



MDDT
Movement for
Democracy,
Development and
Transparency

MDDT SPARKS

The Movement for Democracy, Development & Transparency

INSIDE THIS ISSUE

ISSUE NO. 5

JULY 2019

**Letter from the National
Coordinator** (page 1)

The ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

- Background (page 2)
- National and International Interventions (page 3)
- Addressing the Humanitarian Situation and the Urgency of Civilian Protection (page 7)
- The Way Forward (page 8)

MDDT-NED Project (page 10)
“Countering Youth Radicalization in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon and Promoting National Peace through Dialogue”

MDDT’s Peace-Building Mission
Discussions on the Anglophone Crisis (page 14)

Celebrating Our Team Members
Back Cover

EDITORIAL COLUMN

MDDT SPARKS is a medium that MDDT uses to communicate information on its activities and to circulate news concerning global development. It is published once every two months by MDDT and is distributed online and in hard copy to members, partners, stakeholders and everyone else who is interested in development.



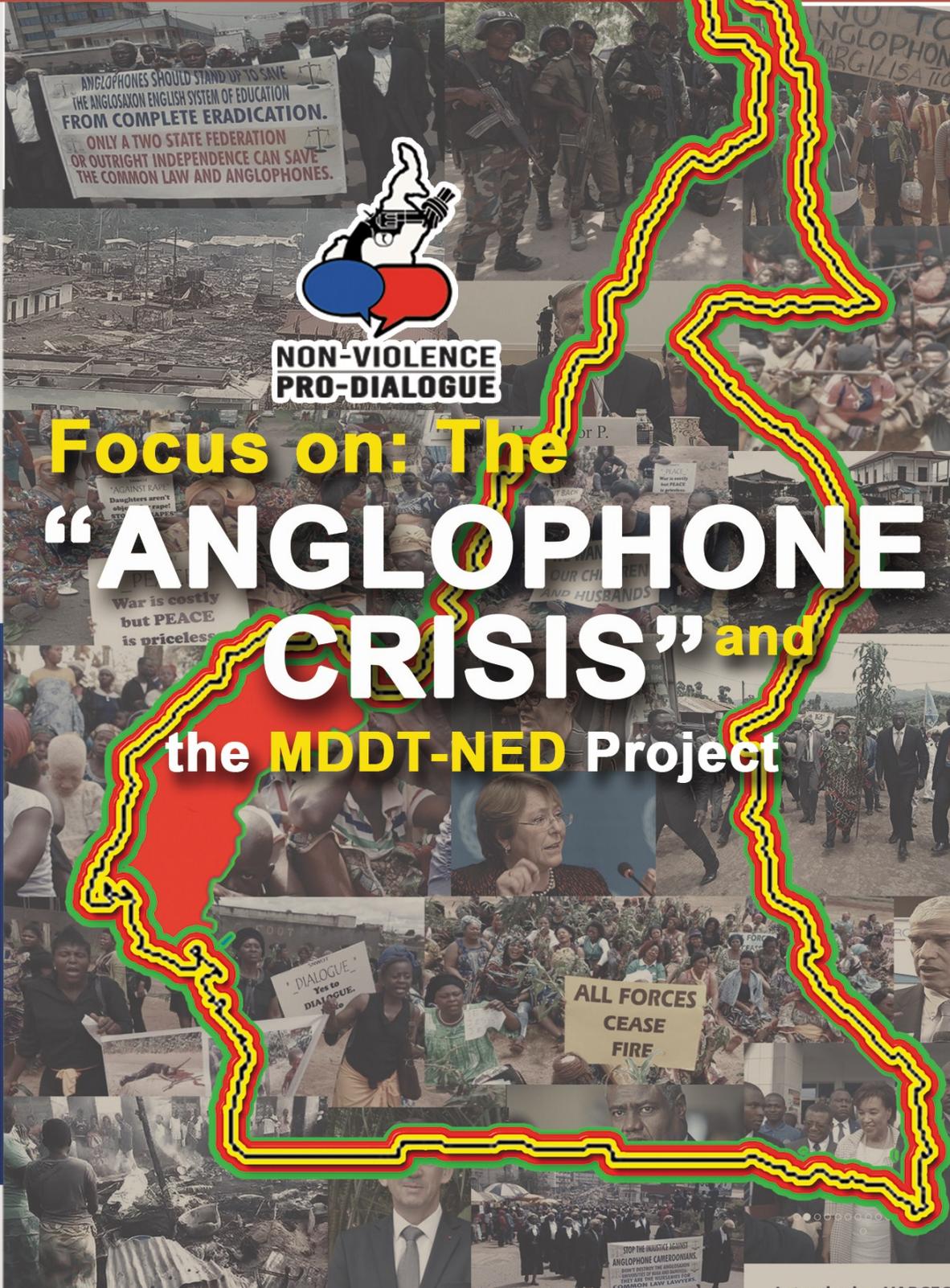
Editor-in-Chief

Walters Shashan B. Mbinglo Esq.

Contributors

MDDT Staff & Volunteers

The Editor-in-chief reserves the right to edit all texts submitted



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

Focus on: The “ANGLOPHONE CRISIS” and the MDDT-NED Project

Letter From the National Coordinator



Dear readers of MDDT Sparks, MDDT community members and stakeholders, MDDT continues to inform its communities of its progress in promoting human rights, peace and democracy across national borders. MDDT prioritizes reporting and sharing of best practices with Civil Society and stakeholders as an instrument of building coalitions for an impactful outcome within socio-economic, socio-cultural and socio-political spheres.

