



WILPF | CAMEROON
WOMEN'S INTERNATIONAL
LEAGUE FOR PEACE & FREEDOM

POLITICIANS AND HATE SPEECH



GUIDE TO POLITICAL EDUCATION FOR RESPECTING DIVERSITY AND PROMOTING PEACE

For political parties



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Political education handbook in compliance with diversity and promotion of peace

For political actors

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

CAAU	Constitutive Act of the African Union
AB	Administrative Bench
CC	Constitutional Council
SC	Supreme Court
EC	Electoral Council
CUN	Charter of the United Nations
CRTV	Cameroon Radio and Television
BCC	Budapest Convention on Cybercrime
HRC	Human Rights Committee
ICRD	International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination
CERD	Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination
ACHPR	African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights
ACDEG	African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance
NCC	National Communication Council
CHRC	Cameroon Human Rights Commission
NCPBM	National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism
HS	Hate Speech
ELECAM	Elections Cameroon
CC	Catholic Church
MCI	Mandela Center International
MINJUSTICE	Ministry of Justice
MINAT	Ministry of Territorial Administration
MINCOM	Ministry of Communication
MINAS	Ministry of Social Affairs
MINPOSTEL	Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications
NHR	New Human Rights
UN	United Nations
INGO	International non-governmental organisations
NGOs	Non-Governmental Organisations
ICCPR	International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights
UNSPA	UN Strategy and Plan of Action
PIC	Public Independent Conciliator
PM	Prime Minister
REDHAC	The Central Africa Human Rights Defenders Network
RTS	Radio TIEMENI Siantou
NSJP	National Service for Justice and Peace
STV	Spectrum Television
AC	Administrative Courts

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May all those who have supported this work in any way whatsoever hereby find the expression of our sincere thanks for the commitment they have exhibited during the elaboration of the present guide.

FOREWORD

Since the 90s, a wave of democracy has been blowing through Africa and Cameroon, manifested in a series of movements and reforms including freedom of association, multipartism, press freedom, freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and so on.

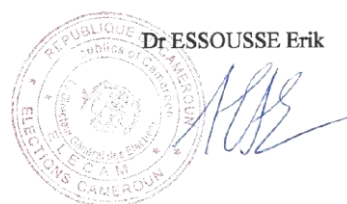
With a view to regulating political life in Cameroon and promoting participatory democracy, Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), the independent body responsible for organising, managing and supervising the entire electoral and referendum process, was created in December 2006 and began operating in 2008 with the appointment of its first executives by the President of the Republic. In compliance with the electoral code, it collaborates with all those involved in the electoral process, including civil society organisations involved in awareness-raising and electoral education for Cameroonian citizens, with a particular focus on women, youth and indigenous minority groups. Hate speech proliferating in the media and on social media calls for close attention before, during and after elections. In the same vein, Cameroon is facing security crises that call on those involved in the electoral process to act to preserve peace, promote democracy, patriotism, civic-mindedness, national cohesion, multiculturalism, solidarity and the general interest.

With this in mind, it is therefore necessary to provide political actors with tools and strategies that can work towards consolidating the constitutional values and principles that are valued by the Cameroonian people. With a view to the successful organisation of elections in Cameroon, ELECAM has undertaken to take concerted action with all those involved in the process to ensure the efficient implementation of best electoral practices. As a major actor in civil society for several years now, the Cameroonian section of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom (WILPF Cameroon) has made a valuable contribution to ensuring inclusive and peaceful elections in our country. Its election-related activities led to the creation of a Women's Early Warning Centre in 2018, which helped to monitor the situation before, during and after the presidential election. At the dawn of a new electoral cycle, ELECAM is working with WILPF Cameroon to promote peace and social cohesion through web influencers, digital campaigns and educating youth in community activism, in order to prevent hate speech and political violence in Cameroon.

This *Guide* thus meets an urgent need for peace during the election period, in which ELECAM is a stakeholder, to help guarantee healthy harmony within Cameroonian society. This Guide proposed by WILPF Cameroon is a breviary that will help to pacify the overall political environment in Cameroon before, during and after elections, but also encourage the strong inclusion of women, youth and vulnerable social strata in the various phases of the electoral process.

We warmly congratulate WILPF Cameroon on this timely initiative.

Dr ESSOUSSE Erik



Chapter 0 : GENERAL INTRODUCTION

I. BACKGROUND

Cameroon is going through a disturbing period in its development, with the rise of hate speech and political violence of all kinds. This compromising situation has dealt a serious blow to social cohesion, particularly among young people, and inevitably to peace. Now involved in politics with different party affiliations, these young people, defending different party ideologies from one party to another, are no longer able to consider the political scene as a simple game with the ultimate aim of destroying State solidarity or eroding cohesion.

As a result of hate speech coupled with political violence, social cohesion is now being sought, with the emergence and natural competition of political groups being one of the vectors of the drift caused by hate speech. On the eve of the presidential election, it would be important to raise public awareness of the need to promote factors of peace and social cohesion, in particular through web influencers, digital campaigns and educating young people in community activism, in order to prevent hate speech and political violence in Cameroon.

The aim is to strengthen the conditions for interaction between different groups of young men and women, including civil society, students, political actors and young municipal councillors, some of whom are internally displaced persons, with a focus on the following geographical areas: Douala 3, Buea, Mandjou and Mokolo, excluding Yaoundé, which will host other activities. It would also be important to produce a teaching tool designed to raise awareness, educate people about community life and living together on social media. The production of a Guide for political parties on political education for respecting diversity and promoting peace would be a perfect tool, given that the seeds of violence and hate speech are usually to be found in political parties, where confusion over political issues and rejection of others take root.

II. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The meaning of several concepts used in this Guide needs to be defined. These include terms such as hate speech, election and devolution of power, social cohesion, political actors and sociological diversity.

A. DEFINITION OF HATE SPEECH

The concept of hate speech abounds in political debates, fuelled by a political arena in which a number of actors do not always accept pluralism of ideas, but shift the debate to ethnic grounds. Also known as hate speech, hate speech does not yet have a universal definition under international human rights law. However, most of the ideas relating to it share

a common background, in that hate speech refers to written or verbal statements of an offensive nature targeting a group or individual on the basis of various considerations such as religion, ethnicity, gender or sex, and which jeopardise social peace. According to the UN Strategy and Plan of Action on combating hate speech, hate speech is *"any type of communication, whether oral or written, or conduct, which is **offensive** or uses **derogatory** or **discriminatory** language, directed against any person or group on the basis of their identity, that is to say, religious affiliation, ethnic origin, nationality, race, colour, descent, gender or other factors constituting identity"*¹.

This definition provides the frame of reference for all explanations relating to the concept of hate speech.

B. DEFINITION OF ELECTION AND DEVOLUTION OF POWER

The concepts of election and devolution of power are consubstantially linked in democracy, since election is a mechanism by which power is democratically transferred. Election is a familiar, even commonplace concept. It is treated in various ways by legal writers, who are unanimous about its meaning and essence. Election is a familiar, even commonplace concept. It is treated in various ways by legal writers, who are unanimous about its meaning and essence. Election is the expression of the democratic ideal of appointment of leaders by the people through direct or indirect universal suffrage. It therefore appears as *"a contest of wills with a view to the appointment"*² of representatives, *"a legal basis from which the representative body of the people as a whole emerges"*³. As a mechanism to select leaders in democratic States, elections are seen as *"a procedure for legitimising power"*⁴, a legal-political institution whose primary aim is the devolution of power by the people to those in power. The periodic organisation of elections for the renewal of leaders or the relegitimization of those whose term of office has expired is a clear sign of democratic vitality. To meet the requirements of democracy, it must be based on criteria such as sincerity, periodicity and regularity, which are standard conditions for democratic elections worldwide.

We can ultimately conclude that the Election is a transfer of power, from one citizen to another (uninominal ballot) or to a group of citizens (list ballot) through a choice for a given period called the mandate⁵.

It is characterised by three main functions:

- The choice of leaders benefiting from the transfer of power

¹ United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action to Combat Hate Speech.

² Marcel PRELOT, *Institutions politiques et droits constitutionnel*, 3rd edn, Paris, Dalloz, 1963, p. 612.

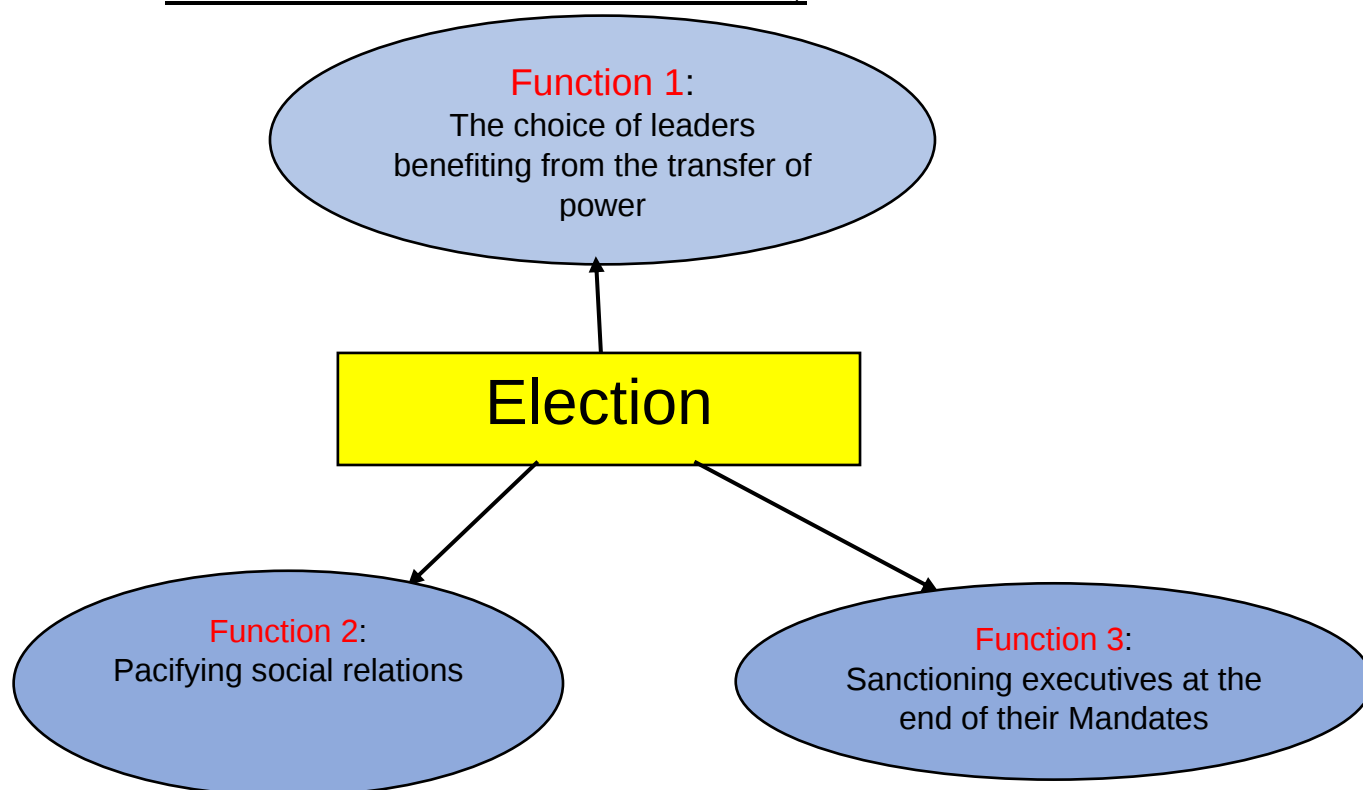
³ Anatole BESOUGLOV, Être député en URSS, son statut juridique, Ed. du Progrès, Moscow, 1978, p. 67.

⁴ Luc SINDJOUN, "Election et politique au Cameroun: concurrence déloyale, coalition de stabilité hégémonique et politique d'affectation", *Association Africaine de Sciences Politiques*, vol. 2, no. 1, 1997, p. 90.

⁵ Hilaire KAMGA, la constitutionnalisation du droit électoral en Afrique, ed CS juin 1996,

- The pacification of social relations
- Sanctioning leaders at the end of their term of office.

The main functions of elections in a democracy



C. Definition of social cohesion

Social cohesion stems from a broad vision of an organised and structured society that takes into account its diversity and all its components with a view to progress, solidarity and unity, limiting socio-ethnic and even anthropological disparities as far as possible and combating any policy of marginalisation. From an institutional perspective, it is seen as *"all the individual and collective processes that contribute to ensuring equal opportunities and conditions for all, equity and access to fundamental Rights and to economic, social and cultural well-being, and that aim to build together a cohesive and co-responsible society for the well-being of all"*⁶.

The issue of social cohesion usually arises in multicultural societies, and its successful implementation depends on the principles and policies developed to systematise it. These include principles and policies such as investing in social rights and organising a cohesive society; establishing shared social responsibilities under the diligence of the State and civil society; strengthening representation and democratic decision-making, as well as developing social dialogue and civic engagement, projecting a secure future for all, and developing and implementing social inclusion policies.

⁶Jacques DONZELOT, *Refonder la cohésion sociale*, Revue Esprit, December 2006.

D. DEFINITION OF POLITICAL ACTORS (political parties, independent candidates, etc.)

A political actor is any entity whose actions have a significant influence on the political environment. In the context of public policy, the notion of political actor " encompasses two dimensions: one concerning the actor's input to the political process and the other relating to the impact or influence of this input on the outcome "⁷. From this perspective, a number of political actors can be identified, including political parties, individuals, civil society, the media and pressure groups. Their role can be seen in the functions they perform in the political landscape.

