

# INTRODUCTION

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**Coalition**  
for Dialogue and Negotiations

## 4.1 Background and Rationale for Conference

The armed conflict in the Southern Cameroons is now in its fourth year and is escalating on a daily basis as demonstrated by the recent massacre of seven (7) school children in Kumba on October 24, 2020. During this period, more than 3,500 people have been allegedly killed. The Government of Cameroon (GoC)'s security forces have systematically burnt down over 400 villages forcing hundreds of thousands to flee into the bushes. According to the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA) Cameroon Situation Report in November 2020, the on-going conflict has affected nearly three (3) million people in the Southern Cameroons, created over 700,000 internally displaced persons (IDPs), with over 60,000 as refugees in neighboring Nigeria, and an estimated 1.4 million in dire need of humanitarian assistance. Schools have also shut down, with more than 900,000 children unable to attend school for over three (3) years.

As the conflict rages on, the Southern Cameroons' economy is gradually and systematically being decimated. There is virtually no productive activity at the moment in the largely agrarian economy, with approximately 1.9 million facing severe hunger. The Cameroon Development Corporation (CDC), National Refining Company (SONARA), the service economy, and the once sprawling Silicon Mountain have all crawled to a halt. It is estimated that more than 75% of health institutions in the Southern Cameroons have been abandoned and are non-functional.

Despite national and international calls to address the root cause(s) of the conflict, to initiate a ceasefire and for a dialogue with "restorationists" without pre-conditions, the Government of Cameroon continues to double down on its use of military force and the implementation of cosmetic measures that essentially maintain the pre-conflict status quo: language policy, education and legal reform, and lack of representation of Southern Cameroonians in the central government, and without substantial concessions on issues addressing the root causes of the armed conflict.

So far, the anemic measures proposed by the Cameroon government, notably, the setting up of a Bilingualism Commission, a Disarmament Commission and the holding of a Grand National Dialogue with the announcement of a Special Status for the Southern Cameroons have not resulted in any discernible positive outcomes.

Fighting between the Southern Cameroons *restoration forces* and Government security forces continues unabated. It is now clear that a battlefield victory by government security forces is not possible, likewise a military victory by the restoration forces is not realistic in the near future. Moreover, the people of the Southern Cameroons have clearly demonstrated their distrust as shown in the just concluded twin elections boycotted by 98 percent of the electorate in the Southern Cameroons.

## 4.2 Purpose and Overall Objectives of the Conference

The armed conflict represents an existential threat to the peoples of the Southern Cameroons. That the Government of Cameroon has resorted to a military solution to resolve a socio-political crisis, with huge human and material losses to the people of the Southern

Cameroons, demands that all Southern Cameroonians sit together and chart a way forward for their collective future. The Conference had two objectives:

**First, to establish a majority position on the political future of the Southern Cameroons.**

In the heat of the armed conflict, His Eminence Christian Cardinal Tumi championed the organization of an Anglophone General Conference (AGC) in Buea before any possible National Dialogue with the Government of Cameroon. The Cardinal saw the need for Southern Cameroonians to come together, speak their needs and wants and to channel a unified message to the Cameroonian government.

Due largely to the lack of overt support from the Cameroon government, Cardinal Tumi's initiative failed to materialize, thus failing to provide the much-needed opportunity for Southern Cameroonians to collectively make their voices heard.

Following the systematic dissolution of all legitimate Southern Cameroonian institutions, notably, the Southern Cameroon's parliament on 20 May, 1972 (in an illegal and unconstitutional referendum) conferences like the AGC would have allowed a broad cross-section of Southern Cameroonians to critically assess the current conflict and establish a majority view on the way forward. Today, it is impossible for Southern Cameroonians to congregate in large numbers in the country, thus there was the urgent need for such a broad-based conference to be organized abroad, in a peaceful and neutral environment where personal security was assured. Due to COVID-19, an in-person gathering was impossible hence the need for a virtual conference which also provided greater access for more Southern Cameroonians to participate.

**Secondly, there was the need to develop a strategy on economic and socio-cultural recovery upon the attainment of a political solution.** The exacerbating economic hardship on Southern Cameroonians, created by the armed conflict is extremely disturbing. It is evident that without proactive planning, with capital and human resource mobilization, the economic recovery and reconstruction of the Southern Cameroons will be compromised for decades to come. Fully cognizant that sustained economic progress is predicated on an actively engaged citizenry, an all-Southern Cameroons International Conference, at this critical time, became a necessity to ensure a strong mobilization of Southern Cameroonians from all walks of life, with diverse technical and organizational skills, to strategize for a robust economic recovery once a political solution is attained.

Given these clear trends, the organization of a Southern Cameroons International Conference became imperative. The successful organization of this Conference was therefore critical to clarifying the potential negotiation process.

The conference had the following specific objectives.

