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*Date* : 18 July 2018

To:

- H.E the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Cameroon
- H.E the Mister of Defense of the Republic of Cameroon
- H.E the Minister of Justice of the Republic of Cameroon

**Subject: Urgent appeal to the Government of the Republic of the Cameroon on matters concerning alleged extrajudicial execution of children suspected of being members of Boko Haram**

I have the honour to address Your Excellencies in my capacity as a Member of the African Committee of Experts on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (ACERWC/the Committee) and Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflict responsible for the promotion and protection of the rights and welfare of the child in situations of conflict.

First of all, I would like to recognize with appreciation the continued effort and commitment that the Government of the Republic of the Cameroon is exerting to ensure the protection and promotion of children's rights. The Committee appreciates the fact that the Government of the Republic of the Cameroon has ratified the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (the African Children's Charter/ the Charter). The Committee recognizes with appreciation the stapes taken to domesticate the Charter and other instruments relating to the child. The Committee would also like to congratulate your Government for submitting its Initial and First Periodic Reports on the implementation of the Charter, which duly confirms the Commitment of your Government to uphold the rights of children as prescribed in the Charter. The Committee further commends the establishment of an inter-ministerial Committee under

the office of the Prime Minister, for the implementation of recommendations from the Committee and other treaty bodies. The Committee notes with appreciation the commendable legislative and other measures taken with a view to fully realising children's rights in the Cameroon.

Your Excellencies;

While appreciating the concrete positive measures that you your Government have taken, the ACERWC has learned that recent developments in the country have put these positive efforts in great jeopardy. Particularly, the Committee is deeply concerned about a video footage being circulated in media and news outlets showing an apparent execution of two children and their mothers by security forces. Consequent reports suggest that the uniform and weapons used are associated with Cameroonian Government forces and identified the location of the act to be Mayo Tsanaga area in the Far North region of Cameroon. The footage circulated further displays the identity of some of the individuals involved in the act, who can be heard telling the victims that they will be killed because they are Boko Haram. This horrific footage and allegation comes amidst continued claims of violations of children's rights by Cameroonian security forces in relation to the fight against Boko Haram in the Far North region of the country. Various reports indicate the use of excessive and unnecessary force targeted at children while conducting arrest operations, including extrajudicial killings. There are allegations that children, suspected of being members of Boko Haram, are being detained and tortured.

If the above information is true, the ACERWC is of the view that actions of this nature would go directly against Cameroon's obligations under the African Children's Charter. As it is clearly stipulated in article 5 (1) 'Every child has an inherent right to life. This right shall be protected by law.' The same provision obliges State Parties to 'ensure, to the maximum extent possible, the survival, protection and development of the child.' Children have an absolute right to life that should be respected and protected to its fullest extent by the Government. Furthermore, under article 16 of the Charter, the Government of Cameroon has an obligation to protect children from all forms of torture and abuse. Moreover, children affected by armed conflict, including internal armed conflict, tension and stifle, require protection and care as enshrined in article 22 of the Charter.

The Committee believes that these actions are contrary to the principles survival and development, and best interest of the child, which are anchored in the Charter and form part of the obligations of the Government of Cameroon. It is therefore paramount

to exercise due diligence in effectively investigating and ensuring accountability for the above-mentioned allegations.

Your Excellencies,

The ACERWC notes with appreciation the ordering of an investigation on the matter by H.E President Paul Biya. However, taking in to account the severity of the alleged violation and the continuous reports of similar trends, and in view of the Government's obligation of ensuring the survival and development of the child and the primacy of the best interest of the child in all actions concerning the child, the ACERWC respectfully urges the Government of the Republic of Cameroon to:

- i. Establish an independent, impartial and competent body to investigate the alleged extrajudicial killing of children;
- ii. Undertake a prompt and effective investigation with the aim of verification of the action, identification of the victims and the perpetrators;
- iii. Ensure accountability of the perpetrators directly involved in the act and superiors who know or should have known of such actions and failed to prevent them.
- iv. Adequately compensate families of the victims for the loss suffered;
- v. Identify measures in order to prevent recurrence of any extrajudicial killings of children in the context or armed conflict and otherwise;
- vi. Develop and implement a national strategy to coordinate the expedited release of children detained on the basis of unfounded evidence of association with terrorist groups;
- vii. Ensure that children who are associated with terrorist groups are provided with psychosocial support and promote their physical and psychological recovery to reintegrate them in to society;
- viii. Undertake trainings to police and armed forces on children's rights and in particular on the child's right to survival and development and the right to freedom from all types of violence, in particular torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment;
- ix. Inform the Committee of the steps it has taken or intends to take towards implementing the above recommendations.

Your Excellencies,

Please note that the Committee remains available to engage as well as support, with good practice and guidelines on addressing extremism without jeopardising the rights and welfare of the child.

The Committee would also like to bring to your attention that in accordance with its mandate, the content of this letter, as well as that of any response received from Your Government will be included in the Committee's Report, which will be submitted to the Executive Council of the African Union.

Please accept, Your Excellencies, the assurances of my highest consideration.

**Professor Benyam Dawit Mezmur**  
**Member of the ACERWC and Special Rapporteur on Children and Armed Conflict**