PREVENTING ELECTORAL VIOLENCE
MONITORING VIOLENCE DURING THE LEGISLATIVE AND MUNICIPAL ELECTIONS OF FEBRUARY 9, 2020
"WOMEN'S SITUATION ROOM CAMEROON"

PRELIMINARY DECLARATION

A- INTRODUCTION

In accordance with the provisions of United Nations Security Council (UNSC) Resolutions 1325 and 1820, the African Union Gender is my Agenda Campaign (GIMAC) and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance (CADEG), the "Cameroon Women for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education Platform" initiated a peace-building project in Cameroon to ensure that women and youth play a leading role in the conduct of peaceful elections. The platform has a Coordinating Committee comprising 15 Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) and is coordinated by the Women’s International League for Peace and Freedom Cameroon Affiliate (WILPF Cameroon). It was created on July 16, 2016 and is made up of about thirty member organizations. The Platform sought to prevent electoral violence in Cameroon through the "Women's Situation Room Cameroon - WSRC".

B- POLITICAL BACKGROUND

The municipal and legislative elections of February 9, 2020 held within a challenging security context marked by conflicts and crisis such as Boko-Haram insurgence in the Far North region and the separatists’ crisis in the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon. Additionally, there were calls for boycott by certain political parties, and threats against all those who would dare to exercise their voting rights or stand as candidates; persistent contests of the results of the October 2018 Presidential Elections and many other conflict-driving factors that could engender electoral violence. In addition, the legal and political provisions of an electoral code that was contested by several actors, could not guarantee the holding of a nonviolent, fair and transparent twin elections. This precarious atmosphere added limitations on political and civil liberties which unfortunately affected the material management of the elections as well as the effective participation of all citizens in the electoral process.

C- LEGAL BACKGROUND OF THE MUNICIPAL AND LEGISLATIVE ELECTIONS OF 9 FEBRUARY 2020

The Judicial framework for these elections was governed by:
• The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon of June 2, 1972, as revised by Law No. 96/06 of January 18, 1996, as amended and supplemented by Law No. 2008/01 of April 14, 2008;
• Decree No. 2019/612 of November 10, 2019 on the convening of the electoral corps by the President of the Republic.

Cameroon has ratified the main international and regional legal instruments relating to the organization of democratic elections. The organization of elections adheres to the principles of international law and reaffirms Cameroon's adherence to the rights and obligations emanating from the charters of the international bodies to which it adheres.

Cameroon adopted, on September 20, 1960, the Universal Declaration on Human Rights (adopted and proclaimed by the United Nations General Assembly, resolution No. 217 A(III) of 10 December 1948);
Cameroon ratified, on June 27, 1984, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (adopted by the United Nations General Assembly resolution A/RES/2200 A (XXI) of December 16, 1966), which entered into force on March 23, 1976;
Cameroon ratified on October 22, 1986, the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights (adopted on 27 June 1981 in Nairobi, Kenya, at the 18th OAU Conference) and entered into force on October 21, 1986;

With regard to these mechanisms, the "Cameroonian Women for Peaceful Elections and Peace Education Platform" can affirm that Cameroon has a legal framework permitting the holding of credible and peaceful elections, which nevertheless lacks consensus with regard to electoral law.

**D- ACTIVITIES OF THE PLATFORM WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS**

1- Preliminary Activities

The monitoring of electoral violence during the municipal and legislative elections is based on a number of achievements following the activities carried out during the electoral process of the Presidential elections of October 2018. The most significant of these are:

- Community awareness and peace education campaigns and the enrolment of more women on the electoral lists,
- training workshops on electoral violence and risk prevention,
- training of monitors on electoral violence,
- training of youth and women on non-violent communication and the use of social media for peace-building consolidation, monitoring and early warning mechanisms, in particular, the "Women's Situation Room Cameroon" furnished with a toll-free number - 8243, to monitor and document violence and conflict-driving factors during the Presidential Elections.

Prior to the twin elections of February 9, 2020, additional activities were carried out by the Platform, which since July 2019 embarked on a gender conflict analysis in Cameroon, an extensive
program within the framework of the Major National Dialogue. Other more specific activities to the electoral process included:

- the training and recycling of 82 female and 78 male electoral violence monitors (160 in total) and their deployment on the ground - reaching 1262 polling stations,

- the re-launch of the hotline (8243) of the Women's Situation Room and the training of 25 tele-operators,

- a youth campaign on social media on the preservation of peace during the electoral period, which had a prize winning component for the top five messages,

- the production and dissemination of information and awareness-raising spot, preventive and circumstantial communications and the development of a digital tool for collecting information on electoral violence, amongst others.