**4.2.1 Specific Objectives:**

1. Bring together a large and broadly representative group of Southern Cameroonians to analyze the ongoing conflict.

2. Propose concrete pathways to a negotiated end to the armed conflict.
3. Propose a draft strategy report on sectoral short, medium, and long-term post-conflict reconstruction of the Southern Cameroons (practical strategies for rebuilding).
4. Identify Southern Cameroonian experts who will be critical to the success of a robust economic reconstruction effort.

#### **4.2.2 Expected Outcomes:**

- Conference Resolutions stating the majority position of Southern Cameroonians.
- Tentative Strategy Report on sectoral short, medium, and long-term post-conflict plans.
- Establishment of Working Groups on key thematic socio-economic and political areas.
- Raised awareness within the International Community on the plight of Southern Cameroonians.
- Lay the foundation for a credible third party (UN-mandated) mediation and negotiation.

The Coalition believes these expected outcomes were achieved and the objectives formed the bases of deliberations in the different sessions during the conference. The Coalition also acknowledges this is work in progress to achieving its overall objective of a mediated and negotiated end to the armed conflict.

#### **4.2.3 Outcome Document:**

The Conference resulted in an outcome document which has the following parts

1. Conference Resolutions stating the majority position of Southern Cameroonians
2. Survey of the aspirations of Southern Cameroonians
3. 20 Guiding Principles as the basis for administrative governance within the Southern Cameroons
4. Working Groups Reports

### **4.3 Conference Participants**

- 1,297 delegates accredited to the conference from the Southern Cameroons and across the globe.
- 362 non-Southern Cameroonians accredited as observers from intergovernmental and international NGOs, including diplomatic missions, universities, and citizens of foreign nations.
- Over 100,000 people engaged via on-line streaming.
- With the notable exception of Cameroon government officials who refused to participate at the conference (but however witnessed as observers), proponents of three of the four leading shades of political opinion in the Southern Cameroons (federalists,

confederationists, independentists) attended and actively participated in conference deliberations.

- Seven international guest speakers included a former head of state, former ambassadors, and current parliamentarians from seven different countries in Africa, the U.S.A and Europe.
- 28 panelists from across the globe contributed on five different panels on key topics relevant to the armed conflict in the Southern Cameroons.
- 455 Southern Cameroonian experts actively participated in the Seven Working Groups created by the CDN.
- Over 3,700 Southern Cameroonians from around the world, with a majority from the Southern Cameroons, took part in a historic survey that highlighted the political aspirations and preferences of Southern Cameroonians.
- 23 journalists and media houses registered and/or covered the conference.
- Several researchers and academics working on the armed conflict were also in attendance.
- 26 floor speeches and 28 written statements given by Southern Cameroonians across the globe especially those in the Southern Cameroons.

**Venue:** Given the COVID-19 pandemic the Conference took place in a virtual environment over Zoom.

**Language:** The language of the Conference was English. There have been no concurrent translations.

### **4.3.1 Session Configurations**

Each day comprised plenary sessions, thematic Working Group sessions and other forums based on specific themes.

**Working Groups:** There were seven main working groups: Mediation and Negotiations, Education and Vocational Training, Governance, Economic Reconstruction, Judiciary and Constitutional Affairs, Healthcare and Humanitarian Relief, Peacebuilding, and Public Security.

Southern Cameroonian professionals with demonstrated expertise as well as those interested were able to participate in one of these Working Groups to contribute to making an objective assessment and recommendation for each of the thematic areas. This platform provided access for Southern Cameroonians, as the affected community, to participate in developing pathways for justice and durable peace in the Southern Cameroons.

**Panels of Southern Cameroonian Front Line Movements and Political Stakeholders:** A special panel bringing together leaders of the frontline movements and another panel for proponents of three of the four leading shades of political opinion in the Southern Cameroons (federalists, confederationists, independentists),

#### 4.3.2 Panels of International Experts

Three International expert panels were held to (1) make an informed assessment of the armed conflict dynamics, (2) develop pathways for a mediated and negotiated end to the armed conflict, and (3) assess international human rights violations and humanitarian situation to ensure the protection of the civilian population and access of aid to the affected communities.

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**On hearing the plans of Ahmadou Ahidjo, the Francophone president, to dissolve and absorb the Southern Cameroons into French Cameroon, Prime Minister Jua had this to say:**

***“It must be emphasized that the Federal Republic of Cameroon is a federation of two states with different backgrounds, cultures and traditions; the present arrangement was in fact envisaged as the most ideal solution to reunification... Any exercise, therefore, that is designed to alter this arrangement ... will clearly alter the basis on which the entire Federation rests and will throw our present system of government into complete disarray ... It is equally clear that since ours is a democratic republic a matter of far-reaching significance and consequences cannot be conceived and executed in secret without the full knowledge and concurrence of the people of West Cameroon through their accredited representatives, to wit, the West Cameroon Government.”***

*Augustine Ngom Jua  
3rd Prime Minister of the Southern Cameroons,  
October 1966*

VIRTUAL INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE ON THE  
**ARMED** **IN** **SOUTHERN**  
**CONFLICT** **THE** **CAMEROONS**



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