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**REPORT OF THE REPUBLIC OF
CAMEROON ON GOVERNANCE AND THE FIGHT AGAINST
CORRUPTION**

REPORT ON GOOD GOVERNANCE AND
THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION
IN CAMEROON

Cameroon is a country situated in the middle of Central Africa with a population of about 14 million inhabitants and has English and French as its official languages. Its diverse peoples and varied geography make it indeed a microcosm of Africa. Cameroon's annual growth rate at present stands at roughly 5%, with agriculture being the mainstay of its development.

Like several other third-world countries, Cameroon has over the last few years embarked on an extensive reform programme geared towards adapting it to the new conditions of modern society.

At the economic level, Cameroon has embarked on an unprecedented process to restructure, privatize and rehabilitate State-owned corporations and undertakings. In this regard, it has signed many agreements with the Bretton Woods Institutions.

At the political level, legislative and statutory instruments on individual and collective public freedoms (the freedom of thought, the freedom of association as well as political and trade union freedoms) were passed in order to strengthen the rule of law.

A National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms comprising all the active forces and various socio-professional brackets was set up to better advance and protect the rights and freedoms of citizens.

At the administrative level, Government equally carried out a reorganisation of ministries in order to better adapt them to their missions and to ensure a more rational organisation and functioning of their structures.

This spate of reforms peaked in 1996 with the adoption of the new Constitution which further changed Cameroon's institutional landscape by establishing an Executive headed by a President of the Republic and a Prime Minister, Head of Government, a bicameral Parliament, a Constitutional Council and an independent judicial power.

The 1996 Constitutional reform affirmed the decentralised nature of the State and instituted the Region, which is a new form of local government. In addition, the Constitution re-affirms Cameroon's attachment to the basic freedoms enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the United Nations Charter, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, and the related international conventions.



Government will effectively and gradually establish the various bodies enshrined in the Constitution.

Furthermore, Cameroon has adopted and is currently implementing a poverty alleviation strategy which essentially aims at considerably and sustainably reducing the proportion of the population living below the poverty line as defined by FAO.

The strategy focuses on the following actions:

- the search for high and sustainable economic growth;
- the redirecting of State resources towards basic social sectors including health, education, housing, employment and the environment;
- the rational and efficient use of human resources;
- greater focus on women and such structurally disadvantaged groups as the elderly, the disabled, and deprived children.

In order to better meet the expectations of the public and to achieve sustainable human development, Government equally prepared a National Good Governance Programme which focuses on specific sectors. Concurrently, it undertook to combat corruption in all its ramifications. These two basic areas are the focus of this report whose ultimate objective is to inform the international community of efforts made by the Cameroon Government in these two areas.

I- THE NATIONAL GOOD GOVERNANCE PROGRAMME

As part of its Structural Adjustment Programme, Government in 1993 decided to reform the public service. The exercise had a dual objective: it sought to control the State wage bill and to improve efficiency within the public service.

However, owing to an initially restrictive design, the reform was limited and inadequate in terms of a more comprehensive approach. It is on account of this situation that Government decided in 1995 to widen the scope of the reform to include governance. Hence the National Programme on Public Service Reform and Good Governance (NPPSRGG) was initiated.

A joint consultation was carried out in this regard by Cameroonian and UNDP experts.

In April 1996, a first draft of the Good Governance project was submitted to donors during the fiftieth United Nations Special Session on Public Administration and Development.

At the end of the meeting, a preparatory assistance paper for the National Good Governance Programme was drawn up and adopted.

On the basis of this document, Government and UNDP, on 3 July 1997, signed an assistance agreement for Cameroon's National Good Governance Programme. The programme has two phases; phase I for design and formulation, and phase 2 to lay the groundwork for the implementation of the Programme.

Phase I of Cameroon's National Good Governance Programme will focus on five priority sectors which need to be addressed in order to usher in good governance in Cameroon. These are:

- the Public Service;
- Decentralization;
- Justice;
- Economic and Social Management;
- Participation of Citizens and Civil Society in the Management of Public Affairs.

