

MAJOR NATIONAL DIALOGUE ON THE CRISIS IN THE NORTH WEST AND SOUTH WEST REGIONS OF CAMEROON

SUMMARY REPORT

The Major National Dialogue on the Crisis in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon was announced by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, H.E. Paul Biya and it held from the 30 September to 4th October 2019 at the Yaounde Conference Centre under the chairmanship of H.E. Chief, Dr. Dion NGUTE, Prime Minister of Cameroon.

As a nonprofit organization that works in the crisis affected Regions (and other Regions) of Cameroon, the Labang Education Foundation was invited to the MND and was represented by Dr. Oscar C. Labang. We are grateful to the Prime Minister of the Republic of Cameroon, H.E. Chief, Dr. Dion NGUTE, for recognizing the work we do in inspiring transformative change in Cameroon, and for inviting a neutral Cameroon diaspora-led education organization to participate in the MND.

In conformity with our nonprofit mission of inspiring transformative change in education, professional training, and resource development in Cameroon, the LEF participated principally in the Education Commission with the aim¹ of:

- Emphasizing the necessity to promote and protect the uniqueness of Cameroon's two sub-systems of education, especially giving that the current crisis resulted partly from frustrations in education sector.
- Proposing strategies that would restore peace, promote justice, and lead to the effective resumption of schools in the crisis affected areas.
- Advocating for the protection of children's right to education and teacher's right to pursue their career without fear of reprisal from either government forces or armed groups.
- Advocating for reforms that would promote and protect the autonomy of each sub-system of education while giving education stakeholder at the local level the powers to make decisions that directly affect the type and quality of education available to their children.

The Education Commission was chaired by H.E Dorothy L. Njeuma and witnessed the personal participation of the Minister of Higher Education, Minister of Secondary Education, Minister of Basic Education, Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, and Minister of Youth Affairs and Civic Education. Also present were representatives of various education trade unions, Regional administrators, private and religious education stakeholders, education researchers and intellectuals, Non-Governmental Organizations, parents, and diaspora. Also

¹ The LEF developed its talking points for the MND from studies and surveys conducted in Anglophone communities over the years. Our aim was to represent the wishes and aspirations of parents and communities in a fair, non-partisan, and scientific manner, in line with our nonprofit mission of inspiring transformative change.



present in the Commission were representatives of defected armed rebels who were currently in training at the Disarmament, Deradicalization, and Reintegration Centers.

The five ministers of education provided brief reports on government actions and efforts at meeting the needs of the education communities in the North West and South West Regions and Cameroon in general. On a whole, the Delegates acknowledged that the various Ministries had made significant efforts to effect changes that could lead to transformative change in the education sector. From the reports of the various ministries,

- The Minister of Higher Education, Professor Jacque Fame Ndong, demonstrated with verifiable evidence that all, except three, of the trade union demands have been effectively accomplished. Two of the three remaining demands are already in progress and this was confirmed by the trade union leaders present. The last demand which deals with the voting of Vice Chancellors in Anglo-Saxon type universities requires legislative action because, at the moment, the President of the Republic has the constitutional authority to appoint Vice Chancellors and Rectors.
- The Ministers of Secondary, Dr. Nalova Lyonga, and Basic Education, Etoundi Ngoa Laurent Serge, demonstrated with facts and verifiable data that the trade union demands related to their ministries have all been accomplished. The Minister of Secondary Education provided information on the additional adjustments and improvements being made by her ministry to meet the contemporary education needs of both the Anglophone and Francophone Subsystems.
- The Minister of Employment and Vocational Training, Issa Tchiroma Bakary, and the Minister of Youth Affairs and Civil Education, Mounouna Foutsou, provided information on the various actions taken by their respective ministries to promote professionalism, civil education and youth engagement in various spheres of national life. The creation of more professional training centers and civic education centers in various Divisions in the conflict affected areas and other parts of the country was a key aspect of their reports.

Delegates in the Education Commission learned from the reports that higher education institutions in the North West and South West Regions notably the University of Buea and the University of Bamenda were functioning relatively well despite the security situation in these Regions. The Vice Chancellors of these universities were present and confirmed that the schools were functioning properly though the staff and students face serious challenges especially during gun battles between the military and armed groups. The Delegates also observed with satisfaction that there have been major reforms in the Ministry of Secondary Education especially with regards to revamping and creation of new technical education institutions in the North and South West Regions, and the upgrading of some institutions into technical schools in other parts of the country.