With the aim of acquiring and exercising power, political parties perform a structuring and management function, a tribunician function in that they generally act as spokespersons for citizens, and a social integration function given the diversity of the social origins of their members, whom they must manage.

As citizens, beneficiaries have the right to vote, individuals are key actors in political life. They do this by standing for election and choosing candidates in competitive elections.

Civil society sometimes gives a voice to minority opinions. In this respect, it is a preferred intermediary for the government in its dialogue with citizens.

The media are generally regarded as the leaven of democracy. Their role in disseminating information, raising awareness and speaking out makes them key actors in political life.

For the purposes of this study, we will confine ourselves to understanding 'political actors' as any actor, organised or otherwise, who contributes to the expression of universal suffrage. This includes therefore political parties and other actors not affiliated to political parties.

E. DEFINING SOCIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY (ethnic diversity, religious diversity, linguistic diversity)

The concept of diversity is generally understood in different contexts. For example, the American concept of diversity is somewhat different from the French one. It is worth noting that the American concept of diversity is deeply rooted in the history and values of the United States as a nation of immigrants from different parts of the world. Diversity is therefore seen as an asset and is constantly celebrated and encouraged. It is then associated with the idea of equal opportunities and respect for the rights of all individuals, regardless of their origin or membership of a particular group.

On the other hand, the French concept of diversity is primarily evolutionary. It is moving from an assimilationist approach to a growing recognition of the significance of

⁷ Emiliano GROSSMAN, "Acteur", in Laurie BOUSSAGUET, Sophie JACQUOT, Pauline RAVINET (dir.), *Dictionnaire des politiques publiques*, Paris, *Presses de Sciences Po*, 2014, pp. 30-38.

cultural diversity. This concept is marked by controversy over the best way to promote inclusion and equality while preserving unity.

However, all these conceptions agree that cultural diversity is a mark of plurality. As a result, sociological diversity is based on the ideal of recognising all the sociological components that make up a society or community, whether they be ethnic, religious or linguistic. It is thus viewed in terms of identity. In a broader sense, this concept highlights *"the issues of gender, age, disability or obesity, as well as political stance, economic and social diversity, sexual orientation, religion, professional diversity and cultural diversity"*⁸.

Cameroon is riven by the issue of diversity, which is reflected in its sociological components. There is ethnic diversity marked by the plurality of its ethnic components, religious diversity fuelled by its secular character, and linguistic diversity as a result of its ethnic diversity. Sociological diversity thus incorporates the plurality of Cameroon's sociological components. These three main diversities (ethnic, linguistic and religious) must be considered in the structuring of political life and in the functioning of the State administration. And political discourse should also conform to them.

III. METHODOLOGY

The design of this Guide is based on a very well-defined methodological framework that considers the objectives and results sought, the value of the Guide and the method used. It is also necessary to identify the target audience for the guide.

A.OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED OUTCOME

The Guide has several objectives. Firstly, it aims at providing a set of resources for political education in respect of diversity and the promotion of peace in Cameroon. It includes a set of educational provisions enabling political parties to educate their members about political life with a view to respecting diversity, social cohesion, respect for human rights and the promotion of peace. In the same vein, it is an instrument that aims at strengthening the capacities of actors and political parties in the conduct of political life, and limiting hate speech as much as possible. It also aims to help clean up the political environment by proposing language codes to limit hate speech and destabilisation. Regarding hate speech, advises political parties on how to carry out their functions, taking into account the specificities related to Cameroonian society, whose multicultural nature is an asset that must be preserved. The aim is to discipline political discourse and steer it in the direction of building national unity in diversity.

B. INTEREST OF THE GUIDE

The interest of the Guide lies in its topicality. The political scene in Cameroon has recently been characterised by hate speech, with political parties providing the ammunition. The debate of ideas, which is characteristic of pluralist societies, has been transformed into a veiled opposition of sociological components, which can be seen in the constant activity on

⁸ Ibid.

the influenced social media. This approach to politics is incompatible with the democratic ideal and even with the constitutional norms that are nonetheless fruitful in terms of the need to build a united and indivisible nation, a solid unity that also includes its diversity. This Guide is therefore an educational tool that teaches the values of social cohesion, the operating principles of democracy and the foundations of the rule of law. In practical terms, it helps to understand what is at stake in politics and its imperfections; it builds the foundations to understand a multicultural society that political parties should be able to accommodate.

C. METHOD USED TO PRODUCE THIS GUIDE

The sociological method was used to draw up this Guide. It was a question of *"combining approaches that come under both the sociology of actors and institutions, but also that come under the "political climate" in the general and noble sense of the term"*⁹. Combined with positivism, this method is based on the premise that *"it is in the social environment that the rules of law should be discovered, or that the sources of inspiration for the legislator should be drawn, or that the effectiveness of the application of formal law should be verified, and hence its appropriateness to the needs of society"*¹⁰. The aim was to examine the political scene, analyse the discourse produced by the actors and identify the factors that contribute to it.

D. WHO IS THIS GUIDE FOR ?

The Guide is primarily, but not exclusively, aimed at political parties, which more or less provide the ammunition for hate speech. Many citizens often engage in hate speech under the cover of political parties or as part of their political activism, thereby undermining social peace.

The Guide also targets other political actors, such as civil society and the media, who sometimes act as spokespersons for minorities. Through their capacity to influence the political environment, they can, in various ways, help to disseminate the contents of the Guide and thus reach as many individual and collective actors as possible.

E. HOW TO USE THIS GUIDE ?

Political parties, in all their diversity, should purchase the Guide and exhort their respective militants to do so in the same way as the statutes and professions of faith that they are accustomed to inserting in the media and making available to the latter. Militants should make it a daily tool, a kind of breviary for life that they will use to absorb the meaning and essence of hate speech, to educate themselves about this phenomenon that kills multicultural societies more than it builds them.

⁹ Laurence BURGORGUE-LARSEN, "Les standards: normes imposées ou consenties? ", in Marie FATINROUGE STEFANINI and Georges SCOFFONI (dir.), *Existe-t-il une exception française en matière de droits fondamentaux*, Proceedings of the colloquium of 17 and 18 November 2011 organised by the Louis FAVOREU Institute, *Les Cahiers de l'Institut Louis FAVOREU*, n° 2, PUAM, p. 22.

¹⁰ Jean-Philippe TRICOIT, "Le positivisme sociologique", *Fiches de Culture juridique*, 2019, pp. 171-174.

For a better use by the addressees, it is recommended to start with a thorough reading of the definition of the key terms in order to understand their meaning. Readers are then invited to familiarise themselves with the theoretical section before focusing on the practical aspects of the Guide. For an overview of the issues addressed, users of the Guide can refer to the boxes in the various chapters. It is also a good idea to take a look at the " Useful Tips " so that they may capitalise on what they have learned as much as possible.

This Guide is divided into two main parts, one focussing on theoretical aspects (part 1) and the other on practical considerations (part 2).

Part 1 : THEORETICAL ASPECTS

Chapter 1: DEMOCRACY, ELECTION AND DIVERSITY

Democracy, election and diversity all have significant links, which can be seen in their respective assumptions, functions and principles. Their implementation generally helps to limit hate speech in a number of contexts.

I. MEANING AND ESSENCE OF DEMOCRACY

Regarding the organisation of modern States, democracy appears to be the regime that has the approval of international law, which makes it a standard, so that States that do not adopt it as a form of government are looked on with suspicion. Democracy was described by Francis Fukuyama as *“the end point of the ideological evolution of mankind”*¹¹. Understood as the government of the people by the people and for the people according to Abraham Lincoln¹², democracy is better seen as *“an institutional technique for the gestation of political decisions, which achieves the common good by entrusting the people themselves with the task of weighing the scales by electing individuals who then come together to carry out their will”*¹³.

In a democratic context, the people are at the centre of all concerns. They are the source of power, since it is they who transfer power to their representatives. Democracy, in this sense, is the government **of the people**. In the same vein, the people, as the main holders of power, govern, even if it is through the representatives they have chosen, and are able to intervene themselves through various means, such as referendums, in situations as important as those likely to have profound repercussions on the future of the nation and its institutions. This is what democracy is all about: government **by the people**. Ultimately, democracy is instituted for the well-being of the people. The people are the ultimate goal, and their well-being and self-fulfilment are the ultimate goals of government. Any government that does not endeavour to ensure this well-being fails in this essential function of democracy, which moreover lay behind its emergence and which, as time has gone by, has reinforced its spread in several States. It is government **for the people**. The people are at the heart of democracy, and this notion of “for” reflects the elements of governance. This is where the issue of good governance emerges as a fundamental factor in democracy.

Democracy rests on a set of pillars and principles.

¹¹ Jacques CHEVALLIER, “La mondialisation de l’Etat de droit”, in *Droit et politique à la croisée des cultures, Mélanges Philippe ARDANT*, Paris, LGDJ, 1999, p. 326.

¹² Abraham LINCOLN in his Gettysburg Address, , November 19, 1863, President Lincoln delivers a speech for the inauguration of the national cemetery in honour of the victims: “The Gettysburg Address

¹³ Joseph SCHUMPETER, *Capitalisme, socialisme et démocratie*, Paris, Payot, 1965, p. 377.

II. THE PILLARS AND PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

A distinction must be made between the pillars and principles of democracy.

A. THE PILLARS OF DEMOCRACY

The stability of democracy rests on three essential pillars: democratic elections, the separation of powers and the rule of law.

- **Democratic elections**

The first pillar of democracy in a State is free and transparent elections. It is common knowledge that democracy is first and foremost election. This procedure enables the people, as the foundation and purpose of power, to give the go-ahead to the representatives who must take decisions in the general interest. The people, as the main holders of power, are therefore called upon to transfer this power within the framework of this pillar.

- **Separation of powers**

As an indicator of the democratic model of a State, this principle prohibits the legislative, executive and judicial powers from being concentrated in the hands of a single authority. As theorised by Montesquieu and John Locke, the separation of powers is a political principle according to which the functions of public institutions are divided between the **legislative branch**, which makes laws, the **executive branch**, which implements and enforces them, and the **judicial branch**, which interprets and enforces them. Each power is seen as a counterweight to the other. Montesquieu therefore argues that in democratic government, power must by force of circumstance stop power.

- **The rule of law**

This pillar of democracy is based on a dual conception; the formal conception implies the necessary respect for the hierarchy of legal norms, with the Constitution completing the edifice of this hierarchy, and the material conception, which implies the need to respect human rights and preserve legal certainty. On the specific question of human rights, the promotion of democracy rightly depends on respect for those rights. In fact, it is when these rights, such as the right to vote, are put into practice that the practical achievement of democracy can be most appreciated. This requirement is reflected in the very principles of democracy. Finally, the equality of the subjects of rights completes the characteristics of what is known as the "rule of law", because there can be no rule of law if the norm introduces inequalities of rights between citizens.

B. THE PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRACY

Democracy is based on a set of universally accepted principles designed to protect, enhance and develop citizens. Over time, with the advent of the rule of law, other principles that are just as essential to the stability of the democratic system have been added to the

fundamental principles of equality and freedom, which underpin many of the requirements of democratic systems.

In accordance with this logic, there are several principles, such as:

- The principle of freedom
- The principle of equality
- The principle of political pluralism
- The principle of responsibility
- Respect for fundamental rights
- Political tolerance
- The principle of transparency
- Political involvement
- The regular organisation of elections.

These principles contribute significantly to stability, social cohesion and peace in multicultural States. Their application requires a certain level of democratic culture. The same applies to the principles of democratic elections.

III. THE FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES OF DEMOCRATIC ELECTIONS

Although they cannot be the only one, elections are the fundamental criterion of democracy. They constitute the procedure that enables citizens to choose between the candidates who are standing for election. Accordingly, Marcel PRELOT defines an election as a "*contest of qualified wills with a view to exercising an appointment*"¹⁴. In concrete terms, an election is a transfer of power from one citizen to another (uninominal ballot) or to a group of citizens (list ballot) through a choice for a given period called the term of office¹⁵. Thus, the frequency of elections in political life theoretically gives the sovereign nation the possibility to participate in the choice of rulers and freely exercising its right to vote, and more or less testifies to the vitality of democracy, provided that these elections are free and transparent¹⁶. The choice is made through the act of voting by means of a ballot paper inserted in the ballot box, which must be sealed and transparent in order to satisfy the conditions for a sincere and transparent vote. It is a given that democracy is first expressed through elections, since elections put forward the people, who constitute the basis of power and the source of the legitimacy of representatives. For elections to have the flavour and taste of democracy, they must be organised in accordance with a set of principles. These principles can be broken down into 04 main characteristics accepted today in electoral science and endorsed by the United Nations:

- Transparent elections
- Free elections

¹⁴ Marcel PRELOT, *op.cit.*

¹⁵ Hilaire KAMGA, la constitutionnalisation du droit électoral en Afrique, ed CS juin 1996,

¹⁶ Giscard NJINGA TCHOUGNIA, "Le mandat des élus au Cameroun : contribution à l'étude du principe représentatif en droit public", Thesis for the PhD in public law, University of Douala, 2012, p. 434.

- Fair elections
- Regular elections.



These 04 elements encompass all the others that are derived from or related to them.

The result is the following principles:

- The principle of free elections
- The principle of equality in the exercise of the right to vote
- The principle of electoral regularity
- The principle of regular elections
- The principle of transparency
- The principle of sincerity

All these principles share a certain interconnectedness and are practically cumulative in their application. Failure to comply with a single principle undermines the reliability of the democratic nature of elections. They can be subsumed under the principle of sincerity, which, in its broad conception, absorbs all the others. Sincerity represents the ideal of a free, transparent and fair election, organised in accordance with the electoral calendar. It also implies equality in the exercise of the right to vote, in accordance with the well-known principle of "*one man, one vote*". In this sense, the election can truly play its role.