2- Election monitoring

2-1. Before Voting:

The Women’s Situation Room Cameroon acknowledges with satisfaction:

- The accreditation of observers: the Platform recognizes the efforts made by the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT), granting 145 accreditations requested, a significant increase as compared to those received during the presidential election of October 7, 2018. These accreditations have enhanced the effective deployment of observers and/or monitors to targeted areas of the national territory;

- The provision of security by the Defense and Security Forces to ensure the peaceful conduct of electoral operations;

- ELECAM's readiness to collaborate with all electoral stakeholders and provide answers to the concerns collected in the field, one of the major indicators being the introduction of the toll-free number - 1508 and easy flow of information among polling stations through SMS using the toll free number - 8111.

Prior to the launch of the electoral campaign on January 25, 2020 and during the campaign, the Platform noted several factors that could interfere with the holding of peaceful elections. These included the following:

- The poor management of the crisis in the North-West and South-West regions characterized by a military response which was generally considered disproportionate to the attacks perpetrated by the separatists, the root cause of the growing insecurity and the massive displacements from these regions to the other regions;

- The prolonged absence of the Sub-divisional officers from their services which led to the non-registration of some candidates;

- The requirement of sums of money for the establishment of the certificate of no fee by the tax services;
- The refusal by some Sub-Divisional Officers to establish documents, (Case of His Majesty BILOA EFFA);
- Refusal to establish the extracts of criminal records without stamps (TPI of Mayo Banyo) as well as physical violence on citizens requesting the documents; among others.

These actions, in violation of the electoral code, could greatly hamper the free and inclusive participation of Cameroonians in the democratic process, and alternatively engender frustration for candidates who would want to take an active part in the construction of the city.

2-2. On the Election Day

The following observations were noted:

- The availability of the electoral materials in most polling stations and in the various electoral districts;
- Increased number of citizens monitoring of the electoral process, an indication of some progress in the democratic culture of Cameroonians;
- Significant strides in the media coverage of the elections;
- A majority of polling stations opened on time;
- Availability of Equipment and electoral material for the elections by ELECAM (in quality and quantity) in the polling stations.

- In the polling stations:

- The late opening of some voting stations, notably at the Mendong Bilingual High School, Yaounde 6 (8:40 a.m.), Office D of the Mendong Station Opera Les Semences (9:45 a.m.) ;
- The relocation of some polling stations without prior and adequate information of the voters (case of the voting centre of La Caisse in Dschang moved to College Notre Dame; case of the office of the Mimboman bus station in Yaounde 4, relocated to the Pharaoh School Complex in Mimboman; case of the Blaise Pascal Institute in Etoudi transferred to an office at the back of the building);
- Non compliance with voters’ privacy/secret balloting – unsealed ballot boxes and unveiled voting booths in some polling stations, case of the Patchiguinari polling center Bureau A Maroua with booths placed near the windows;
- The absence of lighting equipment in polling stations with no electricity ;

With regard to the voters’ lists:

- the absence of voter lists in some offices (e.g. the Centre Opéra Les semences de Mendong (Yaoundé 6); case of the Technical High school d’Akwa (Douala);
- Duplication and absence of certain names of voters on the electoral lists: case of the Centre Opéra Les semences de Mendong (Yaounde 6).

With regard to the election proper:

- Cases of retention of ballot papers of some opposition political parties in some polling centres (SDF ballot papers by the President of Polling Station C of Club CAMTEL in Yaounde 1);
- Multiple voting and voting for others (Kamgo Polling Centre, Bandjoun, Polling Station Catholic School A and B);
- Cases of electoral corruption characterized by the purchase of votes and unused ballots (Kamgo Polling Centre, Bandjoun, polling station Catholic School A and B);
- Continuation of electoral campaign activities on polling day (Polling Station K of the Akwa Technical High School Polling Centre);
- Electoral charters where students from the University of Dschang are transported to vote in Bandjoun;
- Caught red-handed: a PCRN militant with some twenty voter cards in his possession at the Cité des Palmiers High School in Douala. The person concerned was taken to the Police Station of the 12th Arrondissement of Douala for questioning;
- Cases of ballot box stuffing: Kumba 3 polling station; MboudaBamendjin; CEBEC Kouogouo polling centre, A and E polling stations.