For the last three (03) years, the English Speaking Regions of Cameroon have been caught by the fangs of a degenerating conflict. This edition of MDDT sparks will give you an insight of the ongoing crisis, addressing current human rights and humanitarian situations, the state of the rule of law and democracy and interventions made by government, Civil Society Organizations (CSOs), diplomatic missions, and international organizations.

It will report on MDDT's Partnership with the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) U.S.A in "Promoting Youth Advocacy and Reducing Radicalization in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon". An innovation that aims at creating

safe spaces towards disengaging youths from violent actions, advocating for a ceasefire, and a call for a revisit of Article 64 of the Cameroonian Constitution for an enabling environment for inclusive dialogue.

(Article 64: No procedure for the amendment of the Constitution affecting the republican form, unity and territorial integrity of the State and the democratic principles which govern the Republic shall be accepted.)

Dear readers, CSOs and stakeholders of peace, Cameroon is taking a deep dive into an out blown civil war. We require a multi-facet, inclusive, non-violent, advocacy approach to mute radicalization, deaths, anarchy, arbitrary arrests, infringement on the rights and freedoms of civilians.

Amidst political hostilities civilians, CSOs, Senators, Parliamentarians and Ministers have been quarantined by fear, with no safe space to advice on the lead way to dialogue. The Leadership of the call for independence of Former British Southern Cameroons rots in jail and need a safe space for an inclusive dialogue without pre-conditions on the Form of the State. Reliance on the use of force can only deliver an adjournment of the crisis and a restrain by parties to partake in a dialogue can only act as a catalyst to a civil war.

Peace is better than war. MDDT encourages you to carry out positive actions, solution oriented actions to drive positive change. Enjoy your stay with MDDT Sparks, we expect feedback from you through all communication instruments highlighted below.

"Promoting Youth Advocacy and Reducing Youth Radicalization in the Anglophone Regions " - an MDDT-NED PROJECT



**National Endowment
for Democracy**
Supporting freedom around the world



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

BACKGROUND

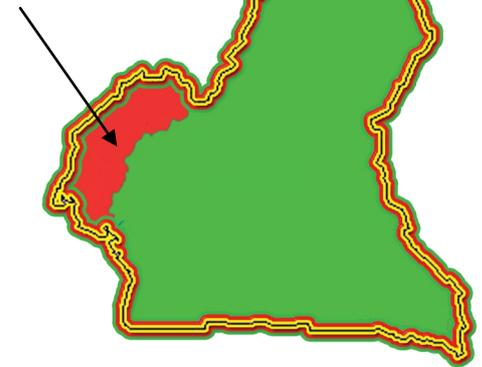
The Anglophone Crisis (otherwise known as the Anglophone problem or Southern Cameroonian question) can be described as a resurgence of a poorly managed decolonization process in the unfinished project of nation-building. Following about 42 years under British trusteeship, the British Southern Cameroons was bequeathed an Anglo-Saxon heritage reflected by a distinct linguistic, educational, legal, administrative and political value system. From 1st October 1960 to 30th September 1961, it was a full self-governing territory fully responsible for its internal affairs except for defence and foreign affairs over which the British continued to exercise jurisdiction.

Following a United Nations supervised plebiscite, Southern Cameroons (otherwise referred to today as "Ambazonia" by those advocating for a return to the status at independence) joined La République du Cameroun (Otherwise known as "The Republic of Cameroon" or French Cameroon). The Southern Cameroons, therefore, achieved independence on 1st October 1961 by joining with the Republic of Cameroon rather than with Nigeria to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon. The objective of such a union was to form a federation of two equal states. However, this political arrangement which barely surpassed a decade, seemingly became the foundation of the Anglophone problem and the root cause of today's Anglophone Crisis.

After the unification of Southern Cameroon and French Cameroon in October 1961, the then President of French Cameroon, Ahmadou Ahidjo organized a referendum which dismantled the 1961 federation and instituted a unitary state in 1972 referred to as the United Republic of Cameroon. This was also accompanied by a change in the governance structure. It is this political move, which according to today's Ambazonians, that kick-started the progressive domination and erosion of the culture and identity of Southern Cameroonians. In fact, they maintain that this move laid down the structural foundations of institutionalized marginalization, oppression and suppression of Anglophones. This political change has equally been described by pundits as a constitutional coup which undermined the basis of peaceful coexistence of two nations with distinct identities.

Again, in 1984, the current President of Cameroon, H.E Paul Biya, changed the name of this union from the "United Republic of Cameroon" to "The Republic of Cameroon", which was previously the exclusive appellation of East or French Cameroon upon attaining independence from France in 1960. This move evidently signaled the unilateral undoing of Southern or West

Former Southern British Cameroons; also former West Cameroon and the territory referred to today as "Ambazonia"



Cameroon as a state of equal status with the Republic of Cameroon. According to some political analysts, going back to use this appellation to refer to two distinct political entities, signified a disregard for the socio-political and cultural heritage of former Southern Cameroons and implied its assimilation into and under the former French Cameroon.

