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))

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on behalf of the ECR Group
The European Parliament,

– having regard to its resolution of 18 April 2019 on Cameroon,

- having regard to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights,

– having regard to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights,

– having regard to the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights,

– having regard to the Cotonou Agreement,

– having regard to the statement of the EU delegation in Cameroon of 27 October 2021 on the support by the European Union to the decentralisation process in Cameroon,

– having regard to the Cameroon Situation Report of 5 November 2021 of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA),

– having regard to the complaint filed by the Centre for Human Rights and Democracy in Africa and the SOS-Torture litigators group in Africa to the UN Committee against Torture against Cameroon for acts of torture perpetrated by the security forces,

– having regard to Rule 144 of its Rules of Procedure,

A. whereas in October 2016, protests in Cameroon’s two minority English-speaking regions, the North-West and South-West, triggered the so-called “Anglophone crisis”; whereas, since then, the two regions have been embroiled in a cycle of violence and human rights violations and abuses committed by both armed separatist groups and government forces;

B. whereas in the Far North region on the border with Nigeria, the armed group Boko Haram continues to commit abuses against the civilian population; whereas, since December 2020, at least 80 civilians have been killed by Boko Haram and there have been also widespread allegations of the security forces perpetrating extrajudicial killings during military operations against the group;

C. whereas in the North-West tension between the Muslim Mbororo/Fulani herders and Christian farming communities, particularly in the Bamenda Grassfields area, has led to violent clashes;

D. whereas since the October 2018 presidential elections, the Government has cracked down on political opposition and dissent;

E. whereas in June 2019 Switzerland mediated peace talks which were followed by a national dialogue organized by President Biya in October 2019, that did not lead to any
tangible improvement of the human rights situation or discussion of key political and governance issues pertaining to the Anglophone regions;

F. whereas the security situation has deteriorated since the beginning of 2021 due to increased fighting between government forces and armed separatist groups and whereas the humanitarian situation remains serious; whereas approximately 30 percent of health facilities are now unable to operate, with at least 29 reported attacks on facilities in the North-West and South-West regions between January-June 2021; whereas a significant increase in targeted attacks on humanitarian workers over the past year has also restricted the delivery of vital aid; and whereas in the first five months of 2021, separatists carried out at least 27 attacks with improvised explosive devices in 13 towns, more than in all previous years of the crisis combined;

G. whereas to date, more than 3,000 civilians (and likely hundreds of members of the security forces) have lost their lives, more than one million have been internally displaced (including more than 700,000 in the North-West and South-West regions), while at least 67,500 have fled to Nigeria; whereas as of November 2020, 1,1 million students were out of school in Cameroon and, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), 1,15 million people are currently severely food insecure;

H. whereas in February 2021 Cardinal Pietro Parolin, Secretary of State of the Vatican, visited Cameroon and announced the readiness of the Catholic Church to facilitate a dialogue between the government and separatist groups;

I. whereas on 7 June 2021, US Secretary of State Blinken announced visa restrictions on those undermining the peaceful resolution of the crisis in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon;

1. Deplores the human rights violations committed by government forces and non-state armed groups in the North-West, South-West, Far North, and other regions of Cameroon, and urges all parties to immediately bring these violations to an end;

2. Condemns the use of excessive force against protestors and political opponents, and violations of the freedoms of the press, expression and assembly, and reminds the Cameroonian Government of its primary responsibility to protect its population from human rights violations;

3. Reminds Cameroon of its international obligations to uphold the right to a fair trial for all citizens before independent courts of law, and recalls that military courts should not have jurisdiction over the civilian population;

4. Expresses concern at the Government of Cameroon’s failure to hold its security forces to account, which has exacerbated the violence and the culture of impunity; calls for an independent and transparent investigation into the human rights violations by the police and security forces, and for those responsible to be held to account in fair trials;

5. Urges the Government of Cameroon to grant the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) immediate and unfettered access to the North-West and South-West regions to investigate potential violations and abuses of International Human Rights Law;
6. Urges the Government of Cameroon, in cooperation with the OHCHR, to design and implement a road map for human rights reforms and accountability with a view to preventing further human rights violations and ensuring accountability as part of a holistic effort to settle the crisis in the country, and to outline concrete benchmarks to be fulfilled by the Government of Cameroon to ensure demonstrable progress on human rights;

7. Calls for the Government of Cameroon to organise an inclusive political dialogue aimed at finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the crisis in the Anglophone regions; calls on the international community to help facilitate such a dialogue by offering to play a mediating role;

8. Calls for the EU and its Member States to use the political leverage provided by development aid and other bilateral programmes to enhance the defence of human rights in Cameroon, and to ensure that no support given to the Cameroonian authorities contributes to or facilitates human rights violations;

9. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the EU Special Representative for Human Rights, the ACP-EU Council, the institutions of the African Union, and the Government and Parliament of Cameroon.