MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

with request for inclusion in the agenda for a debate on cases of breaches of human rights, democracy and the rule of law

pursuant to Rule 144 of the Rules of Procedure

on the human rights situation in Cameroon (2021/2983(RSP))

Marisa Matias
on behalf of The Left Group
The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on Cameroon notably the one of the 17th of April 2019,
- having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, of 1981,
- having regard to the African Charter of Democracy, Elections and governance, adopted by the African Union in January 2007,
- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 10 December 1948, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the UN Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment, and the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child,
- having regard to the Geneva Conventions of 1949 and the additional protocols thereto,
- having regard to the 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 Protocol,
- having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas Cameroon continues to sink into a multifaceted crisis with many hotbeds of military tension; whereas the massacres of men, women and even children are on the increase, especially in the English-speaking area (20% of the population) with belligerents who radicalize their positions;

B. whereas Cameroon has been facing, since the end of 2016, a political and social crisis opposing its English-speaking regions to majority French-speaking governance; whereas at the national level, this crisis comes in addition, in the north, to the deadly attacks carried out by Boko Haram since 2012 against the populations and the security forces and, in the east, to the repeated incursions by Central African armed groups; whereas so far, the conflict in the West is probably the deadliest of the three in the country with around 3,000 deaths and 600,000 displaced persons;

C. whereas those who advocate dialogue and respect for the rule of law continue to be the object of repression; whereas the oldest Cameroonian political party, “l’union des populations du Cameroun-mouvement africain pour la nouvelle indépendance et la démocratie (UPC-Manidem)” is facing a ban; whereas its legalization is requested by the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights since 2016
D. whereas the current conflict in the North-West and South-West regions is a direct consequence from the colonial distribution of the territory between Great Britain and France; whereas the country is deeply affected by neo-colonialism and imperialism, of the old colonial powers and international institutions; whereas Cameroon is an important French political and economic partner; whereas French exports to Cameroon amounted to EUR 519.7 million in 2019, and imports from the country 225.6 M EUR in 2019; whereas Cameroon is the EU’s main trading partner in Central Africa, and accounts for one quarter of EU trade with the region

E. whereas President Biya, has been in office since 1982, and was re-elected for his seventh term in office in October 2018; whereas the government's repression having failed to put an end to the protests, they opened, in September 2019, a "National Dialogue" whose ambition is to find a lasting solution to the crisis; whereas the separatists have been banned from the debates; whereas this dialogue resulted in a "consensus" with te adoption by the Parliament of a law in December 2019 granting a "special status" to the English-speaking regions;

F. whereas the conflict in the Anglophone regions (called “Ambazonia region” by the separatists) highlights the identity, economic, political and social tensions that shake Cameroon and which call into question the country's territorial integrity; whereas even if they are rich in resources, the English-speaking regions remain economically deprived, the sharing of wealth being reserved for the large groups exploiting them and therefore excluding the local population; whereas In 2018, unemployment was around 40%, for a national average of 13%. Thus, the grievances of the English-speaking population remain unresolved almost 60 years after unification;

G. whereas NGO’s rights are restricted; whereas in December 2020 authorities suspended all Médecins sans frontiers (MSF) activities in the North-West region, depriving tens of thousands of people to access to vital health care;

H. whereas exactions are committed by both the security forces and the separatists groups; whereas in 2021, security forces have continued killing civilians, burning homes, arresting and torturing people suspected of collaborating with separatist groups, and committed sexual violence; whereas attacks against health facilities continued; whereas separatist fighters widespread attacks on education, such as attacks on schools, violent assaults and threats against students and teachers, as well as kidnapping;

I. whereas on September 6, schools reopened for the 2021-2022 academic year, however, two out of three schools in the Anglophone regions remained closed, keeping over 700,000 children and adolescents without education;

J. whereas the Islamist armed group Boko Haram increased its attacks in the Far North region from January to April, killing at least 80 civilians, with over 340,000 internally displaced as of August 2021; whereas the answers of the government forces to the armed conflict violated international humanitarian and human rights law, including unlawful killings and arbitrary arrests.

K. whereas Cameroon hosts almost two million people in need of humanitarian assistance, a 15-fold increase since 2017; whereas almost 300 000 internally displaced persons (IDPs)
and refugees (mainly from the Central African Republic and Nigeria) have escaped the Far North region following Boko Haram attacks;

L. whereas Cameroun is a de facto abolitionist country: no executions carried out since 1997; however, the moratorium is not official and many death sentences continue to be handed down each year;

M. whereas the public demonstrations in several African countries and in the Paris region demanded the disappearance of the CFA Franc, a currency imposed on 14 African countries by France and which, far from promoting cooperation, is in fact a tool of domination of the former colonial power and an obstacle to the development of its member countries;

N. whereas Gender-based violence, child abuse, child labour and workers’ rights remain a challenge in Cameroon; whereas the country’s Human Development Index score is 0.563, placing the country 150 out of 189; whereas Life expectancy reached an all-time high of 58.9 years in 2019, up from 55.1 in 2010. Child mortality is 76.1 per 1 000 births; whereas women do not have the right to own land in Cameroon, and neither do they have equal inheritance rights, which inevitably harms their independence. Cameroon’s Gender Inequality Index score is 0.566, placing it 140 out of 162;

O. whereas Cameroon’s penal code punishes “sexual relations between persons of the same sex” with up to five years in prison. In 2021, there has also been an uptick in police action against LGBT people;