IV. THE MAIN FUNCTIONS OF ELECTIONS

In a democracy, elections have three main functions, which are embodied in the act of voting. Firstly, its original function is to pacify social relations; secondly, it is a means of legitimisation; and thirdly, it is a process of sanctioning leaders.

- The function of pacifying social relations

From the outset, elections have been and remain no more than an instrument for pacifying social relations. In fact, the gathering of Greek citizens in what Hilaire Kanga describes as the "crossroads of possibilities" was based on the need to organise the City, in which each Territory had a portion of sovereignty. The need for populations to reach agreement at the risk of creating anarchy gave rise to elections as a means of pacifying social relations, in the sense that they led to the choice of those who would govern, in the name of the Population or the People, the Territories that had become, by the force of social organisation, a single area of sovereignty.

- The function of legitimising rulers

The choice made by the citizens at the time of the elections is coupled with a function of legitimising the representatives¹⁷. As the seat of political command, the people give their assent to representatives through elections. In this respect, *"elections with a plurality of public companies or candidates" are "the new privileged modes of legitimising power"*¹⁸. Through these elections, the people are brought "to the centre of the political sphere" and are represented as the *"supreme reference point, the source of legitimacy and the legality of power"*¹⁹.

This legitimisation is all the more important because when elected representatives serve long terms and remain in power for a long time, the impression is given that they gradually lose legitimacy.

- The sanctioning function of executives

Just as elections confer legitimacy, they also serve to delegitimise representatives. Indeed, the people are not always satisfied with the way their representatives carry out their mandate, especially when their management of public affairs is marred by political and financial scandals that call their management into question²⁰. In the context of representative democracy, where the prohibition of imperative mandates is a criterion, as is the case in Cameroon, the people's sanction comes at election time with a negative vote against the outgoing representative who has run for office at the end of his or her term. In this case, the election has a sanctioning function, a function of regulating the political sphere, a procedure for determining the management of representatives who aspire to keep their respective mandates.

¹⁷ Guy ROSSANTANGA-RIGNAULT, "Elections et légitimité", Cours spécial, Académie de droit constitutionnel, Première session, Yaoundé, 28 July - 06 August, 2008.

¹⁸ André TCHOUPPIE, "L'instrumentalisation de la question de la transparence électorale dans la conjoncture de démocratisation au Cameroun", *Juridis Périodique*, n°89, January-February-March, 2012, p. 51.

¹⁹ Pierre François GONIDEC, "A quoi servent les Constitutions africaines? Réflexion sur le constitutionnalisme africain", *RJPIC*, no. 4, October-December, 1988, p. 856.

²⁰ Hilaire AKEREKORO, "L'exercice de la souveraineté nationale reconnue au peuple dans le constitutionnalisme africain", *RDP*, n° 4, 1997, p. 32.

V. DIVERSITY IN DEMOCRATIC PROCESSES

Diversity necessarily implies the need to take account of all social and sociological components in democratic processes. This diversity can be analysed in terms of inclusive participation in democratic processes, involving the inclusion of sociological components in electoral processes and the inclusion of social components such as persons with disabilities, women and young people in the management of public affairs. This recognition of diversity is generally a feature of social democracies. In multicultural settings, citizens tend to elect political representatives, either individuals or political parties, to run the state affairs on behalf of the citizenry.

Political representation has made significant progress in recent years, with the inclusion and representation of a greater diversity of political parties, incorporating all social, cultural components, candidates and identities than at any previous stage in history. The election of women, young people and persons with disabilities to political offices has improved considerably, although this progress remains uneven and further efforts to improve choices on the ballot paper are still needed²¹.

VI. ETHNIC ISSUES, LINGUISTIC SPECIFICITY AND HATE SPEECH IN THE CONTEXT OF POLITICAL STRUGGLES

Multicultural contexts are marked by the ethnic-political binomial which, without legal and political regulation, leads to oppositions not of ideas but of ethnic or tribal affiliations. This situation is a source of hate speech in the context of political struggles. This is a harmful situation for social peace, which does not fit in with the legal norms and political requirements for regulating electoral competition or political struggles.

While asserting one's tribal identity is not in itself a problem in multicultural environments, using one's ethnic identity in the context of an electoral struggle can fuel hate speech in the political environment and is likely to disturb social peace. Thus, in the context of a political struggle, actors are called upon to set aside ethnic differences and their linguistic specificities and use the power of ideas in the context of electoral competitions.

Victimisation is fuelled by the marginalisation of some and others, according to ethnic considerations and linguistic specificities in the organisation of society. A certain tribalism is claimed, not in the sense that it is valued, but in the sense that it is exploited for the benefit of a certain tribalism. For example, the episode of the "Anglo-Bamis" and the violence of an ethnic nature in the 1990s were the manifestation of a real social fracture, which led to instability in the country. More recently, hate campaigns in the South region, with the hunting down of the Bamoun community, suggest that some people do not have the same conception of citizenship and even of national unity, with some believing that anyone from another region or ethnic group is a stranger. This idea, which has taken root in several geographical areas of Cameroon, is a breeding ground for victimisation, hate speech and a potential source of social upheaval in Cameroon.

²¹ Electoral Institute for Sustainable Democracy in Africa, *Inclusive Participation*, 2004.

Such a situation leads to frustrations which are ultimately expressed through hate speech in the context of the electoral battle. Professor Kamto's metaphor during the dispute over the 2018 presidential election before the Constitutional Council is illustrative. Rhetorically, he made the following statement: *"I am criticised for being from such and such a geographical area. Is there a competition you have to take to be a Bulu?"*. Whatever the perspective from which some and others may have interpreted this statement, it still reflects a frustration stemming from a kind of "ethnisation" of the electoral game, a communitarianisation of the electoral landscape, marked by a clumsy and de facto division of electoral zones according to ethnic areas, and an ethnisation of the post of President of the Republic

This victimisation is further reinforced by religious divisions, which, although understandable in view of the cultural nature of religion, are nevertheless bogged down in oppositions that unfortunately undermine social peace. The Christian-Muslim divide has often been the focus of religious conflicts leading to threats to peace in Cameroon.

Chapter 2 : GENERAL KNOWLEDGE ABOUT HATE SPEECH

General knowledge on hate speech requires an awareness of its existence, an understanding of the motives behind it, as well as the potentially harmful consequences it can have on individuals or communities. It is worth noting that being aware of hate speech does not necessarily mean supporting or promoting it. Rather, it is a prerequisite for combating it and promoting tolerance, respect and equality. An understanding of hate speech makes it possible to criticise it in an informed way, to make others aware of its dangers and to enhance values of inclusion and diversity. Understanding hate speech means mastering its characteristics, its causes and a few concrete instances.

I. CHARACTERISTICS OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech has a number of distinctive features. Hate speech can be identified by a number of common features. These include:

- 1. Hostility and denigration:** Hate speech is often characterised by intense hostility towards a specific individual, group or community. It aims at denigrating and discrediting the targeted person or group.
- 2. Bias and stereotypes:** Hate speech is often based on negative biases and stereotypes about a particular group. They often generalise negative characteristics to the whole group, without considering individual diversity.
- 3. Incitement to violence or discrimination:** Hate speech may contain direct or indirect calls for violence, discrimination or other forms of oppression against the targeted group. It often seeks to legitimise or encourage malicious acts.
- 4. Intolerance and exclusion:** Hate speech is closed to diversity and inclusion. They tend to marginalise and exclude individuals or groups who do not fit their norms or beliefs.
- 5. Spreading fear and hatred:** Hate speech often aims at instilling fear and hatred towards the targeted group. They use propaganda tactics to reinforce biases and negative feelings.
- 6. Spreading disinformation:** Hate speech can use false, misleading or distorted information to underpin its arguments. It aims to manipulate opinions by spreading false information.

It is therefore important to recognize and condemn hate speech, as it can have damaging consequences for targeted individuals and communities. Promoting respect, tolerance and inclusion is vital to combat hate speech and foster a fairer, more egalitarian society, and to anticipate its causes.

II. CAUSES OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech is driven by a number of factors and can have complex causes. In general, these are:

- 1. Ignorance and biases:** Hate speech may stem from profound ignorance or biases towards certain people or groups. Stereotypes and ignorance of diversity can fuel negative attitudes and hate speech.
- 2. Fear and insecurity:** Fear of the unknown or of what is perceived as different can lead to hate speech. Individuals might feel threatened by groups or ideas that challenge their beliefs or social status, which can lead to hate speech.
- 3. Intolerance and extremism:** Some individuals develop extremist ideologies or are deeply intolerant of certain people or groups because of their religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, etc. These extreme beliefs can lead to hate speech and violent acts.
- 4. Influence of the media and the Internet:** Media and the Internet contribute to the spread of hate speech. Online platforms provide a forum where people can express their unfiltered opinions, which can foster the spread of hate speech.
- 5. Socio-political conflicts:** Social and political unrest can contribute to the spread of hate speech. Inequality, discrimination and conflict between groups can fuel hate speech by exacerbating divisions and creating scapegoats.
- 6. Manipulation and incitement:** Some individuals or groups may use hate speech as a means of manipulating public opinion or inciting violence. Extremist leaders or propagandists may exploit people's emotions and frustrations to incite them to endorse hate speech.
- 7. Social injustice:** Social injustice, characterized by discontent with material deprivation and disenfranchisement, is one of the sources of hate speech. Ivan Sainsaulieu explains that a strong sense of social injustice "carries the seeds of social instability and even revolt".
- 8. Precariousness:** Poverty is at the root of violent behaviour. A fall in national income can potentially increase the risk of hate speech if it affects the opportunity cost of agents and/or the capacity of the State.
- 9. Access to resources:** Access to vital resources, like economic dominance, is also a trigger for hate speech. Several localities in Cameroon, for example, are subject to sporadic conflicts between herders and farmers seeking to monopolise common resources.
- 10. Lack of a culture of tolerance:** Hate speech arises in an environment where tolerance, communication and dialogue are absent. If this does not exist, then hostile discourse emerges and tears society apart, pushing it into a permanent state of war and hostility.
- 11. Media and information technologies:** The media and social media sites, with their various platforms, have a great influence in the spread of hate speech. A study issued in 2017 on the relationship between the Internet and political polarisation by the scholar "Jintsko

Boxall" showed that the emergence of social media and the Internet is the main factor in growing political polarisation in American society.

12. Political causes: These are poor governance, business dealings, demagoguery, nepotism, political vagrancy, non-compliance with the law by those in power, the existence of basic legal texts with legal loopholes that make regulation difficult, and the means used by political parties to take power according to the principle of "no holds barred".

It is worth noting that these causes are not exhaustive. It should also be noted that hate speech can be influenced by a range of individual, social, economic, anthropological and political factors. Combating hate speech requires a comprehensive approach that includes education, the promotion of tolerance and inclusion, as well as legislative measures.

III. SOME INSTANCES

It is necessary to know about examples of hate speech for several important reasons. Firstly, the study of concrete examples of hate speech makes us aware of the extent and diversity of the forms that this scourge can take. This gives us a better understanding of how hate can be expressed in different contexts, whether online, in the media or in everyday life.

Secondly, once we know what forms hate can take, we can better protect ourselves against it. Identification of hate speech enables us to recognise it and counter it effectively. This can help prevent the spread of hate and promote a more inclusive society.

Similarly, the study of hate speech can be used to educate individuals about the harmful consequences of hate. Examples of hate speech can be exposed and their implications discussed, raising awareness of the prejudice, discrimination and violence. This fosters collective awareness and encourages empathy and tolerance.

Furthermore, knowledge of hate speech is essential to develop laws and public policies to combat hate and protect their victims. Analysing examples of hate speech enables policy-makers to provide appropriate measures and regulatory mechanisms to prevent and punish acts of hatred.

Finally, in the context of public debate, it is important to be able to identify and challenge hate speech. Concrete examples can help us to argue against hate speech and promote ideas based on equality, diversity and mutual respect.

However, it is worth noting that exposure to hate speech can be emotionally distressing. It is therefore advisable to exercise caution and take care of one's mental health when studying these instances. Each political actor is able to give examples based on his or her own experience and the characteristics described above.

At this level and by way of illustration, the following hate speech is often pointed out and must be absolutely prohibited when used in its negative connotations.

"Anglofou", "Francofou", "moutons du Nord", "pygmées de Yoko", "Babana", "Dschang Kouna", "sorcier Mbouda", "Tontinards", "Sardinards", "Bamileke", "Beti", ... Those are the negative connotations attached to them by the speaker and not contained words themselves.

In addition to these expressions, there are hate-filled assertions about communities or other groups in the Republic.

Some shots

"The Betis are those who brought the country down...". Yet, while it is a fact that the current President and certain officials are predominantly from the geographical area referred to as "Beti" (Fan...), such an assumption is totally false given that the gravediggers of the Republic can be counted in all of Cameroon's ethnic communities. By the same token, thousands of citizens who identify themselves as "Beti" are just as destitute and have nothing to do with the ruling order.

"The Bamileke want to ruin the country." Such an assertion, which stigmatises a community, is just as false and dangerous. In fact, those who are fighting against the ruling order are from all communities.



Chapter 3: PERPETRATORS OR AUTHORS OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech can be generated by a variety of perpetrators. Identifying them can enable political actors to take precautions to guard against their harmful effects. They can be classified as direct or indirect perpetrators, depending on their involvement.