The Trade Union representatives acknowledged the efforts made by the various government ministries but noted that there were still problems at the level of implementation of some of the reforms. They noted that their evaluation of government actions in relation to their



demands was not up-to-date and promised to provide a more recent assessment soon. They equally acknowledged that the different government ministries have taken major steps towards fulfilling the demands of the teachers' trade unions. They however noted that the implementation of some of the demands like the creation of a Common Law Department at the National School of Magistracy and the special recruitment of Anglophone did not meet the requirements as set forth.

After serious and sometimes passionate brainstorming among the Delegate and education stakeholders, the Education Commission

- Identified strategies, techniques, and approaches that could lead to effective resumption of schools in all parts of the North West and South West Regions. The main recommendation in this regard was for the government to call for a ceasefire for humanitarian purposes because it would be difficult, if not impossible, for parents to allow their children to attend schools while fully conscious of the safety and security risk.
- Articulated the determination of Anglophones to maintain, promote and protect the educational and legal systems which constitute their postcolonial identity. Education stakeholders from both sub-systems agreed that it was necessary for each subsystem to maintain its uniqueness but can freely borrow valuable lessons from each system.
- Evaluated government efforts at meeting the demands of the Teachers' and Lawyers' trade unions and called on government to implement the remaining professional demands within the earliest possible timeframe. Government ministers and trade union leaders indicated that they were working in collaboration towards the organization of the National Education Forum, which is one of the demands of the trad unions.
- Assessed Cameroon's education situation and potential from a global perspective. Delegated observed that Cameroon generally had a good education potential, but the implementation of programs was not being fully achieved.
- Emphasized on the need for the various ministries to make information and statistics on various programs, government actions and other education activities readily available to education stakeholders. This will prevent the propaganda and misinformation that is provided by separatists and some international organizations.

The LEF welcomes the wonderful suggestions and resolutions made by the organizations and Delegates in the Education Commission and the other Commissions. The recommendations from the final report constitute clear evidence of the determination of Delegates to work towards the restoration of peace and stability, the reconstruction of the crisis areas, and the resettlement of displayed population.

Generally, the close to 600 Delegates drawn from different political, religious, cultural, Regional, and professional backgrounds, and the Cameroonian diaspora expressed a strong and passionate determination to restore peace and stability in Cameroon, and to promote justice, development and respect for life, liberty, freedom, and human dignity. Thus, the Delegates:



- Welcomed the MND as a first significant steps toward resolving the crisis in the English speaking Regions of Cameroon, and manifested an unmatched determination to make suggestions and arrive at resolutions that will change the destiny of Cameroon and steer it towards a future of stability, progress, and development in all Regions and spheres.
- Recognized that Cameroon is made up of two postcolonial cultures that have been raised to national status and expressed a firm assurance to respect the specificities and uniqueness of the two cultural identities. They expressed a profound desire to protect the specificities of Anglophone cultural identity as provided under the Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon.
- Acknowledged the devastating consequences of the on-going violence, killings, kidnapping, destruction of property and economic stalemate, and demonstrated a strong commitment for the necessity to restore peace and promote justice, accountability, and rule of law.
- Noted the strategic importance of peaceful resolution of conflicts and reaffirmed their shared commitment to a sovereign and peaceful Cameroon united in diversity with respect for life, liberty, freedom and human dignity.
- Emphasized the advantages of the two judicial, educational, linguistic, and cultural heritages, and demonstrated the urgent necessity to uphold, promote and protect the unique values and ideals of both cultural identities.

The LEF salutes the efforts and contributions of all peace-loving Cameroonians at home and in the Diaspora for their unflinching determination and willingness to find solutions to the crises in the North West and South West Regions; and to rebuild a united Cameroon where every citizen enjoys a deep spirit of belonging, feels a profound sense of respect and social justice, and has a fair opportunity to share in the Promise professed in Cameroon's National Anthem.

Delegates at the Major National Dialogue were offered a per diem in accordance with the laws of the Republic of Cameroon and the representative of the LEF received per diem of 800.000frs CFA (\$1,400.00 USD). In compliance with the LEF nonprofit mission and internal rules the Delegate transferred the funds to the LEF, and it was used to provide basic needs for some teachers and students at the Kondengui Central Prison², and to provide school supplies to Internally Displaced Person (students) under the Presbyterian and Baptist churches in Garoua in the North Region of Cameroon³.

The LEF reaffirms its commitment to work with all peace-loving individuals and organizations towards inspiring transformative change in education, professional training and resource development in Cameroon.

Dr. Oscar C. Labang
President, LEF

² See report of visit to Kondengui Central Prison by Dr Oscar Labang and Maitre Alex Ndivé Lisinge. And

³ See report, pictures and receipts for donation of school supplies to IDP in Garoua by Mr. Patrick Asanga.



October 15, 2019