Since then, Anglophones have launched significant attempts through peaceful means to reassert their identity within the union. The Southern Cameroonian struggle was officially born as a result of this decision when a sitting magistrate called Gorji Dinka took the State of Cameroon to the African Commission on Human and Peoples' Rights, and later created the Southern Cameroon National Council (SCNC). In 1993 and 1994, the All Anglophone Conference (AAC) was held in Buea and Bamenda respectively, wherein Anglophones boldly expressed their frustration and disgust over what many considered then and still do so today, to be the second-class citizenship status to which the Francophone majority has reduced them; thus underscoring the need for a return to a federal system of government as one of its proposals. This appeal was diluted by the French-dominated government which called for a Tri-partite conference wherein all proposals made by Anglophones were ignored in favour of a decentralized unitary state. Twenty-two years after the 1996 constitution which articulated the agenda of decentralization, nothing has been implemented in concrete terms. As a result, Anglophones have continued to feel marginalized and disenfranchised, particularly as the most basic tenets of constitutional provisions on a bi-jural, bi-cultural and bilingual state have been progressively obliterated.

The tensions boiled back to the surface when in October 2016, lawyers of Anglo-Saxon Common Law extraction, organized a peaceful protest, following a memorandum which they submitted to the government in May 2015 asking in part, for a review of

Southern Cameroon's identity in the union. This memo was a direct consequence of the systematic and continuous dilution of Common Law practice through the deployment of civil law trained magistrates who could not speak or understand the English language, thus undermining the delivery of justice for Southern Cameroonians. The call for nonviolent protests was met with brutal repression by the state of Cameroon. Lawyers were tear-gassed, brutalized and their regalia seized. Anglophone teachers later joined in the strike and the government's harsh and repressive response triggered a general outrage by Anglophones which subsequently translated into calls for a return to a two-state federation. The collective interests of Anglophones were represented by the leaders of the protests who created a consortium. The leaders (Barrister Felix Agbor Balla, Dr. Neba Fontem and others) were arrested shortly after the consortium was banned in 2017.

Following the arrests of the Consortium leaders and the banning of the consortium, the state of Cameroon responded with further arbitrary measures leading to internet shut-downs, massive arbitrary arrests, enforced disappearances and other gross human rights violations meted on Anglophones in the North West and South West regions. What started as peaceful protests for the reinstatement of constitutional safeguards transformed into radical calls for total independence. This desire was symbolically expressed by the declaration of independence by Anglophones on the 1st of

October 2017. This day was characterized by a bloody response from government forces who opened fire on harmless civilians marching with peace plants. Today, this crisis has blown out into a full-blown armed conflict between the state of Cameroon and Separatists fighting for independence.

Anglophone Lawyers (of the Anglo-Saxon Common Law Extraction) on a peaceful protest in October 2016



NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL INTERVENTIONS

Since the inception of the Anglophone Crisis there has been a series of interventions from the Cameroonian government, citizens as well as national and international bodies. After an understanding of the background and evolution of the crisis, it would be worthwhile looking at some of the various interventions that have been made so far towards resolving the crisis.

Before delving in, one must agree that whatever interventions have been made in the course of this crisis, they have apparently not been enough to prevent an armed conflict that only seems to escalate; they have not been able to ensure a ceasefire or proffer any pragmatic or commendable solutions towards bringing the crisis to a judicious end. Nevertheless, it is the aim of this article to identify such interventions and expose the efforts whether sufficient or not - in the hope that all parties and stakeholders may see the undying need to increase efforts and take practical steps to end the conflict and arrest the humanitarian crisis that continues to grow by the day.

From 2018, the Anglophone Crisis drew increasing international attention, and became a challenge to Cameroon's foreign relations as it developed into an armed conflict. Triggered by a violent crack-

down following the 2016-2017 protests, the conflict escalated from a low-scale insurgency to a civil war-like situation. While a majority of African countries have been largely silent on the issue and generally opposed to any non-African interference, and while Cameroon enjoys support from some African and foreign states, and France in particular, no country has openly supported the Ambazonian independence movement. However, many western nations, regional and international organizations have put pressure on the Cameroonian government to engage dialogue with the separatists to resolve the crisis.

Beginning with interventions at the national level, the Cameroonian government, after having consistently denied the existence of an "Anglophone problem" for decades, finally admitted to its existence and genuineness, and took certain steps from 2017 to address the problem. Below is a cursory view of some of the steps.

The head of state in 2017 created high level commissions to reach out to the Anglophone populations of the South west and North West regions, and also to hold consultative talks with those in the diaspora. These commissions which have been criticized for being headed by big wing CPDM militants

(like Former Prime minister Peter Mafany Musonge, Current Prime Minister Dion Ngute and former Minister Elvis Ngolle Ngolle) organized regional talks and fact-finding missions in the Anglophone regions. Recommendations from these consultative talks that were heavily criticized and poorly attended were forwarded to the head of state for eventual action. In January of 2017 for example, a National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism was established and was later accompanied by the appointment of Anglophone magistrates and bilingual teachers; and in March 2017, some Anglophone civil society leaders and activists released from prison. According to Amnesty International, "these moves were viewed by the Anglophone movements as being too limited," and the protests continued, intensifying the crisis with the escalate largely blamed on an unwarranted atrocious crackdown by the armed forces in the Anglophone regions.