I- DIRECT PERPETRATORS OF HATE SPEECH

Direct perpetrators of hate speech are people who directly or actively express or disseminate hateful ideas, opinions or messages. This category includes the following persons:

1. **Politicians and political leaders:** Unfortunately, some politicians and political leaders have used hate speech to motivate their supporters or promote discriminatory policies.
2. **Extremist groups:** Whether political, religious or ideological, these groups may spread hate speech in order to promote their ideology and recruit new followers.
3. **Anonymous individuals:** much hate speech is posted online by people who deliberately choose to mask their identity and remain anonymous.
4. **Online trolls:** Online trolls are individuals who intentionally seek to stir up negative reactions and sow discord by posting hateful and offensive comments on the Internet. They may target specific individuals or communities with the aim of harassing them and creating conflict.
5. **Disinformation media:** certain media are often associated with specific political agendas. In such cases, they are quick to broadcast programmes with particularly vexatious and discriminatory content. The spread of false information helps to fuel fear, division and hatred.
6. **Public figures:** Some public figures, whether politicians, media professionals, or influential in other fields, may express or promote hate speech. Their public status can give them a larger audience and greater influence, which can increase the impact of their hate speech on society.

II- INDIRECT PERPETRATORS OF HATE SPEECH

An indirect perpetrator of hate speech is a person who, intentionally or unintentionally, contributes to the propagation of hate speech without necessarily being the direct perpetrator of the hate speech itself. It is worth noting that indirect perpetrators of hate speech may have different motivations, ranging from genuine adherence to hateful ideologies to simple ignorance of the consequences of their actions. However, their contribution to the spread of such speech can have a detrimental impact on society by encouraging division, discrimination and violence. The following indirect actors can be mentioned:

1. **The general public:** They can contribute to the spread of hate speech through sharing, silent complicity, passive support, lack of awareness or education, weak condemnation and the excuses given to those who engage in such speech.
2. **Online platforms:** Online platforms can be considered indirect perpetrators of hate speech for a number of reasons, including the absence or inadequacy of moderation policies. If hate speech is not effectively detected and eliminated, it can spread and influence users, thereby contributing to its spread. It should be noted that legislation is increasingly imposing the necessary measures on these platforms to curb this scourge and ultimately lead to a safer and more inclusive online media space.
3. **Traditional media:** When traditional media host people making hateful comments on their channels, they give them high visibility and legitimise their reprehensible behaviour.
4. **Advertising structures:** It is possible that they may unwittingly fund or indirectly support hate speech by advertising on sites or platforms that disseminate this type of content. This may happen if advertising targeting or site selection systems are not clear enough to avoid such content.
5. **Funding structures:** They may play an indirect role in the spread of hate speech by providing financial resources to individuals, groups or organisations that promote it. As a result, they can be held partly responsible for the way in which these funds are used. This is why these structures must perform due diligence in assessing potential beneficiaries, to ensure that their resources are not used to support hateful or illegal activities.

Chapter 4 : VICTIMS OF HATE SPEECH

Identifying the victims of hate speech is a key element in the process of eradicating this scourge. Once we know who the victims are, we can tailor policies to combat the phenomenon.

The victims of hate speech can be many and varied. Hate speech can target different groups of people because of their race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender, disability or other characteristics. The following victims can therefore be considered:

I. CITIZENS

Citizens can be subjected to personal attacks and suffer the harmful consequences of hate speech. Hate speech since it attacks, defames or denigrates a specific person because of their race, gender, religion, party, sexual orientation, ethnicity, economic status, physical appearance or other personal characteristics.

II. GROUPS

These include:

- 1. Racial and ethnic minorities:** Hate speech can target people from racial or ethnic minorities, spreading stereotypes, biases and hatred towards these groups. Some minority ethnic groups in Cameroon, such as the Mbororos and Pygmies, are often targeted. Similarly, some people are stigmatised because of the colour of their skin. This is the case of Albinos.
- 2. Religious groups:** Hate speech may be directed against different religions, such as Islam, animists, Judaism, Christianity, Hinduism, Sikhism and so on. Members of these groups may be subjected to defamation, threats or verbal and physical violence.
- 3. Women:** Sexist hate speech can target women, perpetuating negative stereotypes, insults and verbal and psychological abuse.
- 4. Persons with disabilities:** Hate speech can also target persons with disabilities, by mocking their disabilities, denigrating them or socially excluding them.
- 5. Other marginalised groups:** Hate speech can also affect other marginalised groups such as foreigners, migrants, refugees, homeless people, poor people, etc.
- 6. Political groups:** When some political groups are seen as outside the norm or representing different ideas or values to others, they can be subject to biases, discrimination and hate speech. Such speech may take place within or outside institutions.

III. THE STATE AND ITS INSTITUTIONS

Hate speech may threaten the State and its institutions. When such speech is propagated, it can sow division and mistrust towards institutions. Similarly, leaders are often exposed because of their position of power and visibility.

It is worth noting that hate speech can have devastating consequences for individuals and communities, ranging from physical violence to systemic discrimination. Combating hate speech and promoting tolerance, mutual respect and inclusion are essential to building a fairer and more egalitarian society.

Chapter 5 : CONSEQUENCES OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech can have profound and harmful effects on individuals, communities and society as a whole.

I. IMPACT ON INDIVIDUALS

Hate speech can have profoundly harmful effects on individuals who are the victims of hate speech, as well as on society as a whole. These effects can be summarised as follows:

1. Psychological impact: Hate speech may significantly impact on the mental and emotional health of individuals by creating an atmosphere of fear, anxiety and stress, which can lead to issues such as depression, anxiety, psychological trauma and even suicidal ideation. Individuals who are regularly exposed to hate speech can develop low self-esteem, a loss of self-confidence and a deterioration in their general well-being.

2. Discrimination and harassment: Hate speech fuels discrimination and harassment against particular groups in society. Individuals who are targeted because of their race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender or other characteristics may suffer unfair treatment, biases and violence. This can have devastating consequences for their daily lives, security and personal development.

3. Social isolation: Hate speech can lead to the social isolation of victims. They may feel excluded, stigmatised and marginalised, which can lead them to isolate themselves from social interaction and withdraw from community life. This can have a negative impact on their emotional well-being and sense of belonging to society.

4. Threat to physical security: Hate speech can also endanger the physical security of individuals. When hate speech is spread, it can incite violence and aggression against specific groups. Individuals who are targeted may fear for their personal security, which can limit their freedom of movement and participation in public life.

Very recently, in November 2023, traditional rulers organised a funeral for an opposition leader who was still alive.

On 20 December in Tokombere in the Far North of the country, at least 5 deaths were reported following violence linked to political strife.

5. Effect on self-esteem: Hate speech can affect the self-esteem of its victims. They may internalise hate messages and develop a negative self-image. This can lead to reduced self-esteem, feelings of inferiority and a loss of self-confidence. Hate speech can lead to the social isolation of victims.

6. Impact on mental health: Hate speech significantly impacts on the mental health of the individuals who are the victims, but also on society as a whole. It causes stress, anxiety and emotional distress, which can have a negative impact on people's psychological well-being.

It is therefore imperative to combat hate speech and promote speech that is respectful, inclusive and positive. This requires efforts to promote tolerance, empathy and mutual respect. Individuals also need support through legal protections against discrimination and harassment, as well as psychological and social support services to deal with the consequences of hate speech.

II. IMPACT ON THE STATE

Hate speech can have adverse effects on the functioning of the State. These include:

1. Social disruption: Hate speech can contribute to social disruption by creating tensions and divisions among people. This may lead to conflict, violent demonstrations and increased polarisation. When society is divided, it becomes more difficult to maintain the social cohesion and consensus needed to rule effectively.

2. Threat to political stability: Hate speech can create fissures in the social and political fabric of a country, which can threaten political stability. When divisions are deep and tensions are high, it can be difficult for governments to maintain order and trust in institutions.

3. The potential for violence and conflict: Hate speech can incite violence and aggravate existing tensions. It may fuel hatred and anger, which can lead to violence, riots and even larger-scale conflict. These situations may have serious consequences for the security and stability of the State.

4. Erosion of democratic institutions: Hate speech can undermine public confidence in democratic institutions. When politicians or leaders use hate speech, it can call into question the legitimacy of these institutions and erode public confidence in the political system. It can also undermine the rule of law and equality before the law.

5. Impact on the economy: Hate speech can have negative economic repercussions. Foreign investors may be deterred from investing in a country with high social tensions. Furthermore, tensions and conflicts fuelled by hate speech may disrupt economic activity, leading to lower consumer confidence, market disruption and reduced investment. Tribal hate speech also creates social insecurity for potential local investors who wish to invest in regions where hostility towards their ethnic group is fostered through hate speech.

Governments therefore need to tackle hate speech proactively by putting in place measures to prevent, raise awareness of and combat discrimination. This can include adopting laws and policies to protect human rights, promote social inclusion, encourage inter-community dialogue and punish those who propagate hate speech.

III. IMPACT ON SOCIETY

Hate speech can have many adverse effects on society as a whole. It can lead to:

- 1. A weakening of the social bond:** Hate speech creates divisions within society by dividing different groups. It reinforces existing biases, stereotypes and discrimination, which can lead to inter-group tensions and fragmentation of society. These divisions might hinder social cohesion and the building of a harmonious society.
- 2. A rise in intolerance:** Hate speech fosters intolerance of differences, whether based on race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, gender or other characteristics. They promote hatred and hostility towards marginalised groups, leading to discrimination, harassment and violence.
- 3. Fear and insecurity:** Hate speech creates an atmosphere of fear and insecurity within society. Individuals targeted by hate speech may feel that their physical and emotional security is threatened. This can lead to a deterioration in the standard of living and a curtailment of individual freedoms.
- 4. A decline in social trust:** Hate speech undermines social trust by fostering mistrust and suspicion between people. It challenges the fundamental values of respect, tolerance and solidarity, potentially undermining interpersonal relations and mutual trust.
- 5. A threat to democracy:** Hate speech can also pose a threat to democracy by weakening democratic institutions and principles. It can spur the emergence of extremist movements, the rise of xenophobia and authoritarianism, and call into question the very foundations of pluralist democracy.

Therefore, it is crucial to tackle hate speech and promote a society based on respect, inclusion and diversity. This requires awareness-raising, education, appropriate legislation and preventive measures to combat hatred and promote more constructive and respectful discourse within society.

IV. IMPACT ON POLITICAL ACTORS

Hate speech may also have an impact on political actors, both those who spread it and those who are targeted by it. At this level, there are a number of effects, the most conspicuous being:

- 1. Political polarisation:** Hate speech can deepen political polarisation by fostering divisions between different political groups. Politicians who use hate speech may attempt to mobilise their base by stigmatising particular groups or exploiting existing fears and biases. This can lead to confrontational rhetoric and less cooperation and constructive dialogue between different parties.

2. Deterioration of public debate: Hate speech may impair public debate by stimulating personal attacks, insults and aggressive rhetoric. This can undermine the quality of political debates and prevent the search for common solutions and compromises.

3. Impact on public perception: The public perception of politicians who propagate hate speech can be negatively affected. The use of hate speech may be seen as incompatible with democratic values, political ethics and the pursuit of the common good. This can lead to a loss of trust and support from the electorate.

4. Impact on the political agenda: Hate speech can also influence the political agenda with its emphasis on divisive issues, diverting attention from the real issues and necessary solutions. Politicians who use hate speech may seek to mobilise their grassroots base by exploiting fears and biases. However, this can divert attention from the real challenges and needs of the population.

It is important to promote a political discourse that is respectful, constructive and based on democratic values. Political actors have a critical role to play in promoting inclusion, equality and respect for human rights, and in rejecting hate speech that fosters division and discrimination.

V. IMPACT ON MILITANTS AND POLITICAL PARTIES

Hate speech may have disruptive effects on militants and the properties of political organisations. These include:

1. Threat to the militants' security: Hate speech can threaten the physical security of political militants. When hate speech is spread against a specific political group, its supporters may face an increased risk of violence, intimidation or aggression from those who sustain such speech. This can curtail militants' freedom of expression and political participation, and deter some from actively engaging in the political process. This is the case with the activities conducted by members of the group known as the “Brigade Anti-Sardinards” (BAS) acting in Europe.

2. Destruction of property and infrastructure: Hate speech can lead to acts of vandalism, destruction or sabotage of property and infrastructure belonging to political organisations. Party premises, campaign offices, election posters and other items associated with a political party may be targeted and damaged. These acts can undermine the ability of political parties to carry out their activities effectively and to interact with voters.

3. Defamation and denigration: Hate speech can be used to defame and denigrate political militants and members of political parties. Rumours, slander and personal attacks can be spread to discredit individuals and political parties. This can undermine the reputation and credibility of militants, reducing the chances of political parties gaining the trust and support of voters.

4. Fear and intimidation: Hate speech can create an atmosphere of fear and intimidation for political militants. When hate speech is widespread, some militants may fear for their security and well-being. This can potentially reduce political participation, withdraw from public engagement and limit militants' freedom of expression.

5. Impact on the electoral campaign: Hate speech can upset an electoral campaign by diverting attention from political challenges and promoting polarised and hostile debates. When hate speech is prevalent, it becomes more difficult for political parties to deliver their messages, mobilise voters and promote constructive and informed political debate.

NOTE. Hate speech must be condemned and a respectful, inclusive and peaceful political environment must be promoted. Adequate security and legal measures must be provided for political militants in order to combat hate speech and acts of violence.

Political parties can also play a role in promoting the values of mutual respect and tolerance and initiating an open and constructive dialogue with voters.