With regard to cases of violence:
- A clash between voters and CPDM militants, following attempts to manipulate and direct voters at the voting centre in the Domayo sports complex (Maroua I);
- Violent altercations: at the polling station of the Makepe High School (Douala) due to the obstruction of access to the polling station of a deputy returning officer by the President because of his late arrival; similar situation was noted at the Kamgo Polling Centre (Bandjoun), polling station Catholic School A and B, between a CPDM Municipal Councilor and an opposition candidate;
- Clashes between the Chief of the Opéra district in Maroua II and the population on the one hand and the President of the ELECAM polling station on the other hand, following an attempt by the latter to relocate the polling station;
- Observed cases of violence committed by security forces (Kousseri police station of the 2nd residential district);
- Violent clashes resulting in the death of two (02) individuals not yet identified: individuals broke into polling centers in the locality of Koupa Matapit and Kouoptamo (Noun Division, Western Region) with the intention of preventing voting.

With regard to gender issues in the course of

The main gender-related problems were as follows:
- Family voting: Cases were noted in Bertoua where women were forced to vote according to their husbands’ political orientations (by bringing back ballots from undesirable candidates) in fear of repudiation.
- Some elderly people had difficulty accessing their polling station, as in the case of the voting centre Opéra les Semences in Mendong, where some polling stations were located on the first floor;
- Attempts to influence the voting of the elderly persons (mostly women) in the polling booth, the case of the Papatacentre in Maroua;
- The absence of toilets in several polling centres, which poses a particular problem especially for women.
Other major incidents

- Circulation of tracks containing intimidating messages, hate speech and tribalistic overtones in order to influence voting in the Moun go and the Noun;
- Arrest and detention of the Honorable TSOMELOU Jean, Secretary General of the SDF in Mbouda.

With regard to the specific case in the North-West and South-West Regions

- Exchange of gunfire and explosives in some localities in the North-Western (Mbengwi and Mankon) and South-Western (Muea and Kumba) Regions;
- Burning of a Post Office in AGYATI, Bafut District, Mezam Department (North-West Region);
- Difficulties in exercising the right to vote for some IDPs victims of the crisis in the North-West and South-West Regions (some transfer requests were not successful and/or the persons concerned were not sufficiently informed about the procedure);
- The non-distribution of electoral material stored at Army Camp at Up station (Bamenda) in some polling stations in the North-West due to difficulties of access to these sites;
- Failure to open some polling stations: case of IRAD Mankon, Bamenda 2;

RECOMMENDATIONS:

➢ To the Authorities:

- The adoption of the single ballot in order to reduce cases of electoral fraud and corruption and to ease related social tensions;
- Sanction perpetrators of electoral fraud and corruption;
- Establish a framework to facilitate the effective participation of internally displaced persons;
- Accelerate the peace-building process in the North-West and South-West regions;
- Equip polling centres with toilets.

➢ To ELECAM: ACTIONS TO INTENSIFY:

- Make the lists of polling stations, political parties and candidates in competition available on ELECAM website and on all other available media;
- Update data on voters and polling stations;
- Improve the recruitment and training process for polling station members;
- Strengthen communication on the relocation of polling stations;
- Ensure that polling stations are accessible to the elderly, pregnant women, etc.;
- Ensure that polling stations are accessible to all voters.
- Produce a brochure (pamphlet) on FAQs (Frequently Asked Questions)
➢ To political parties
- Capacity building of tellers on the electoral process;
- Share common set backs experienced in the field and table such to appropriate quarters;
- Propose solutions to these setbacks to the right quarters.

➢ To civil society organizations
- Working in synergy for more impact in the field;
- Strengthen public awareness of electoral processes and citizen monitoring;
- Raise public awareness on the dangers of hate and tribal discourse;

➢ To the population
- Use non-violent means of protest;
- Put into practice the slogan "if you see something say something".

Done in Yaoundé, February 10, 2020

The Platform Cameroonian Women for Peaceful Election and Peace Education