On the 30th November 2018, the Disarmament, demobilization and Rehabilitation Committee was created. This committee's mission is to organize, supervise and manage those who wish or have decided to lay down their arms, particularly in the Far North regions of Cameroon and the two Anglophone regions. For President Paul Biya, this action provides "an honorable way out for these ex-combatants and a prospect for social reintegration." Although the Government has been quick to report positively on the effectiveness of the committee, many Anglophones think that the creation of this committee only fits the adage, "you cannot put the cart before the horse". The root problem remains unaddressed.

Finally, the appointment of Joseph Dion Ngute as Prime Minister (PM), head of government in 2019, came with a breath of new air. **"The Head of State Paul Biya is ready to open a genuine dialogue to end the crisis rocking the North West and South West regions of Cameroon"**. That was the message delivered by P.M Dion Ngute on his maiden visit to the regions following his appointment. The P.M served as President Paul Biya's messenger for peace and reconciliation, holding broad based consultations with different groups in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon. During his visit, he also revealed that the Head of State was going to organize a "meeting" where all political problems will be tabled except secession and separation. While it may have seemed then that the government was ready to resolve the crisis without any foreign intervention, no commendable practical steps have seemed to follow the P.M's visit leaving many to question the government's will and commitment to resolving the crisis.

At the International level there have been several reactions and visits from top personalities. See below an attempt to summarize all such efforts

Commonwealth

The Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Patricia Scotland, paid a visit to Cameroon from the 18th to 22nd of December 2018. During the five-day working visit, she held talks with President Paul Biya, then Prime Minister Philemon Yang and other members of Government, opposition party leaders and representatives of the civil society.

The Anglophone Problem was high on the agenda of the Commonwealth Scribe's discussions. It was hoped that she will give fresh impetus to efforts aimed at defusing the crisis in the English-speaking regions of the Northwest and Southwest. Patricia Scotland had earlier called for peace, unity and non-violence in Cameroon, saying she was **"particularly concerned about what is happening in the country."**

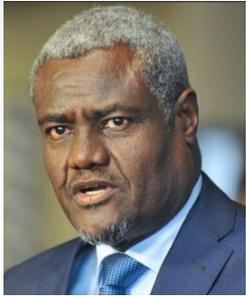


Secretary General of the Commonwealth of Nations, Patricia Scotland, paid a visit to Cameroon in December 2018

African Union, AUC chairperson

The Chair of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, asserted that dialogue is the best way to settle the differences that are fuelling the ongoing Anglophone Crisis rocking the country. He made the remark at the Unity Palace, on Friday, July 13 2018, shortly after an audience with President Paul Biya. The AU boss, who was on a three-day official visit in Cameroon at the time, condemned violence in all its ramifications. While stating that the Anglophone Crisis is one of the key issues he discussed with President Paul Biya, Faki Mahamat, a Chadian national, said dialogue is the best way through which both parties can settle the problem peacefully. He expressed solidarity with the population of the affected areas, promising to transform his solidarity into concrete actions as soon as he returned. Faki Mahamat reiterated his organization's commitment to promote unity, stability and the protection of the territorial integrity of member States. He lauded Cameroon for its

uniqueness, saying the country is a symbol for socio-cultural and linguistic diversity. He called for the promotion of appropriate policies in the national life of the AU member countries so that differences can be better managed to avert the upsurge of socio-political crises.



*Chair of the African Union Commission,
Moussa Faki Mahamat*

However, as of July 2018, the African Union has remained largely silent on the Anglophone Crisis.

United Nations

On May 30, 2018, the United Nations declared a humanitarian crisis in the Anglophone regions and started organizing aid. Through the declaration, the United Nations assumed responsibility for the safety of civilians in these regions, and to this end, it could to intervene against both warring parties. The United Nations equally called for impartial investigations of possible human rights violations in the Anglophone regions. On November 20, 2018, the UN condemned both sides; the separatists for abductions, school attacks and killings of military officers, and the government for carrying out extrajudicial executions. On February 7, 2019, Allegra Baiocchi, the UN Resident and Humanitarian Coordinator for Cameroon, said that the situation was a "forgotten crisis" and should be put near the top of the UN's agenda. On May 6, 2019, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Michelle Bachelet, said that there was still a window of opportunity to end the crisis, but the Cameroonian government had to take decisive action to win the trust of the

population in Anglophone regions. (Wikipedia).

United Nations Human Rights High Commissioner

Following her visit to Cameroon in February 2019, the UN Human Rights High Commissioner, Michelle Bachelet on Friday, 2nd of February 2019 was granted audience by the Head of State, Paul Biya. Both personalities discussed on the human rights situation in the country and how they can work together as partners to improve on it.

"We discussed ways through which the United Nations can help in the protection and respect of human rights," Michelle Bachelet said.

Without giving much out, the Head of State Paul Biya had disclosed that said they discussed on peace, security, development and human rights. It is worth noting that the UN diplomat's visit came after several damning reports by international non-governmental organizations on the human rights situation in Cameroon.



Michelle Bachelet, UN High Commissioner for Human Rights

United States Assistant Secretary for African Affairs

The United States Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy took a swipe at the government of Cameroon in its handling of the crisis in the North West and South West regions of the country. Tibor Nagy who was before

the US Congress Foreign Affairs Committee on Thursday May 16, 2019 said the government of Cameroon has done nothing to resolve the conflict in the North West and South West regions of the country.