VI. IMPACT ON DEMOCRACY

Hate speech can have dangerous effects on democracy. Without claiming to be exhaustive, we can mention:

1. Threat to freedom of expression: Hate speech can lead to restrictions on freedom of expression. In some cases, governments may be tempted to introduce laws to suppress hate speech. However, these measures can also be used to restrict legitimate criticism and political dissent. Alternatively, individuals may censor themselves for fear of negative impact, thus restricting diversity of opinion and democratic debate.

2. Weakening confidence in democratic institutions: Hate speech can erode public confidence in democratic institutions. When politicians use hate speech, it can challenge the legitimacy of these institutions and erode public confidence in the political system. This can lead to civic disengagement and reduced political participation, thereby weakening democracy.

3. Eliminating marginal voices: Hate speech can reduce the political participation of marginalised groups. When these groups are targeted by hate speech, they may be deterred from engaging in the political sphere and voicing their rights and concerns. This can lead to unfair representation and the exclusion of voices and perspectives that are important to democracy.

4. Rise of extremism: Hate speech can contribute to the rise of political extremism. When politicians or leaders use hate speech, it can lead to extremist movements forming and taking root. These movements can challenge democratic values, spread violence and threaten the stability of society.

5. Unconstitutional changes of government: In contexts characterised by weak, corrupt or non-existent democratic institutions, hate speech can be exploited by opportunistic political actors as a tool to manipulate the people and justify unconstitutional changes of government, such as coups d'état or authoritarian movements. In such cases, hate speech can contribute to polarisation and the disintegration of democratic principles.

It is critical for the preservation of democracy to combat hate speech and promote respectful, inclusive and constructive discourse. This requires sustained efforts to strengthen tolerance, mutual understanding and civic education. Democratic institutions must also be vigilant in preventing and punishing hate speech that threatens the basis of democracy.

Ultimately, it is essential to be aware of the negative effects of hate speech and to work collectively to combat it. This means promoting tolerance, mutual respect, education, appropriate legislation and accountability for those who spread hatred.



Chapter 6 : LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR PEACE AND FIGHT AGAINST HATE SPEECH

The promotion of peace and the fight against hate speech are enshrined in international, regional and national legal instruments.

I. INTERNATIONAL INSTRUMENTS

International agreements	Year of adoption
Charter of the United Nations	1945
United Nations Covenant on Civil and Political Rights	1966
International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination	2013
Budapest Convention on Cybercrime	2001
Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime, concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems	2003
The United Nations Strategy and Action Plan on Hate Speech	2019
The Rabat Plan of Action	2012

At international level, the promotion of peace and the fight against hate speech are fundamental concerns that are reflected in several legal instruments drawn up by the United Nations. In fact, there is no convention or treaty specifically dedicated to peace or to combating hate speech. Nevertheless, the preservation of peace and the fight against hate speech can draw their international legal sources from texts of general scope or from texts dealing with specific issues with which they share a more or less direct link. These include the following texts:

- **Charter of the United Nations:** Adopted on 26 June 1945, the preamble to this Charter requires States to practise tolerance, to live in peace with one another in a spirit of good neighbourliness, and to join forces to maintain international peace and security. Its aims and principles include maintaining and preserving peace as one of the challenges of international relations (articles 1 and 2).
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights** of 1966. Article 20 prohibits all advocacy of national hatred, discrimination and marginalisation. Under paragraph 2 of this provision, *"any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law"*.
- **International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination.** It was adopted on 26 September 2013 and provides the main tool used to combat hate speech (Article 4). While the term "hate speech" is not

expressly used in the Convention, it should be noted that the United Nations Human Rights Committee refers to it to identify phenomena and facts that may relate to hate speech.

- **Budapest Convention on Cybercrime** adopted in 2001 and its **Additional Protocol to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime** concerning the criminalisation of acts of a racist and xenophobic nature committed through computer systems adopted in 2003.
- **The United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech** recognise that hate speech has the potential to incite violence and weaken social unity. They recognise that hate speech has been at the root of criminal atrocities, including genocide, over the past 75 years²².

This approach to coordinating efforts across the UN system to detect, prevent and combat hate speech is based on international human rights standards, including the right to freedom of opinion and expression, the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and other fundamental rights. The strategy aims to give the United Nations the space and resources to combat hate speech, which poses a threat to the principles, values and programmes of the United Nations. It provides guidance to the UN system on how to deal with hate speech and includes ways to support the work of UN Resident Coordinators in combating hate speech at the grassroots level.

The Strategy and Action Plan have two overarching objectives: first, to strengthen UN efforts to address the root causes and drivers of hate speech in a coordinated manner, with a focus on education as a preventive tool to raise awareness and build unity; and second, to focus on the UN response to the impact of hate speech on societies, with a focus on engaging relevant actors, strengthening advocacy and developing counter-narrative guidance²³.

- **The Rabat Plan of Action** on the prohibition of advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence brings together the conclusions and recommendations of several OHCHR expert workshops (held in Geneva, Vienna, Nairobi, Bangkok and Santiago de Chile)²⁴. The discussions, rooted in international human rights law, had three objectives:
 - a) To better understand legislative patterns, judicial practices and policies relating to the notion of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, while ensuring full respect for freedom of expression as defined in articles 19 and 20 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights;
 - b) Undertake a comprehensive assessment of the state of implementation of the prohibition of incitement in accordance with international human rights law;
 - c) Identify possible actions at all levels.

The Rabat Plan of Action was adopted by experts at the closing meeting held in Rabat on 4 and 5 October 2012.

²² See <https://www.un.org/en/hate-speech/un-strategy-and-plan-of-action-on-hate-speech>

²³ Ibidem

²⁴ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/freedom-of-expression>

In addition to these texts, the UN Human Rights Committee has made several remarks relating to the fight against hate speech. Although these instruments are not legally binding, they are important tools which necessarily bring to mind the requirements of standard-setting instruments relating to the fight against hate speech.

By way of illustration, the following tools can be mentioned:

- Human Rights Committee.

- **General Comment No. 10, adopted on 29 June 1983, Article 19 - Freedom of expression, § 4:** "Paragraph 3 expressly provides that the exercise of freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities, and it is for this reason that certain restrictions on this right are permitted, having regard to the interests of others or of the community as a whole Human Rights Committee."²⁵.
- **General Comment No. 11, adopted on 29 July 1983, Article 20 - Prohibition of propaganda for war and of incitement to national, racial or religious hatred, § 2:** (on the relationship between Articles 19 and 20). "Article 20 of the Covenant provides that any propaganda for war and any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence shall be prohibited by law. In the Committee's view, these prohibitions are fully compatible with the right to freedom of expression under Article 19, the exercise of which carries with it special duties and responsibilities. The prohibition in paragraph 1 extends to all forms of propaganda which threaten or lead to an act of aggression or breach of the peace in breach of the Charter of the United Nations, while paragraph 2 covers any advocacy of national, racial or religious hatred that constitutes incitement to discrimination, hostility or violence, whether such propaganda or advocacy has internal or external objectives in relation to the State concerned. (...) For Article 20 to be fully effective, a law would have to make it clear that the propaganda and advocacy described therein are contrary to public policy, and prescribe an appropriate sanction in the event of violation. (...) "²⁶

In addition to these Observations, the Recommendations of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination may be added.

At the level of the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination,

- **General Recommendation XV, adopted on 23 March 1993, Organised violence based on ethnic origin (article 4):**

"The Committee draws attention to its General Recommendation VII in which it explained that the requirements of Article 4 are mandatory. To meet them, States parties must not only enact appropriate legislation but also ensure that it is effectively enforced. Since threats and acts of racial violence easily lead to other acts of a similar nature and create an atmosphere of hostility, prompt intervention is necessary to meet the requirement to act effectively. " (§ 2).

²⁵ Anne Weber, *Handbook on hate speech*, Council of Europe, May 2009, pp. 14 et seq.

²⁶ *Ibid.*

"The Committee considers that the prohibition of the dissemination of all ideas based on racial superiority or hatred is compatible with the right to freedom of opinion and expression, as set forth in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Article 19) and pointed out in Article 5 (d) (viii) of the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, The relationship between this right and Article 4 is indicated in the Article itself. Every citizen has special duties and responsibilities in the exercise of this right, as set out in paragraph 2 of Article 29 of the Universal Declaration, including the prohibition of the propagation of racist ideas, which is particularly relevant." (§ 4)²⁷.

- **General Recommendation XXX, adopted on 1 October 2004, General Recommendation on discrimination against non-citizens.** The Committee urges States to adopt various protective measures against incitement to racial hatred and violence, in particular : take measures to combat xenophobic attitudes and behaviour towards non-citizens, including incitement to racial hatred and violence, and promote a better understanding of the principle of non-discrimination with regard to the status of non-citizens (§ 11); take vigorous action to tackle any tendency to target, stigmatise, stereotype or profile members of "non-citizen" population groups on the basis of race, colour, descent and national or ethnic origin, in particular by politicians, policy-makers, educators and the media, on the Internet, in other electronic communication platforms and in society at large (12)²⁸.

II. REGIONAL LEGISLATION

Regional legislation	Year of adoption
Constitutive Act of the African Union	2000
African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights	1981
African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance	2007
The Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Prevention of and Response to Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Central Africa	2023

At regional level, preserving peace and combating hate speech are covered by a number of legal instruments. As at international level, it is still difficult to identify a text that focuses directly on the preservation of peace and the fight against hate speech. Nevertheless, a number of instruments are relevant. For example :

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ *Ibid.*

- **Constitutive Act of the African Union** adopted in Lomé on 11 July 2000. In its preamble, this text sets out the need to promote peace, security and stability as a prerequisite for the implementation of our development and integration agenda. While the text does not refer directly to hate speech, it does require States to promote tolerance and therefore to combat hate speech. This is undoubtedly one of the guarantees of the preservation of peace, which is both a principle and an objective of the African Union.
- **African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights.** The concept of "hate speech" does not appear in any provision of the Charter, but some provisions relating to rights can be linked to the fight against and condemnation of hate speech, notably Article 2, which states that "Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognised and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, colour, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or any other status". The same applies to the article "Every individual has the right to express and disseminate his opinions within the framework of the laws and regulations".
- **African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance.** It promotes the values of peace, security and stability. It sets as one of its objectives the need to establish, strengthen and consolidate good governance through the promotion of democratic practice and culture, the building and strengthening of institutions of governance and the instilling of pluralism and political tolerance (Article 2). Tolerance is enshrined as a tool for pacifying relations between citizens, peoples and States.

It is noteworthy that the issue of hate speech and hateful acts is a fundamental current concern that is also reflected in other non-legally binding instruments. Here are some examples:

- **The Communiqué of the 1147th meeting of the PSC held on 6 April 2023, on the prevention of hate ideology, genocide and hate crimes in Africa, adopted by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union.** Point 7 of this Communiqué, which has no binding legal force, "*Reiterates the importance of awareness raising campaigns through various media, informal and formal education; and in this vein, encourages Member States to include in their education curricula, the culture of peace, leadership, reconciliation, tolerance of diversity, togetherness, justice and democratic values, as well as to formulate inclusive policies which reflect the diversity of the population in their countries*".
- **Resolution on the protection of women against digital violence in Africa ACHPR/RES. 522 (LXXII) 2022.** This resolution calls on States to revise/adopt legislation to combat all forms of digital violence and to define gender-based violence more broadly so as to include digital violence against women, including cyber-bullying, gender-based hate speech, among other ICT-related violations (Point 1); to undertake awareness-raising programmes targeting boys and men, as well as campaigns involving all relevant stakeholders. These programmes must address the root causes of digital

violence against women in the overall context of gender-based violence, in order to bring about changes in social and cultural attitudes and to remove gender norms and stereotypes, while promoting respect for fundamental rights in the online space, with particular attention to social media platforms (Point 3).

- **The Regional Strategy and Action Plan for the Prevention of and Response to Hate Speech and Incitement to Violence in Central Africa²⁹.**

III. NATIONAL LEGISLATION

Legislative and regulatory texts	Year of adoption
Law no 96/06 of 18 January 1996 revising the Constitution of 02 June 1972, amended and supplemented by Law n°2008/001 of 14 April 2008	1996 and amended in 2008
Law no. 2019/020 of 24 December 2019 amending and supplementing some provisions of Law no. 2016/007 on the Penal Code	2019 amending and supplementing the 2016 Law
Law no 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the Penal Code of Cameroon	2016
Law of 25 July 2023 on the Charter on Child Online Protection	2023
Law no. 90/052 of 19 December 1990 on freedom of social communication, amended and supplemented by Law No. 96/04 of 4 January 1996	1990 amended in 1996
Law no 2022/002 of 27 April 2022 authorising the President of the Republic to accede Cameroon to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.	2022
Law no 2010/012 of 21 December 2010 on the fight against cybercrime in Cameroon.	2010
Law no 90/052 of 19 December 1990 on social communication	1990
Law no 2015/006 of 20 April 2015 regulating electronic communications in Cameroon.	2015
Order No. 62/OF/18 of 12 March 1962 on the repression of subversion.	1962

In Cameroon, preserving peace and combating hate speech are based on the Constitution and subsequent legislation.

- **Law no 96/06 of 18 January 1996 revising the Constitution of 02 June 1972, amended and supplemented by Law n°2008/001 of 14 April 2008.**

²⁹ <https://ceeac-eccas.org/2024/02/01/forum-ministeriel-sur-la-pre-validation-de-la-strategie-regionale-et-du-plan-daction-pour-la-prevention-et-la-reponse-aux-discours-de-haine-et-dincitation-a-la-violence-en-afrique-ce>

Preserving peace and combating hate speech are reflected in the provisions of the Preamble, which promote solidarity between peoples, the promotion of unity in diversity and the preservation of human dignity without discrimination of any kind.

