individuals subject to Cameroonian jurisdiction the conditions necessary for their development. That is the guiding principle underlying the Government's human rights protection and promotion policy, which properly encompasses all the guaranteed rights.

74. Special attention is given to protecting the rights of vulnerable groups (children, persons with disabilities, marginalized groups, older people) and of women and girls, so that no group feels excluded. A number of measures have been adopted in that regard by the Government as well as by development partners.

75. Lastly, the remarkable role played by human rights defenders, as evidenced by the work of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms, the United Nations Sub-regional Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Central Africa, and national and international NGOs, should not be forgotten.

Notes

¹ A titre transitoire, la Cour Suprême exerce les fonctions et attributions du Conseil Constitutionnel.

² L'observatoire National des Elections (ONEL) exerce à titre transitoire ses fonctions.

³ Soit 47 328 244 euros.

⁴ 2 294 salles de classe ont été construites en 2007; 1 485 ont été programmées pour 2008.

⁵ Soit environ 106 874 341,72 euros.

⁶ Soit environ 3 538 461,53 euros.

⁷ Soit environ 3 124 615,38 euros.

⁸ Voir rapport du MINJUSTICE sur l'Etat des droits de l'homme au Cameroun en 2005, pp. 163 et s. n° 573 et s.