On his visit to Cameroon during which he met with the Head of State on the 18th March 2019, he stated that Paul Biya promised initiating dialogue so as to find a solution to the conflict, while calling on the United States to double efforts and its commitment to see an end to the crisis. Tibor Nagy equally expressed his satisfaction on the *Aria Formula meeting* on Cameroon held at the United Nations Security Council on May 13, 2019.



Tibor Nagy, US Assistant Secretary for

UN Security Council Informal Meeting

The United Nations Security Council's decision to hold an informal meeting on Cameroon on May 13, 2019 gave momentum to international efforts to address the human rights crisis in the country's Anglophone regions. Also referred to as the *Aria Formula meeting*, it was a strategic in indicating the UN's position and direction towards resolving the Anglophone Crisis.

"Security Council members should call on the government of Cameroon and leaders of armed separatist groups to end abuses against civilians in the Anglophone regions and hold

those responsible for abuse accountable,” said Lewis Mudge, Central Africa director at Human Rights Watch. *“This meeting is an opportunity to remind abusers that the world is watching.”*

Francophonie

The Head of State Paul Biya received Louise Muskhwabo, Secretary General of La Francophonie on Friday 24th May in Yaoundé. At the end of the audience, the Francophonie scribe said the organization is ready to assist Cameroon overcome its challenges and become the stable country it once was.

“I wanted to offer that the organization that I lead is ready, willing and happy to contribute in any way possible to the stability of this country and the continuity of the peace that it enjoyed for many years until...”, the Francophonie scribe said.

FRANCE

On the 19th May 2019, the **French Ambassador** to Cameroon, H.E Gilles Thibault, called on the government and separatists to look for pacific ways to end the escalating Anglophone crisis. He delivered this diplomatic address in Yaoundé during a ceremony to mark the country’s National day celebration in Cameroon this year. President Paul Biya was represented at this ceremony by the Minister Director of the Civil Cabinet at the Presidency of the Republic, Samuel Mvondo Ayollo. Speaking on Cameroon’s socio-political situation, the French diplomat said it was doing well in spite of the challenges posed by separatist fighters in the North West and South West regions of the country. He said,



“The only way out for everybody is to find pacific ways to create peace amongst all the people.”

Gilles Thibault, the French Ambassador to Cameroon

European Union Parliament

On June 20, 2018, the European Union supported the entry of UN bodies into the Anglophone regions and called upon the Cameroonian government to allow this. In March 2019, EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini stated that,

“the persistent violence and human rights abuses in the North West and South West regions of

Cameroon have created an unacceptable number of victims as well as enormous human and material damages”.

She also blamed Cameroonian media and politicians for incitement through hate speech. In April 2019, the European Parliament passed a motion condemning human rights violations in Southern Cameroons and called for an investigation of possible war crimes committed by Cameroonian soldiers. It also called on the Cameroonian government to stop using **“military trials for civilians and francophone courts for Anglophone detainees”**. The motion concluded that the Anglophone Crisis, if it continued, should be tabled at the United Nations Security Council. The EU statement was met with condemnation in the Senate of Cameroon by Senate President, Marcel Niat Njifenji who described it as a **“litany of falsehoods”**. Senator Njifenji also stated that Cameroon would be open to receiving an EU delegation, so they could see for themselves. In June 2019, the EU gave its blessing to the subsequent Swiss-led mediation initiative. (Wikipedia).

United States Congressional Delegation:

In July 2019, a US Congressional delegation, accompanied by the US Ambassador to Cameroon, met the Prime Minister, Head of Government, Joseph Dion Ngute. During the meeting which took place in Yaounde on on 2nd July 2019, both parties discussed bilateral cooperation between Cameroon and the United States. They equally discussed on the crisis in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon as well as the fight against Boko Haram in the northern regions as well as US support to the Cameroonian government in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Headed by Karen Bass, the main mission of the US Congressional delegation to Cameroon was to get first hand facts on the Anglophone crisis so as to enable its government make right decisions.



Karen Bass, head of the US Congressional Delegation to Cameroon - July 2019



Peter Henry Barlerin, US Ambassador to Cameroon

Addressing the Humanitarian Situation and the Urgency of Civilian Protection

The humanitarian crisis which now exists as a direct consequence of the ongoing armed conflict in the Northwest and Southwest regions of Cameroon reflects a bleak picture which begs for emergency relief and humanitarian intervention. The crisis has received little international attention despite irrefutable evidence of systematic and widespread attacks on civilians, potentially amounting to crimes against humanity. Jan Egeland, head of the Norwegian Refugee Council noted in April 2019 that ***"there is no mediation, no large relief programme, no media interest and little pressure on the parties to stop attacking civilians"***.

According to reports from the Global Centre on the Responsibility to Protect, at least 650 civilians, 253 members of the security forces, and an estimated 1000 alleged separatists have been killed as a result of the ongoing fighting. With more than a thousand displaced people, the situation has been exacerbated by the burning down of more than 250 villages by government forces.

As the crisis intensifies, there has been growing evidence of armed separatists and government forces attacking and destroying civilian infrastructure. School buildings and hospitals have been burnt down with reports of medical personnel threatened for allegedly treating belligerents. Meantime, the education of approximately 600,000 has been affected by attacks on schools and separatist-imposed school boycotts, with an estimated 80 percent of schools in the Anglophone regions forced to close down. Despairingly, humanitarian convoys delivering government-backed aid to vulnerable populations have also been attacked by separatists in some situations.