- **Law no. 2019/020 of 24 December 2019 amending and supplementing some provisions of Law no. 2016/007 on the Penal Code.**

This text, which adjusts to the Penal Code, was adopted in response to the rise of hate speech in Cameroon's political environment. It punishes all hate speech against races and religions, and against tribes and ethnic groups. It appeared to be an urgent reform in view of the shift in political discourse towards fostering hatred between ethnic groups and communities in Cameroon.

- **Law no 2016/007 of 12 July 2016 on the Cameroon Penal Code** in its articles 240 to 241 and 242.

- Article 240 to 242 provides that:

Whoever publishes or propagates by any means whatever any news without being able to prove either its truth or that he had good reason to believe it to be true, shall be punished with imprisonment for from 1 (one) to 5 (five) years and with a fine of from CFAF 20,000 (twenty thousand) to CFAF 10,000,000 (ten million). (2) The penalty shall be doubled for anonymous publication or propagation.

Article 242 provides that (1) Anyone who commits an insult, as defined in article 152 of this Code, to the race or religion of a certain number of citizens or residents shall be punished by imprisonment from 6 (six) days to 6 (six) months and a fine of CFAF 5,000 (five thousand) to CFAF 500,000 (five hundred thousand).

- ❖ **The law of 25 July 2023 on the Charter on Child Online Protection** (article 20(1)).

- ❖ Article 74 of **Law no. 90/052 of 19 December 1990 on freedom of social communication, as amended and supplemented by Law no. 96/04 of 4 January 1996**, which states:

"The undermentioned persons shall, in the following order, be punishable as principal offenders for offences committed by through press and audio-visual communication organs as provided for by the Penal Code: (1) Publishers, station managers and editors, regardless of their occupations or designations, as well as authors; (2) Failing the persons referred to in subsection (1) above, printers, distributors and managers of recording or broadcasting companies; (3) Failing the persons referred to in subsection (2) above, bill-posters, pedlars and vendors".

- ❖ **Law n°2022/002 of 27 April 2022 authorising the President of the Republic to accede Cameroon to the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime.**
- ❖ **Law no 2010/012 of 21 December 2010 on the fight against cybercrime in Cameroon.**

Article 43 specifies that content providers are responsible for data transmitted via their information systems, particularly if this may result in an affront to human dignity, an affront to morality or an invasion of privacy.

❖ **Law no 90/052 of 19 December 1990 on social communication**

Articles 74 and 75 of the Code state that "the liable persons shall, in the following order, be punishable as principal offenders for offences committed by through press and audio-visual communication organs as provided for by the Penal Code: (1) Publishers, station managers and editors, regardless of their occupations or designations, as well as authors; (2) Failing the persons referred to in subsection (1) above, printers, distributors and managers of recording or broadcasting companies; (3) Failing the persons referred to in subsection (2) above, bill-posters, pedlars and vendors. Article 75 provides that persons to whom article 97 of the Penal Code applies may be prosecuted for the same reasons and in all cases".

❖ **Law no. 2023/009 of 25 July 2023 relating to the Charter on Child Online Protection in Cameroon.**

Article 3 defines cybercrime as "a breach of the law through cyberspace using means other than those usually used to commit conventional crimes."

❖ **Law no 2015/006 of 20 April 2015 regulating electronic communications in Cameroon.**

(Article 81 and in fine). Section 81 (1) Any person who, by means of an electromagnetic, acoustic, mechanical or other device, voluntarily or involuntarily intercepts a private communication and discloses it shall be punished in accordance with the penalties set out in section 80.

Given the above legal instruments available to combat hate speech in Cameroon, we can conclude by saying that there is an urgent need for a codified law on hate speech in Cameroon. Such a codified hate speech law will strengthen the capacity of institutions fighting hate speech in Cameroon.

Chapter 7 : INSTITUTIONS COMBATING HATE SPEECH

Combating hate speech is a major challenge for the institutions that deploy multifaceted measures to deal with it. These institutions often operate through collaboration and partnership with a view to building a more inclusive society that respects the values of peace. In their respective actions, they may involve political actors in order to strengthen their credibility and effectiveness. A distinction is made between State and non-state institutions.

I. STATE INSTITUTIONS

The State is a major player in the fight against hate speech. It sets up bodies and structures to perform various functions to promote peace, social cohesion and the pacification of the political arena, the main objective being to contribute to the well-being of the population. These include government institutions, specially created bodies and the judiciary.

A. GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

Government institutions are executive power structures that exercise political power on behalf of the State. Reporting to the President of the Republic and the Prime Minister, they are responsible for developing, implementing and enforcing public policy and managing public affairs. Some of these institutions play a significant role in the fight against hate speech, which is a threat to peace and social cohesion, as can be seen in Decree No. 2018/190 of 02 March 2018 amending and supplementing certain provisions of Decree No. 2011/408 of 09 December 2011 organising the Government.

These include:

1. **Ministry of Justice:** It is responsible for monitoring Human Rights and the fight against torture, cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment, as well as the functioning of courts.
2. **Ministry of Territorial Administration:** It is responsible for drawing up and implementing government policy on territorial administration, civil protection and following up electoral issues (new Article 8(5)). In this capacity, it prepares and applies laws and regulations relating to public freedoms; it also maintains public order and monitors the activities of political associations and movements.
3. **Ministry of Communication:** is responsible for developing and implementing the Government's communication policy. It is responsible, among other things, for ensuring compliance with deontology in the social communication and advertising sector, respect for pluralism, and contributing to the formation of a civic culture and the development of national awareness.

4. **Ministry of Social Affairs:** In line with the provisions of article 8 paragraph 6 of the 2011 decree, it is responsible for drawing up and implementing Government policy on prevention, assistance and protection of socially vulnerable people against physical violence and all other forms of violence. It is also responsible for national solidarity.
5. **Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications:** It is responsible for drawing up and implementing government policy on postal services, telecommunications and information and communication technologies. It monitors issues relating to cybersecurity and cybercrime.

B. REGIONAL AND LOCAL INSTITUTIONS

Regional and local institutions have a major role to play in eradicating hate speech. Since they are closer to the people they are supposed to know best, they need to be more involved in strategies to combat this plague. The same applies to traditional chieftaincies.

1. Regional administrations

To take only the case of the heads of administrative constituencies, namely Governors, Divisional Officers and Sub-divisional Officers, they must fully play their role in safeguarding public order in accordance with decree no. 2008/377 of 12 November 2008 determining the powers of the heads of administrative constituencies and the organisation and functioning of their departments. Acting both preventively and repressively within the framework of the administrative police, their actions must nevertheless be reconciled with respect for rights and freedoms.

2. Local administrations

Strategies to combat hate speech and policies to promote peace and social cohesion are closely linked to the development and effectiveness of decentralisation. As stated in Article 1 paragraph 2 of the Constitution, Cameroon is a decentralised unitary state. Law n°2019/024 of 24 December 2019 on the General Decentralisation Code devotes a set of prerogatives to the municipalities and regions, as well as to their bodies in terms of promoting peace, democracy, solidarity, development and the well-being of local populations. These entities must encourage cultural mixing, social harmony and the integration of peoples.

3. Traditional chiefdoms

Considered to be administrative entities sui generis, traditional chieftaincies are organised by Decree no. 77/245 of 15 July 1977 on the organisation of traditional chieftaincies. The chiefs play an important legal, social and cultural role. Through the legitimacy conferred on them by their populations, they can act validly to preserve human dignity and respect for others.

C. THE SPECIAL BODIES FOR COMBATING HATE SPEECH

Some are advisory bodies to central administrative authorities, others are independent bodies. They work to combat hate speech by promoting peace, human rights and social cohesion in all its facets. These include:

1. National Communication Council (NCC)

Created by Decree no. 91/287 of 21 June 1991, the NCC is Cameroon's media regulatory body. It ensures that the media respect ethical principles and do not broadcast hate speech. It ensures compliance with the principles of transparency, pluralism, equal access to the media, particularly during electoral seasons, the promotion of national languages and cultures in all media, and the protection of youth and childhood in all media. It can take disciplinary action against media which violate these principles.

2. The Cameroon Human Rights Commission (CHRC)

Created by Law No. 1019/014 of 19 July 2019, it is an independent institution for consultation, observation, evaluation, dialogue, conciliation and concertation in promoting and protecting Human Rights. It also acts as Cameroon National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture, abbreviated to "NMPT". It contributes to the development of a culture of Human Rights based on the ideals of peace, equal rights and duties, mutual respect and sustainable development, as stated in Article 4 of the text establishing it.

3. The National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism (NCPBM)

Created by decree No. 2017/013 of 23 January 2017, this Commission is responsible, under its Article 3, for promoting bilingualism and multiculturalism in Cameroon, with a view to maintaining peace, consolidating the country's national unity and strengthening the will and daily practice of living together among its people.

4. Public Independent Conciliator (PIC)

This new institution is an expression of taking into account the specificities of the English-speaking regions of Cameroon, and is enshrined in Chapter III of Title V of Law No. 2019/024 of 24 December 2019 on the General Code of the DTCs. It is responsible for examining and amicably settling disputes between users and the regional and communal administration in the North-West and South-West regions; defending and protecting rights and freedoms; and devising and implementing measures to combat direct and indirect discrimination against users of regional or communal services.

D. INSTITUTIONS OF THE JUDICIARY

The judiciary plays an essential role in combating hate speech by enforcing existing laws and ensuring its perpetrators are held to account for their actions. It accomplishes this through a number of institutions:

1. **Courts and their staff:** these include:

- Criminal courts (to punish acts constituting offences through penalties such as imprisonment, fines, confiscation, prohibition and disqualification);
- Civil courts, to hold perpetrators civilly liable and order compensation for damage suffered by victims; administrative courts, such as the administrative tribunals and the Administrative Bench of the Supreme Court, which are responsible for ensuring that the administration acts in accordance with the law.

2. **Court officers:** Court officers have an important role to play in the fight against hate speech, which can undermine social cohesion. Whether they are lawyers, bailiffs, notaries, judicial police personnel or others, their contribution is necessary.

E. PARLIAMENT

The Cameroonian parliament is a major player in the fight against hate speech and the defence of rights and freedoms. Both the Senate and the National Assembly must fulfil their political, legal and social roles effectively. Through their legislative function, the parliamentary chambers have a duty to pass laws in the field of human rights. Through their role as a counterweight, parliament monitors government action by means of oral and written questions or by setting up parliamentary committees of enquiry. Debates in parliament must take place in a climate of peace, dialogue, inclusiveness and respect for different ideas and ideologies. The pacification of their arenas is a powerful symbol for the public.

II. NON-GOVERNMENTAL INSTITUTIONS

In addition to State institutions, there are also non-governmental institutions that play an important role in combating hate speech and promoting social cohesion. These include:

1. **International Non-Governmental Organisations (INGOs):** There are several NGOs dedicated specifically to combating hate speech. They often work on the field, running sensitisation campaigns, providing training on tolerance and diversity, and providing support to victims of hate speech. Examples include WILPF, Transparency International, MSF (Doctors Without Borders), ICRC, etc.
2. **National human rights NGOs:** Human rights NGOs play a crucial role in the fight against hate speech. They monitor human rights violations linked to hate speech, document cases and advocate legal and political measures to address them. They include NDH (New Human Rights), REDHAC, Mandela Center International, WILPF-Cameroon...
3. **Religious organisations:** Religious institutions can play an important role in promoting tolerance and peaceful coexistence. Many religious organisations set up educational

programmes and interfaith initiatives to combat hate speech and promote interreligious dialogue.

4. **Independent media:** Independent media play a crucial role in diffusing objective and balanced information, which helps to counter hate speech. Some independent media also set up fact-checking initiatives to combat misinformation and hate speech.

These non-state institutions often work with government institutions, international agencies and other civil society actors to strengthen efforts to combat hate speech and promote tolerance and peaceful coexistence.

For example, United Nations (UN) bodies such as the Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights are working on a daily basis to curb hate speech. In response to the alarming increase in hate speech around the world, on 18 June 2019 Secretary-General António Guterres launched the United Nations Strategy and Plan of Action on Hate Speech. Aimed at improving the UN's response to the global phenomenon of hate speech, the strategy is the result of close collaboration between 16 entities within the UN Working Group on Hate Speech and is coordinated by the UN Special Adviser on the Prevention of Genocide. During his visit to Cameroon on 7 August 2024, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights recognised the fundamental role of political actors in the fight against the proliferation of hate speech³⁰. The success of this action depends, among other things, on political parties reappropriating and promoting human rights.

IMPORTANT NOTE

It is worth noting that combating hate speech is a complex and multi-faceted challenge, and requires the involvement of a variety of actors, including the media, government, civil society, political actors and individuals themselves.

³⁰ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/statements/2024/08/un-high-commissioner-human-rights-volker-turk-concludes-official-visit-cameroon>

Part 2 : PRACTICAL ASPECTS

Chapter 1 : HATE SPEECH IN THE MEDIA

Political actors should promote respectful and inclusive discourse. They should publicly condemn hate speech and take concrete actions to educate their members and prevent the spread of hatred.