P. whereas security forces arbitrarily arrested, beat, or threatened at least 24 people, including a 17-year-old boy, for alleged consensual same-sex conduct or gender nonconformity since February 2021. On May 11, a Cameroonian court sentenced Shakiro and Patricia, two transgender women, to five years in prison and fines of 200,000 CFA (US $370) for alleged same-sex relations

1. Strongly condemns the multiple attacks on the right of citizens to peaceful assembly and demonstration throughout the Cameroonian territory, as well as attacks on freedom of expression; in this sense demands respect for the right to freedom of expression, assembly, association and expression guaranteed by international norms and United Nations treaties and conventions ratified by Cameroon and refrain from use of force to disperse protests;

2. Calls for the release of all political prisoners and for the end of the repression, arbitrary trials and harassment towards civil society, political parties, and people critical of the outcome of the elections; Urges the Camerooun government to withdraw the ban on “l’union des populations du Cameroun-mouvement africain pour la nouvelle indépendance et la démocratie (UPC-Manidem)” and to prevent any persecution on political opinion notably regarding Anglophone regions;

3. Condemns the impunity enjoyed by the perpetrators and sponsors of the massive and serious human rights violations; calls for an immediate, independent and impartial investigation into all allegations of use of force against peaceful demonstrators, as well as about the ill-treatment and torture of detainees by the State forces; insists that the results of these investigations be made public and that those responsible appear before an independent and impartial tribunal and that the authorities should to grant unhindered access to independent
monitors, as well as humanitarian organizations, across the country, including in the Anglophone regions (“Ambazonia”);

4. Condemns the use of violence against civilians by any party to the conflict or by terrorists or other armed groups, as such acts have led the country into a severe humanitarian crisis, and resulted in hundreds of deaths and injuries and displaced people; deplores the massacre of women, men and children, the rapes, the extrajudicial executions, the use of torture; urges the Cameroonian authorities to put an end to these acts in accordance with their repeated commitments for many years and stands with the people of Cameroon in their determination to fight all forms of violence in their country;

5. Supports the requests to the UN experts for a review of the 2014 antiterrorism law to ensure it is not used to restrict fundamental freedoms, such as the rights to freedom of expression, peaceful assembly and association; asks the UN Security Council to formally add the situation in Cameroon’s Anglophone regions to its agenda and request a briefing on the situation from the UN Secretary General;

6. Insists on the fact that the fight against terrorism could be efficient only if we address the causes and specifically problems related to inequality, the control of fertile farmland, unemployment and poverty; highlights the fact that the current situation shouldn’t be a pretext to restrict human rights and fundamental freedoms or to commit crimes;

7. Considers that the peaceful resolution of conflicts can only take place through respect for human rights, especially the inalienable right of the people to dispose of themselves and their resources; Believes that only through a constructive and inclusive dialogue that a sustainable solution can be found to the ongoing crisis in the North-West and South-West regions;

8. Calls the Cameroonian’s authorities to protect every women in the country, especially in the conflict areas and to promote gender equality and women’s empowerment through boosting women and women rights organisations participation in public and political life; calls for a comprehensive EU approach on violence against women and girls with increased efforts and resources to prevent and eliminate all discriminatory practices against women as well as to combat and prosecute all forms of violence including gender-based violence in conflict and post-conflict situations; calls for the development of specific EU actions to strengthen the rights of different groups of women, with a special attention to youth, migrants, women living with HIV, LGBTI persons and persons with disabilities;

9. Is worried about the fact that citizens of Cameroon fleeing persecution are not safe in the neighbouring countries, particularly Nigeria, as their right to international protection is not recognized or respected with a risk of refoulment to Cameroon; urges the EU and it’s Member states to provide asylum to the persons in need;

10. Calls on the EU and its Member States to increase their financial support and humanitarian aid to meet the urgent needs of the Cameroonian population, including displaced persons and refugees in neighbouring countries; calls for EU and its Member States to provide aid in the form of grants and not in the form of loans not to increase the debt burden; deplores the fact that the majority of EU Member States have not achieved the target of 0.7% GNI for official development assistance and that some have even reduced their percentage of development aid;
11. Urges the EU and its Member States, to suspend any cooperation with the Cameroonian State Forces, in particular by sending military advisers, financing and equipment used by State forces responsible for abuses; calls on the EU and its member states to ensure that any support to the Cameroonian authorities does not contribute to or facilitate human rights violations;

12. Stresses the inalienable right of peoples to self-determination without external interference and condemns consequently the imperialist attempts of old colonial powers and other Western powers, not only on the economy of the country but also in the support and maintenance of the political influence;

13. emphasizes that political, economic and monetary independence is a fundamental condition of sovereignty and development; stresses that it will succeed, therefore, only by getting rid of relationships inequalities that exist with the institutions international and old colonial powers; supports the popular mobilizations in the ACP countries against the structural adjustment plans and against monetary control tools such as the Franc CFA; underlines that despite its "Renovation", the new currency will remain pegged to the euro which means that it will make the fight against inflation his priority to the detriment of a real industrial and agricultural development and of a social progress policy for countries concerned; further emphasizes that the role of "warantor" of France, all such as portability, which allows multinational enterprises to facilitate the return of their profits to the country of their seat, is a major obstacle to economic development of these countries; therefore supports the deletion of CFA system and other instruments of monetary dominance as a prerequisite for economic development from ACP countries; supports the efforts of countries ACP which aim to set up their own monetary institutions

14. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the African Union, the Prime Minister and the Parliament of Cameroon, the UN Secretary-General, the UN Human Rights Council and the ACP Joint Parliamentary Assembly -EU.