Owing to this gloomy picture and a consistent attack on civilians and their property, there is a high risk of mass atrocities in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon. The urgency of civilian protection cannot be overemphasized in these dire circumstances. There has been an evident failure by the government to protect populations from human rights violations and abuses from government forces and armed separatists as well as failure to hold security forces accountable for extrajudicial killings and possible war crimes. It must be highlighted that on the 13th of May 2019, the United Nations Security Council held its first Arria formula on the humanitarian and human rights situation in Cameroon. Following a visit by



the UN High Commissioner in May 2019, she urged the government to investigate and hold security forces accountable for gross violations of human rights. On June 27th 2019, Switzerland offered to mediate between the Cameroonian government and the armed separatists but the initiative which received some degree of support did not quite turn out well, at least for a start, and has since fallen short of expectations.

Caught in the middle of an armed conflict with deadly violence, the civilians in the conflict affected regions of Cameroon continue to bare the brunt and have been subjected to massive human rights violations which potentially amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity. In the face of imminent mass atrocities, the need for dialogue has been continuously resounded by MDDT to deescalate the situation while an urgent call for civilian protection has been flagged by human rights activists and humanitarian organizations.



THE WAY FORWARD ON THE ANGLOPHONE CRISIS

From national voices such as the SDF national Chairman Ni John Fru Ndi, Barrister Akere Muna, former vice chair of Transparency International and past President of the Cameroon Bar Association to regional and international voices such as the UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres, the United States Assistant Secretary for African Affairs, Tibor Nagy, the Chair of the African Union Commission, Moussa Faki Mahamat, the EU and the US Congress (just to name a few), the world has defined its position on the solution to the crisis.

One can therefore conclude that there is no longer a question as to what solutions are available in resolving the Anglophone crisis because most (if not all) voices from the inception of the crisis till present day have been advocating for an inclusive dialogue as the best approach to finding a long-lasting and peaceful solution to the crisis. If it has continued to be resounded over the years, it is because it is the most appropriate solution vis-à-vis the root causes of the crisis and its adverse ramifications. There is a clear need for dialogue to address the humanitarian crisis that has been created as a result of the conflict in the Anglophone regions; thousands have been rendered homeless as refugees and internally displaced persons; villages, homes, health, educational and governance structures burnt down, aid destroyed etc. Dialogue is definitely a more cost-effective, highly inclusive and peaceful option to armed conflict, as it encourages peace and fosters democratic ideals towards sustainable development.

However, engaging the dialogue process has not been as easy as identifying and proposing it as a solution. The failures recorded with the June Swiss-led mediation initiative illustrates this. Having determined dialogue as the way forward, issues such as determining the dialogue agenda, transparency of the processes, identifying the representatives, defining and agreeing on the steps and procedures etc. have exposed numerous challenges to its attainment. Some of these challenges have been attributed to the lack of will on the part of Cameroonian authorities, division within the Anglophone "Ambazonian" block, the insistence on preconditions to dialogue, continuous fighting between the military and armed resistance groups etc.

On one score for example, ever since the President of the Republic of Cameroon, H.E Paul Biya indicated his readiness to engage in dialogue with the outing of Prime Minister Dion Ngute in May 2019, the move has seemingly not been followed by any concrete action, leaving the will and commitment of the government in question as hostilities continue to thrive in the Anglophone regions. On the other hand, the "Ambazonian" block that is bent on a complete restoration of the independence of the Anglophone regions as a separate autonomous entity, with its base abroad, seems divided with many factions caught in a battler for leadership. On another score, while the main parties to the dialogue table may have accepted that it be inclusive, they have outlined certain preconditions which neither is ready to fulfill: The armed separatist groups are not willing to lay down their weapons while the government is not willing to demilitarize the Anglophone regions or release all those detained and being tried as a result of the crisis.

Nevertheless, if one can outline factors that are inevitable in resolving the Anglophone Crisis, the first is that the Cameroonian government must assume its role as an authority, to take initiative in fostering the dialogue process. It has a greater responsibility to lead in concretizing the dialogue call as this would best demonstrate its goodwill and could help regain the trust of the people in the governance structures for the utmost interest of the state.

The second point revolves around ascertaining the parties to the dialogue table, particularly on

Cameroonian Prime Minister, H.E Dion Ngute on his visit to the Anglophone regions in May 2019



the Anglophone side. While many western nations and organizations have offered international support to the Cameroonian government to initiate dialogue with peaceful Anglophone leaders, finding such leaders both home and abroad is seemingly improbable. The seemingly more peaceful leaders of the Ambazonian movement remain locked up in Yaoundé after being “abducted” from Nigeria in January 2018; their abduction and detention, particularly of Sissiku Ayuk Tabe, left a vacuum which created a leadership crisis within the Ambazonian block. More so, finding such peaceful leaders on “Ground Zero” (as the Anglophone regions have been nicknamed) seems impossible as a result of the politically repressive reputation of the government, the protracted armed conflict, the unchecked excesses of the government and separatist forces (some of which are loyal to different Ambazonian factions abroad). These aspects have stifled room for any credible leadership to be born, and hence jeopardized opportunities to advocate and facilitate the dialogue process.