I. POLITICAL ACTORS AND HATE SPEECH IN THE MEDIA: FORMS AND TYPOLOGY

Political actors play a crucial role in the appropriate use of the media. They should therefore consider the following elements:

1. **Strategic communication:** Political actors need to develop strategic communication to convey clear and consistent messages. This means using the media thoughtfully to reach their target audience and communicate their ideas, policies and programmes effectively.
2. **Fact-checking:** Political actors should ensure that the information they disseminate through the media is based on verified and reliable facts. They must avoid the spread of misinformation and rumours, which can contribute to polarisation and public distrust.
3. **Transparency and accountability:** Political actors must be transparent in their use of the media. This includes disclosing their sources of funding to avoid undesirable influences on their media communication. Furthermore, they must be prepared to be accountable for their statements and to correct misinformation.
4. **Respect for ethical standards:** Political actors must respect ethical standards in media communication. This includes avoiding hate speech, defamation and manipulation of the media for partisan purposes. They must also respect the privacy of individuals and avoid personal attacks.
5. **Constructive engagement:** Political actors can use the media as a platform to promote constructive dialogue with the public. They can organise debates, press conferences and meetings to exchange ideas, answer questions and listen to citizens' concerns.

Political actors must use the media responsibly, respecting the principles of transparency, truthfulness and respect, in order to foster a healthy and informed democratic debate. At its 38th ordinary session in June 2023, the National Communication Council imposed penalties for hate speech. Four media organs, journalists and their guests were severely sanctioned, ranging from suspension of activities to a permanent ban.

II. POLITICAL ACTORS AND HATE SPEECH ON SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media are playing an increasingly important role in the political landscape. Political actors use social media to communicate with voters, share their ideas and messages, mobilise supporters and even influence public opinion. They can play a crucial role in combating hate speech on the Internet by adopting several approaches :

1. **Awareness-raising and education:** Political actors can educate their members and supporters about the dangers of online hate speech. They can organise training on how to recognise and counter such speech, as well as on the harmful consequences in society.
2. **Developing internal policies:** Political actors can develop clear internal policies to condemn hate speech and establish a code of conduct for their members when expressing themselves online. This can help to promote a culture of respect and tolerance within the party.
3. **Public condemnation:** Political actors can take a strong public stance against hate speech and openly condemn its perpetrators. They can use their platform and visibility to help raise public awareness and combat the social acceptance of hate speech.
4. **Collaborating with online platforms:** Political actors can work with social media platforms and online service providers to report hate content and request its removal. They can also advocate for stronger hate speech moderation and enforcement policies.
5. **Promoting appropriate legislation:** Political actors can propose and support legislation to combat online hate speech. This could include laws increasing the accountability of online platforms, criminalising hate speech or promoting awareness and education in schools.
6. **Working with civil society:** Political actors can partner with civil society organisations that fight online hate speech. They can work together to share resources, expertise and good practice to combat hate speech effectively.

It is worth noting that the fight against online hate speech requires a collective and concerted approach involving not only political actors, but also governments, online platforms, civil society and citizens. Together, we can create a more inclusive, respectful and safe online environment.

Behaviours and attitudes to avoid

Political actors should avoid certain behaviours on social media in order to have a positive online presence and preserve their reputation. The following behaviours should be avoided:

1. **Hate speech and defamation:** Political actors should avoid publishing hate speech, defamatory or offensive towards other political actors, individuals or groups. They should always respect different opinions and points of view, even if they disagree with them,
2. **Trolls and provocations:** They should avoid getting involved in trolling or provocative behaviour online. They should not seek to start conflicts or fuel polemics, but be courteous and respectful in their online interactions,
3. **Disinformation and fake news:** They should avoid sharing unverified information, rumours or fake news, but make sure that their publications are based on verified facts and disclosed by reliable sources. They should join the fight against misinformation by sharing accurate and verified information,
4. **Misuse of personal data:** They should avoid collecting or misusing personal data of social media users, but observe data protection laws and make sure they ask for appropriate consent when collecting personal information,
5. **Online harassment:** They should avoid any harassing behaviour online, whether towards individuals or other political parties. They should be ethical and respectful online and urge their members to do the same,
6. **Lack of transparency:** They should avoid any lack of transparency in their online communications and be honest about their intentions, sources of funding and their positions. They should know that transparency builds trust with their audience and strengthens their credibility.

By avoiding such behavior, political parties can maintain a positive online presence and avoid damaging their reputation. It is therefore crucial to promote responsible and respectful political communication on social media.



III. BEST PRACTICES FOR PREVENTING AND COMBATING HATE SPEECH IN THE MEDIA

Political parties need to show responsibility and avoid certain behaviors in the media.

What to avoid:

1. **Lies or misinformation:** they should avoid spreading lies or misinformation in the media. Check the truthfulness of the information you share, and make sure it is based on verified facts. Spreading false information damages your credibility and public trust.
2. **Personal attacks:** they should avoid personal attacks on your political opponents and focus on ideas, policies and issues rather than people. Avoid defamatory or slanderous statements and promote constructive, respectful debate.
3. **Hate speech or stigmatization:** they should avoid hate speech, stigmatization or discrimination towards specific communities or groups of people. Respect diversity and promote inclusion in your speech and actions.
4. **Media manipulation:** They should avoid manipulating the media or attempting to control media coverage to your advantage. Respect the independence of the media and promote a transparent relationship with journalists.
5. **Incitement to violence:** They should avoid any speech or rhetoric that incites violence or can be interpreted as such. Political parties should promote peace and condemn all forms of violence.
6. **Spreading of rumors and false information:** they should avoid spreading rumors or false information with the aim of manipulating public opinion but rigorous and truthful in your media interventions.

Chapter 2 : MECHANISMS FOR PREVENTING HATE SPEECH

I. INTERNAL PREVENTION MECHANISMS WITHIN POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties should set up internal mechanisms to anticipate and prevent hate speech among their members. They can:

- 1. Draw up a code of conduct:** Political organizations can draw up an internal code of conduct that clearly defines expectations in terms of respectful speech and non-discriminatory behavior. Such codes should explicitly prohibit hate speech by their members. The code can include specific guidelines on preventing hate speech, specifying what is not acceptable. These codes can establish clear standards and sanctions for those who break these rules, demonstrating the party's commitment to combating hate speech.
- 2. Raising members' awareness:** It is important for political parties to make their members aware of the harmful consequences of hate speech. This can be done through seminars, training sessions or sensitisation campaigns that underscore the importance of tolerance, diversity and mutual respect. Political parties can run sensitisation campaigns to sustain the fight against hate speech in the media. They should organize events, training sessions and workshops to raise awareness among their members and the public of the harmful consequences of hate speech and the importance of promoting respect and tolerance.
- 3. Include anti-discrimination clauses in statutes:** Political organizations can include anti-discrimination clauses in their statutes or charters. These clauses can stipulate that members who engage in hate speech may be subject to disciplinary action or even exclusion.
- 4. Strengthen internal accountability:** Political parties should set up internal accountability mechanisms to prevent hate speech. This can include the appointment of officials within the party responsible for monitoring and reporting cases of hate speech, as well as procedures for dealing with complaints.
- 5. Encouraging dialogue and mutual respect:** Political organizations can promote an internal environment conducive to open dialogue and mutual respect. This can be achieved through constructive debate, regular meetings between members and the promotion of a collaborative rather than confrontational culture.

Political parties can maintain a regular dialogue with the media to promote ethical and deontological standards. They can encourage the media to avoid hate speech, provide balanced coverage and rigorously verify facts.

6. Exemplarity of leaders: Political leaders play a key role in preventing hate speech. They must set an example of respectful language and non-discriminatory behavior. Their exemplary posture can positively influence their members and foster a healthy political environment.

7. Raising members' awareness of misinformation issues: Political parties can organize information sessions on misinformation and fake news. It's important to make members aware of the dangers of misinformation and urge them to check information before sharing it.

Example to follow: Political parties can act as role models by adopting respectful and inclusive communication. When they avoid hate speech in their own communications, they send a strong message about the importance of promoting a healthy and respectful media culture.

8. Monitoring and reporting: Political parties should urge their members to report cases of hate speech in the media and cooperate with media regulatory bodies to take appropriate action. They can also set up monitoring mechanisms to track hate speech trends and act swiftly to counter them.

9. Reward the best militants: Political parties can reward the best activists in the fight against hate speech and political violence.

Through these internal mechanisms, political parties can create an internal culture that promotes mutual respect, tolerance and the prevention of hate speech. This does not only helps to prevent hate speech within the political organization, but also reinforces the party's public image as a political actor committed to fighting discrimination and polarization.

II. PREVENTION MECHANISMS EXTERNAL TO POLITICAL ORGANIZATIONS

In addition to internal measures, political organizations can also put in place hate speech prevention mechanisms aimed at a wider audience. These include:

- 1. Sensitisation and education:** Political parties may organize sensitisation and education campaigns to inform the general public about the consequences of hate speech and promote values of tolerance, respect and diversity. This can be done through conferences, workshops, seminars or public events.
- 2. Positive communication campaigns:** Political parties may run positive communication campaigns that promote the values of inclusion, solidarity and mutual respect. They can also promote encouraging and inspiring messages to counter hate speech and encourage civic participation.
- 3. Collaboration with civil society organizations:** Political parties can partner with civil society organizations committed to combating hate speech and promoting diversity. These collaborations can include joint actions, sensitisation programs or joint initiatives to prevent hate speech.

4. **Responsible use of social media:** Political organizations can promote the responsible use of social media by their members and sympathizers. They can call for the observance of online rules of conduct, the verification of information before sharing it, and the promotion of respectful and constructive dialogue on digital platforms.
5. **Open dialogue with communities:** Political formations can conduct an open and inclusive dialogue with communities marginalized or affected by hate speech. This can include meetings, chat rooms or public consultations to understand their concerns and needs, and develop inclusive policies accordingly.
6. **Participation in cross-party initiatives:** Political parties can participate in cross-party initiatives aimed at preventing hate speech. This can include joint statements, joint events or coordinated actions to promote respectful political standards of conduct and combat polarization.
7. **Advocacy for anti-discrimination legislative policies:** Political parties can advocate legislative policies that strengthen the fight against hate speech and discrimination. They can support laws that criminalize hate speech, strengthen reporting and monitoring mechanisms, and promote education and awareness-raising in schools.

Useful tips

Political parties must take concrete steps to combat hate speech in the media in general and on social networks in particular, as this helps to promote a media environment that is more respectful, inclusive and conducive to democratic debate. Political parties should maintain a healthy relationship with the media and preserve their credibility with the public by avoiding such deviant behavior. It is very important to adopt a sense of responsibility and integrity when interacting with the media. In a nutshell, social media have changed the way political parties communicate with voters and influence public opinion. This presents both opportunities and challenges for political parties, who need to use these platforms strategically while remaining alert to misinformation.

By implementing these external mechanisms, political parties can play an active role in preventing hate speech in society. They can help create a more inclusive, respectful and democratic political environment, and inspire other political and social actors to act in a similar way.

Chapter 3: HATE SPEECH PROTECTING METHODS

Political actors play a key role in setting up protection mechanisms against hate speech.

I. PROTECTION THROUGH INTERNAL POLICIES OF POLITICAL PARTIES

Political parties can play an important role in combating hate speech by adopting protection policies and mechanisms. The following are examples of measures that political parties can put in place:

- 1. Internal policies:** Political parties can adopt clear internal policies that condemn hate speech and promote tolerance and inclusion. This may include codes of conduct for party members, guidelines on appropriate language and behavior, and mechanisms for reporting and dealing with cases of hate speech within the political party itself.
- 2. Sensitisation and training:** Political formations can organize sensitisation and training sessions for their members on the issues of hate speech and discrimination. This can include talks on the consequences of hate speech, the promotion of empathy and mutual understanding, and training on how to detect and deal with hate speech.
- 3. Candidate selection and screening:** Political parties should put in place rigorous selection and screening procedures for their candidates. This can include past history checks, assessments of commitment to the principles of equality and non-discrimination, and strict criteria to avoid supporting candidates who spread hate speech.
- 4. Monitoring and response:** Political parties can closely monitor the speech of their members and react quickly to hate speech. This can include internal reporting mechanisms, disciplinary procedures and accountability measures to deter members from promoting hate speech.
- 5. Exemplary leadership:** Political party leaders play a key role in promoting a respectful and inclusive environment. They can set an example by publicly condemning hate speech, encouraging constructive dialogue and promoting policies and actions to combat discrimination and hatred.

It is important for political parties to actively engage in the fight against hate speech, as they have a significant influence on the policies and decisions that forge society. Political parties can help create a more inclusive political environment and combat hate speech by adopting strong internal policies and promoting values of equality and respect.

II. REINFORCING THE REPRESSION OF HATE SPEECH

Hate speech repressing mechanisms are extremely varied. Some of them are commonly used to repress hate speech in many democratic countries.

1. A legal framework: Many countries have specific laws prohibiting hate speech. These laws usually define what is considered hate speech, such as speech inciting violence, discrimination or hatred based on race, religion, ethnic origin, sexual orientation, gender, etc. Those found guilty of hate speech may face criminal sanctions, such as fines, prison sentences or other forms of punishment.

2. Online monitoring: Governments and law enforcement agencies can monitor online platforms and social media for hate speech. Algorithms and automatic detection tools can be used to identify potentially hateful content. When such content is identified, action can be taken, such as removing content, suspending accounts or reporting infringements to the platforms concerned.

3. Sensitisation and education: Many countries are implementing awareness-raising and education programs to prevent hate speech. This can include sensitisation campaigns in schools, universities and the media, as well as training programs for law enforcement, teachers and media professionals to help them identify and deal with hate speech.

4. International collaboration: Cooperation between countries can play an important role in cracking down on hate speech, particularly on Internet. Governments can work together to set up cooperation agreements and cross-border reporting mechanisms, to facilitate the exchange of information on hate speech and coordinate action to suppress it.