Government carried out an unbiased diagnosis in each of the sectors chosen depicting the governance situation in Cameroon. On the strength of this, recommendations were made to:

- adapt the missions of the Public Service to the requirements of a democratic and liberal society, taking into account the structural adjustment agreements signed by Cameroon;
- ensure that State workers comply with regulations and democratic ethics (transparency, accountability, control of legality);
- improve Public Service output and efficiency with emphasis on revitalizing structures, adopting career profiles, promoting professional ethics, and standardizing staff management instruments and tools;

- guarantee genuine organisational and management autonomy of local authorities by insisting on harmony in the co-operation between the State and local authorities as well as between traditional authority and the other forms of social organization within grass root communities;
- provide the necessary conditions (human, material and financial) for a truly independent, sound and speedy justice system which protects the rights and freedoms of citizens and guarantees the legal and judicial safety of persons, property and investments;
- promote efficient and transparent economic management as well as a fair distribution of the fruits of growth, notably through:
 - the enhancement of co-ordination between the services responsible for economic management as well as concerted action among economic actors in order to create the conditions for sustainable human development;
 - the creation of an enabling climate for economic operators.

The Government is counting on the support of the International Community to implement all the actions chosen under its Programme.

It should be noted that Cameroon's National Good Governance Programme is part of a process being implemented by the Government. On this score, Government has already undertaken a number of actions to demonstrate its will to improve on the management of public affairs.

Hence:

At the level of the Public Service:

- the organization charts of ministries were harmonized as part of the organization and staffing plan;
- career profiles were defined;
- work positions were identified and the Public Service staff situation streamlined.

At the level of Decentralization:

1996 saw the enactment of the new Constitution providing for the decentralization of the State. The implementing instruments will soon be adopted.

As concerns Justice:

- the Constitution has established the Judiciary as an autonomous and independent power from the Executive;
- the salaries and fringe benefits of magistrates were increased in January 1997 and the ceremonial position of the Judicial power has been improved.

As regards Economic and Social management

- payment of the internal debt;
- gradual and significant reduction in the taxation of economic activity;
- total exemption of pharmaceuticals from VAT;
- the establishment of a single window in the Douala port;
- more effective environmental protection...
- control of the wage bill etc.

Regarding the Participation of Civil Society in the Management of Public Affairs:

- the adoption in June 1999 of a specific regulation adapted to nongovernmental organizations so as to institute an active and judicious partnership with the private sector (economic actors).

Concurrently with its Good Governance Programme, Cameroon is pursuing its Anti-Corruption Strategy.

11. THE ANTI-CORRUPTION STRATEGY

According to the common definition, to corrupt is to vitiate, to distort, to pervert, to convince using gifts or promises. Morally-speaking, corruption is synonymous with debasement, perversion and blemish. In legal terms, it is a breach

or deformation of a set of societal rules. In Cameroonian law, a corrupt person is any civil servant or State worker who, for himself or for a third party, requests or receives offers, promises, donations or gifts in order to discharge, abstain from discharging or postpone an act under his duty. This definition can have an extensive meaning especially within the World Bank, where corruption is considered as the misuse of public property for personal purposes.

Considered in its various aspects, corruption is an age-old social phenomenon which affects developed and developing countries alike. It hits the private and public sectors and is manifested in myriad and sometimes very unsuspected forms.

With its many tentacles today, corruption, just like the sword of Damocles, is one of the most insidious and dangerous threats to the regular and smooth functioning of fledgling states all over the world.

Hence, in Cameroon, the law of 12 November 1965 to institute the Penal Code severely sanctions corruption by imprisonment from 1 to 10 years depending on whether the guilty person is a State worker. Other related offences are equally sanctioned, especially interest in an act, that is, when a civil servant or any State worker directly or indirectly takes or finds an interest in a matter under his control or supervision.

Though not explicitly considered as corruption, misappropriation of public funds or property is punished more severely, with the punishments ranging from imprisonment for from 2 to 20 years to a life sentence depending on the case.