The third issue of certainty concerns the dialogue agenda. Considering the genesis and evolution of the Anglophone Crisis, there is no gainsaying that a political solution must remain the top priority of the agenda. As such, this approach must include deliberations on governance and the form of the state, be it decentralization, a federation, absolute autonomy or restoration of independence etc. This implies that Article 64 of the Cameroonian Constitution which provides that ***no procedure for the amendment of the Constitution affecting the republican form, unity and territorial integrity of the State and the democratic principles which govern the Republic shall be accepted*** would have to be disregarded if progress has to be made in resolving the crisis.

With regards to other aspects such as determining the conduct of the dialogue process, ascertaining the approach (e.g. national constitutional conference, mediation etc.) and the participation of key stakeholders as well defining of their roles (e.g. facilitators, negotiators), these will be easier to ascertain once the key representatives of the parties to the talks have been identified and the agenda clearly spelt out. This therefore implies the necessity for pre-dialogue talks jointly agreed to and implemented accordingly by these representatives; such pre-talks will be responsible for ensuring that a needs-assessment is judiciously executed that will identify and ensure the validation of all necessary

components and conditions to guarantee a successful dialogue process.

It is worth noting that the international community, particularly Cameroon’s international partners have demonstrated their willingness to back the dialogue initiative in a bid to prevent Cameroon from becoming trapped in a long multifaceted conflict. Considering the steady revival of ethnic rivalries, political discontent and socio-political instability in other regions, the urgent need for a political solution to the Anglophone Crisis cannot be over-emphasized. If the government continues to minimize efforts in fostering dialogue while understanding that the crisis poses a grave and direct threat to the its socio-economic, political and security interests, then it must equally understand that destabilization in Cameroon would undoubtedly have sub-regional consequences especially in Central Africa. This being the case, all parties must focus on and direct their best efforts to attaining dialogue because a destabilized Cameroon would be detrimental to all.



Women in the Anglophone regions advocating for peace and decriing the effects of the armed conflict in the regions.

Countering Youth Radicalization in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon and Promoting National Peace through Dialogue - an MDDT-NED PROJECT

If the Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT), has been able to take considerable steps and record successes over the years, it is fundamentally thanks to its strategic partnerships. In its commitment to foster its ideals in the service of humanity, MDDT realized a great need to contribute towards the resolution of the Anglophone Crisis that has continued to drag for almost three years. From what began as a peaceful protest, has emerged an armed conflict wherein thousands have lost their lives, hundreds displaced, livelihoods destroyed and youth educational sector stifled thereby creating an unhealthy socio-economic environment that continues to deteriorate as the crisis remains unresolved.

Following the emergence of armed resistance to combat unchecked military hostilities, MDDT realized through its activities and research that more and more youths in the Anglophone regions were getting radicalized. Having understood the ramifications of such armed conflicts as in the cases of

Rwanda, Ethiopia, Sudan etc, particularly on youths and women, MDDT decided to join the voice to those advocating for a swift and peaceful resolution of the crisis. With the international, national and regional calls for dialogue, the organization conceptualized a project that focuses on engaging youths in the affected regions in pro-active advocacy while deterring them from radicalization. It is against this backdrop that the organization was able to win the support and partnership of the National Endowment for Democracy (NED) in a project dubbed **"Promoting youth advocacy and reducing youth radicalization in the Anglophone Regions of Cameroon"** and promoted by the hashtag **#letdialoguelead**.

The project which was kick-started sometime in February 2019, is geared towards increasing youth advocacy for dialogue on the resolution of Anglophone crisis. It capitalizes on revamping the rule of law and democracy in Cameroon



**National Endowment
for Democracy**
Supporting freedom around the world



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**



#letdialoguelead



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

through the voice of the youths. This MDDT-NED project constitutes the advocacy and civic education component of the “Not Too Young to Vote Campaign” project initiated by MDDT a few years back. It seeks to create an opportunity to stay close to youths towards empowering them to participate in decision-making, drive policy changes as well as promote good governance and democracy while directing them on the best practices in addressing socio-political issues rather than open-up to radicalization or engaging in violent extremism. MDDT strongly believes that youths can foster change if they can find and utilize safe arenas and other protective mechanisms to speak out without facing unwarranted administrative excesses, arrests, police brutality or threats from armed groups. To achieve these goals, the project focuses on the creation of a digital platform for over two million young Cameroonians between the ages of 15 and 35, as a safe space for massive mobilization, empowerment and interaction. Such a database will serve and be sustained as a medium for constant advocacy and mobilization for youths, particularly during significant political activities such as presidential elections and elections at the level of local constituencies before parliamentary sessions. The database will have a multiplying effect through social media and other IT applications to build a database of 2 million young Cameroonians.

As afore-mentioned, the project has been under implementation for a couple of months during which numerous activities have been carried out. Phase 1 which ran from April to May 2019 involved activities such as the production of fliers, tee-Shirts and banners, the recruitment and training of Volunteers, the identification of Youth CSOs, the contracting of IT



MDDT-NED Project team (of Staff and volunteers) during training sessions at the beginning of the project

firm for the creation of a mobile application database, the contracting of a Music Label and Music Production team, the identification of and meetings with project schools and chiefdoms, the launching of the Project in target Universities, granting of press conferences and media sensitization, online Sensitization, production of reports and newsletters.