These sanctions, which are pronounced by competent courts, can be accompanied by forfeiture, that is, the destitution or expulsion from any public duty or office, or the ban from managing public funds over a given period of time.

To support the anticorruption drive, the Government set up internal control structures in Government services (general inspectorates, finance controls, finance commissions, etc.) and a Supreme State Audit service with an overall control duty in all State services. This latter structure is made up of a ministry attached to the Presidency of the Republic and has a disciplinary organ, the Budget and Finance Disciplinary Board, which studies and initiates procedures against unscrupulous State workers.

In order to better eradicate and prevent this scourge and at the behest of the Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA, the Government, in 1997 adopted a National Anti-Corruption Plan. The follow-up of the implementation of the plan is



ensured by an Ad-Hoc Committee chaired by the Prime Minister, Head of Government and equally comprising members of the Civil Society.

This plan which involves all the ministries was preceded by an extensive media sensitization campaign, as well as the pledge by the Prime Minister, on behalf of his whole Government, to be personally committed to the fight against corruption in a concrete, constant and sustainable manner.

On the whole, the plan aims at:

IN THE SHORT TERM

- increasing the purchasing power of State workers (as a means to fight against one of the causes of corruption);
- preparing and publishing regulation and procedure handbooks in each Government service;
- devolving decision-making powers, especially in the management of personnel, salaries and pension rights, to ministers and provincial governors;
- setting up the new institutions provided for by the revised Constitution of 1996, especially the Audit Bench;
- implementing the Constitutional provision requiring senior officials to declare their assets before and after their mandate;
- amending tax and customs laws to give little room for their interpretation by State workers;
- promoting civic responsibility and moral integrity by encouraging citizens to report acts and manifestations of corruption to the competent authorities.

IN THE MEDIUM TERM

- setting up a Higher Council of the Public Service and drawing up a code of ethics for State workers;
- developing multifaceted international co-operation involving the judicial, banking and financial sectors in the fight against corruption;

- introducing civics lessons on the fight against corruption in the educational system;
- the continuous sensitization of citizens on honesty and ethics in the Public Service;
- setting up an Anti-Corruption Committee with a special operational squad or unit;
- implementing and guaranteeing devolution for regions and councils.

In spite of the inherent difficulties of the struggle, by the end of the first two years, the following actions had been carried out by the Government:

- 1) the organization of seminars on the fight against corruption;
- 2) reforms of procedures and structures to speed up and lighten the processing of files in Government services;
- 3) the setting up of a single window at the Douala port;
- 4) the adoption of an official market list for main items supplied to Government services;
- 5) the safeguard of State administrative accounting documents against imitation thanks to the procurement of very high quality forge-proof documents;
- 6) rewards and other incentives to deserving State workers;
- 7) the initiation, between 1998 and 1999, of more than 100 (one hundred) disciplinary procedures against magistrates for unethical practices, serious professional inadequacies or offences;
- 8) suspensions, criminal convictions or striking off the roll of the Cameroon Bar of more than ten lawyers;
- 9) disciplinary and legal prosecution of State workers presumed guilty of forgery;
- 10) prosecution of about one hundred people accused of embezzling State funds, amongst them high level State personalities such as a Member of Government and a General Manager of a State corporation.

Parallel to these achievements, a number of studies and measures, some of which are almost completed, have equally been initiated in order to:

- establish a separate code of ethics for the Police;
- decriminalize aiding and abetting of corruption in order to ease its denouncement and sanction;
- re-establish special criminal courts with exclusive jurisdiction over matters of misappropriation of State funds;
- set up in the near future a corruption watch which will be a special operational unit responsible for following up the implementation of the decisions of the Ad Hoc Committee for the Fight Against Corruption.

These are the general outlines of the efforts made by the Cameroon Government to make good its resolve to stamp out corruption.

Active partnership in this joint struggle with the Commonwealth will certainly enable Cameroon in the medium term to streamline all the channels likely to encourage corruption and to render more operational the structures which prosecute corruption.