Phase Two ran from June to July 2019 and involved civic activities in target schools, the creation of youth clubs, artistic performances, online and press media sensitization and database messaging, data collection by clubs and Volunteers, meetings with some commissions, Members of Parliament, Ministers and other stakeholders, monitoring and evaluation etc. The project is currently in its third phase with one more to go and implementation should be terminated by March 2020.



Young talented budding artists composing and recording a soundtrack for the project at Feelins Music Studio and Godema Records.

Sensitization campaign at the University of Buea Campus (in Molyko, Fako Division of the South West Region) in May 2019 for the creation and launching of civic clubs



Prof. Gratien Atigdogbe, Dean of the Faculty of Arts at the University of Buea presenting a keynote on non-violent action



Two of several university of Buea Students sharing their passion for youth advocacy through arts with the audience



The project implementation has not been very smooth, which have more often than not, been due to factors beyond MDDT's control. It has been very difficult holding meetings, carrying out project activities and meeting deadlines amidst the tensed atmosphere in the two Anglophone regions marked by continuous violence and acts of hostilities perpetrated by the government forces and the armed resistance fighters. In fact, the most stifling challenges have been gross insecurity coupled with lockdowns and ghost towns during which freedom of movement and performance of socio-economic/political activities are prohibited; sometimes, these are accompanied by long hours of power cut.

Apart from stifling the socio-economic and other activities in the regions, the recurrent sporadic acts of aggression and lockdowns have continued to heighten the level of insecurity thus requiring the adoption of a strict safety policy by the organization for its members and volunteers.

Despite these hurdles, the organization has been able to move forward thanks to its very dynamic and committed team of members and volunteers. MDDT has been able to proceed with the project implementation by scheduling and carrying out activities on weekends, organizing online conference and meeting sessions regularly which have been very effective in setting objectives, assigning tasks and ensuring timely implementation, reporting and follow-up. The main social media tools here have been whatsapp, skype and email.



Prof. Anong Damian, the Director of Students' Affairs Prof. Anong Damian giving a keynote during sensitization campaign at the University of Bamenda Campus for the creation and launching of civic clubs.



Project activities with the Old Town Muslim community of Bamenda (NWR)





Above: Project activities in the Bokoko Community (SWR)
 Left: MDDT staff and volunteers in Bamenda displaying the database collection app for the project.

MDDT'S PEACE-BUILDING MISSION ON THE ANGLOPHONE CRISES

The Movement for Democracy, Development and Transparency (MDDT) in partnership project with National Endowment for Democracy (NED) has made great strides in recent months, in promoting youth advocacy and reducing radicalization in the Anglophone Regions. Through the project, the youths in the North West and South West Regions of Cameroon are gradually coming out boldly to advocate for dialogue and a ceasefire in the ongoing armed conflict. Yes! The hash-tag, **#Letdialoguelead** has been trending on some social media and other forums to which MDDT and its members are actively involved. Youths have been waving their **#Letdialoguelead** flags during MDDT project activities, sharing messages promoting peace and calling for dialogue on social media platform such as whatsapp, Facebook, Twitter and Instagram. Of course, dialogue is the only way forward and it is against this backdrop that MDDT-NED project engages youths in community peace building initiatives and advocacy for non-violent action.

It continues to be a wonderful experience working with youths. As often said, youths are tomorrow's leaders and this project is not only empowering

youths on best practices in ensuring socio-political change but enabling them to do so boldly through safe-spaces. Hence, youths through this project are being encouraged to add their voices responsibly and without fear of repression in calling for dialogue, advocating for peace and demanding change in governance from community to national levels. The magic ingredient MDDT is offering them towards attain this long-lasting peace is love and respect for humanity. The project is banking on the ramifications of the crisis particularly on youths and the aged to encourage and attract them to be more pro-active. As the world continues to echo the call for dialogue, it is the responsibility of all to ensure this call is resounded non-stop in especially in the affected regions.

*"Drop the guns because of gross human rights violations,
 Drop the guns and let dialogue lead,
 Drop the guns and stop the killings and violence,
 Drop the guns and let peace reign,
 Drop the guns and mobilize for development,
 Drop the guns and create a safe space for inclusive dialogue,
 Drop the guns! Drop the guns! Drop the guns!"*

MDDT-NED PROJECT TEAM



CLIFFORD N. AKONTEH
National Coordinator



VICKY NIBA
Deputy Secretary General



POUBOM REHBEH
Program Coordinator



CHRISTIAN L. FONYE
Secretary General



SEIDOU MARIAM
Project Assistant



KOUNIWIYI IZIDORE
Finance Consultant



WALTERS S.B. MBINGLO
Legal & Database



ENONGENE SONITA
Volunteer Coordinator



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

CONTACT US:

Head Office: University Street, CEREC Block

Apartment 2, P.O Box 337, Molyko-Buea

Tel: (+237) 233 32 36 32, (+237) 677 23 27 55, (+237) 675 23 05 09

Email: mddtnational@yahoo.com Website: www.mddtcameroon.org

Facebook: MDDT Cameroon

Twitter: @mddtcameroon



PROMOTING YOUTH ADVOCACY AND
REDUCING RADICALIZATION IN THE
ANGLOPHONE REGIONS



**LET
DIALOGUE
LEAD**



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

#letdialoguelead



**NON-VIOLENCE
PRO-DIALOGUE**

**say
no to
violence
silence
the guns**

#letdialoguelead