Useful tips: It should be noted that the crackdown on hate speech is a complex and often controversial debate. There are legitimate concerns about freedom of expression and censorship. It is thus important to strike a balance between the repression of hate speech and respect for fundamental rights, such as freedom of expression and press freedom.

III. SUPPORTING VULNERABLE POPULATIONS AND VICTIMS

Supporting vulnerable populations and victims of hate speech is a key aspect of the fight against hate and discrimination. Measures to be taken to support and protect these populations:

1. Sensitisation and education: It is crucial to raise public awareness of hate speech and its impact on vulnerable populations. Educational programs can be set up in schools and communities to promote tolerance, mutual respect and understanding between different groups. This builds the resilience of vulnerable populations and provides them with the tools they need to deal with hate speech.

2. Psychological support: Victims of hate speech can suffer emotional and psychological trauma. It is therefore crucial to set up psychological support and assistance services to help them overcome the harmful effects of hate speech. This can include individual counseling, support groups or accessible online resources.

3. Access to justice: Victims of hate speech must have access to legal remedies. This involves informing victims of their rights, facilitating the filing of complaints and ensuring the effective investigation and prosecution of hate speech perpetrators. Cameroon's judicial system must be made aware of the specific nature of hate speech and be prepared to deal with it appropriately.

4. Strengthening legislation: In Cameroon, existing laws on discrimination and hate speech can be strengthened to provide better protection for vulnerable populations. This could include broadening definitions of discrimination and hate speech, increasing penalties for perpetrators of such speech, particularly in the case of recidivists, and improving reporting and monitoring mechanisms.

5. Strengthening partnerships: Cameroonian Government, civil society organizations operating in Cameroon, educational institutions and actors in the information and communication technology industry must work in partnership to combat hate speech. This can include setting up guidelines and codes of conduct for online platforms, as well as collaborating on prevention and awareness-raising.

It is important to note that each country and context has its own specific challenges and needs in terms of protecting vulnerable populations and victims of hate speech. Therefore, the measures to be taken must be tailored to these factors.

Chapter 4 : PEACEFUL MANAGEMENT OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

The peaceful management of elections is an important concept to ensure democratic and non-violent electoral processes. A look back at Cameroon's electoral history reveals that the various electoral processes organized have not been smooth sailing. Between laborious organization, violent protests, crises linked to the legitimacy of the electoral process and the bodies in charge of managing it, electoral apathy, fraud, exacerbation of tribalism, etc., elections in Cameroon are sensitive moments in the life of the Nation and should be taken seriously. This means adopting measures and practices that foster a calm, inclusive and respectful environment during all phases of the elections, including preparation, voting day and the counting of votes, as well as the publication of results. The different phases of the electoral process, namely the pre-electoral, electoral and post-electoral phases, must be properly managed.

I. MANAGING THE PRE-ELECTORAL PERIOD

Peaceful management of the pre-electoral period is essential to create an environment conducive to democratic and non-violent elections. Some key elements of the peaceful management of this period are as follows:

1. Dialogue and consultation: Political actors must encourage open and inclusive dialogue between the various stakeholders, including political parties, civil society, the media and voters. Concertation forums can be created to discuss electoral issues, resolve differences and promote mutual trust.

2. Fairness and transparency: The rules of the electoral contest must be agreed by all political actors. Indeed, a large proportion of post-electoral crises can be avoided by drawing up an electoral code that is consensual and accepted by all. These rules must also be clear, fair and transparent. This includes provisions for voter registration, drawing up electoral lists, equitable access to the media, political party funding, etc. Total transparency in the pre-electoral process helps to prevent suspicions and tensions. A lack of clarity in these rules can lead to behavior offending the values of democracy, and to rejection of the results by the losers.

NOTE. Political actors must therefore work peacefully towards a legal framework that promotes fairness and electoral transparency.

3. Raising awareness and educating political actors: Political actors need to be made aware of the principles of democracy, human rights and non-violence. Training programs can be organized to reinforce their knowledge of electoral processes, international standards and good electoral practice. This can help promote a peaceful political culture.

4. Conflict prevention: It is important to identify and prevent potential sources of conflict during the pre-election period. This can include setting up mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms, as well as awareness-raising initiatives to prevent hate speech, ethnic or religious tensions, and political violence.

5. Independent election observation: Independent election observers play a crucial role in the peaceful management of the pre-election period. National and international observation missions can monitor compliance with democratic standards, report possible irregularities and reinforce public confidence in the electoral process. ELECAM, as the body in charge of managing the electoral process in Cameroon, must therefore do everything in its power to facilitate the mission of independent observers, whose reports are likely to lend credibility to or improve its actions. It should be noted that these missions are often the work of Cameroon's partners, such as the European Union, the African Union, Transparency International and others. We should also rightly laud the actions of national civil society organizations working to uphold democratic, republican and humanitarian values. These include Nouveaux Droits de l'Homme (New Human Rights), WILPF Cameroon, Un Monde Avenir, the Catholic Church and the Service National Justice et Paix. Thanks to their coverage of several elections, they have been able to make relevant comments for the improvement of the electoral process.

NOTE. Political parties need to collaborate with these election observation missions to ensure that the reports they produce are more credible, thus helping to reduce conflict in post-election periods.

7. Responsible media: The media play a key role in the pre-election period as a source of information for voters. The media must play their role responsibly, providing balanced and impartial coverage, checking facts and avoiding the spread of false information. They can also organize political debates to encourage a respectful exchange of ideas. Whether it's the state-owned CRTV, or private media such as Equinoxe Tv, Canal 2 International, Vision 4, STV, Balafon, Le Messenger, RTS, they all play a crucial role in preserving equal opportunity and diversity.

NOTE. Political actors and parties must structure their participation in these debates with the fight against hate speech as a backdrop.

7. Public funding: Public funding for political parties taking part in elections is an important factor in guaranteeing the fairness and equality of candidates. Proper management of financing arrangements can help reduce tensions and crises. In Cameroon, electoral legislation provides for mechanisms to finance political parties and electoral and referendum campaigns. The terms and conditions of this public funding are set out in Title XI of Law No. 2012/001 of April 19, 2012 on the Electoral Code, amended and supplemented by Law No. 2012/017 of December 21, 2012. The funds from this financing are public resources, and cover both the ongoing activities of political parties and the organization of election and referendum campaigns.

These measures can contribute to the peaceful management of the pre-electoral period, creating the atmosphere of trust, mutual respect and stability necessary for democratic and peaceful elections.

NOTE. Political parties must put in place good governance mechanisms to ensure the transparent management of these funds. Such a practice will keep them away from the targets of hate speech based on the pretext of "misappropriation of public funds".

II. MANAGING THE ELECTORAL PERIOD

The electoral period runs from the opening of polling stations to the proclamation of results by the authorized bodies.

Peaceful management of voting day is a key factor in ensuring free and fair elections. All stakeholders, including voters, candidates, political parties, electoral authorities and law enforcement agencies, must be committed to maintaining a peaceful environment during the electoral process. Key principles to promote peaceful management of voting day:

1. **Sensitisation:** Voters need to be informed of their rights and responsibilities in order to reduce tensions and misunderstandings. Sensitisation campaigns can be organised to explain voting procedures, rules of conduct and sanctions for inappropriate behaviour.
2. **Security:** Competent authorities must take suitable measures to ensure the security of voters, election staff and election-related infrastructure. This includes the deployment of appropriate security forces to prevent acts of violence or intimidation. These forces must demonstrate neutrality and impartiality, and refrain from any action likely to discredit them in the eyes of actors.

NOTE. Political parties need to educate their members on the importance of the presence of such forces, to avoid a negative interpretation that could create a climate of hostility likely to lead to conflict.

3. **Neutrality:** The electoral authorities, i.e. ELECAM and the local voting commissions, and the courts responsible for ensuring the regularity of elections and the proclamation of results (the Constitutional Council for presidential, parliamentary and referendum elections; the administrative judge for regional and municipal elections, represented by the Administrative Courts ruling at first instance and the Administrative Bench of the Supreme Court ruling on appeal) must guarantee impartiality and neutrality in the electoral process. This means that all candidates and political parties must be treated equally. It also means that electoral rules must be applied uniformly.

NOTE. Political parties must make use of these mechanisms when faced with difficulties. It is important to avoid discrediting these electoral actors a priori. Any recriminatory discourse should be based on empirical evidence.

7. **Collaboration:** Electoral stakeholders must work together to ensure that voting goes smoothly, from the opening of polling stations to the delivery of voting materials and the counting of votes.

4. **Mediation and conflict resolution:** In the event of tensions or conflicts during voting day, mediation and conflict resolution mechanisms must be put in place. This may involve the intervention of neutral mediators or civil society organizations to facilitate dialogue and find peaceful solutions.

NOTE. Political parties must endeavor to contribute to the pacification of relations between electoral stakeholders, so that they can easily find an acceptable mediation mechanism in case of conflict.

5. **Monitoring and transparency:** The presence of independent election observers can help promote transparency and deter acts of violence or fraud. Observers should be allowed access to polling stations and counting centers to monitor the electoral process and report any irregularities.

NOTE. Political parties need to collaborate with these election observation missions to ensure that the reports they produce are more credible, thus helping to reduce conflict in post-election periods.

6. **Civic education:** Adequate civic education can help promote a culture of mutual respect and political tolerance. Civic education programs can be set up by political parties to raise citizens' awareness of the importance of the democratic process and the need to respect differences of opinion.

These principles can help to promote peaceful management of polling day and build confidence in the electoral process. This helps to preserve democratic integrity and ensure legitimate results accepted by all.

III. MANAGING THE POST-ELECTORAL PERIOD

The peaceful management of the post-election period is crucial to maintaining stability and confidence in the political system. Political actors play a critical role in this process, and must demonstrate responsibility and commitment to democracy. Important aspects of peaceful management of the post-election period for political actors:

1. **Acceptance of results:** Political actors must accept election results peacefully, even if they are not in their favor. This implies recognizing the legitimacy of electoral institutions and respecting the will expressed by voters.

2. **Dialogue and negotiation:** Political actors must be prepared to engage in constructive dialogue and negotiation to peacefully resolve post-election disputes or conflicts. This may imply the creation of commissions or mediation mechanisms to facilitate discussions between the parties concerned.

3. Legal remedies: Political actors must have confidence in the judicial system and use legal channels to resolve any electoral disputes. This means respecting court decisions and avoiding violent methods of protest.

4. Responsible leadership: Political actors must set an example of responsible leadership. This means firmly condemning any form of violence, hate speech or provocation that could aggravate post-election tensions. They must promote respectful language, foster reconciliation and encourage respect for human rights and basic freedoms.

5. Inclusion and representation: Political actors should strive to promote the inclusion and representation of all stakeholders in the political process. This may imply engaging in dialogue with marginalized groups, promoting the participation of women and minorities in political decision-making, and seeking inclusive solutions that address the concerns of all.

6. Transparency and accountability: Political actors must promote transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs. This can include the disclosure of political financing, the fight against corruption and the establishment of control mechanisms to ensure transparent and accountable governance.

These principles can help political actors to manage the post-election period peacefully, thereby promoting political stability and democratic development.

To conclude, the peaceful management of elections is a major objective to preserve democracy and ensure stable political transitions. It requires the participation and commitment of all stakeholders, including governments, political parties, civil society and citizens.

IV. BEST PRACTICES IN THE PEACEFUL MANAGEMENT OF THE VARIOUS STAGES OF THE ELECTORAL PROCESS

1. Electoral legislation: Clear and fair electoral laws must be put in place to properly regulate the electoral process. This includes rules on voter registration, candidacy, electoral campaign, political financing, etc. Sound legislation helps ensure fair and transparent elections.

2. Independence and impartiality: Institutions in charge of managing and supervising elections, such as Joint Electoral Commissions, ELECAM branches and the Electoral Council, must be independent and impartial. They must operate in a transparent, professional and neutral manner, without favouring any political party or candidate. This strengthens public confidence in the electoral process.

3. Voter awareness and education: Voters need to be informed about their rights and responsibilities, as well as about the electoral process. Effective awareness-raising can help reduce tensions, misunderstandings and potential conflicts. Civic education initiatives can also promote a culture of peaceful and responsible participation.

4. Dialogue and mediation: Political actors, civil society and the media have a crucial role to play in promoting constructive and peaceful dialogue during elections. Mediation can be used

to resolve disputes and conflicts that may arise. Public debates and forums for the expression of diverse opinions should be actively encouraged.

5. Security and law enforcement: The competent authorities must ensure the safety of voters, candidates and election staff. This includes the prevention and management of possible violations of electoral law, as well as protection against political violence or intimidation.

6. Transparency and election observation: In order to build public confidence, it is important to ensure transparency throughout the electoral process. National and international election observation missions play an important role in providing an independent and impartial appraisal of the electoral process.

Chapter 5: METHODS OF POLITICAL CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Methods of resolving political conflicts are usually based on the nature of the institutions involved. They fall into two specific categories: jurisdictional mechanisms and alternative dispute resolution methods.

I. JURISDICTIONAL MECHANISMS TO RESOLVE POLITICAL CONFLICTS

Jurisdictional mechanisms refer to the intervention of judges in the resolution of political conflicts. Depending on the situation, a distinction can be made between the electoral judge, the criminal judge and possibly the military court.

1. The electoral judge

In normal situations, political conflict arises from challenges to the regularity of elections. It should therefore be noted that the electoral judge is the one who intervenes in such disputes. In the Cameroonian setting, the electoral judge is split into an administrative judge, who handles disputes concerning local elections, and the Constitutional Council, who handles disputes concerning national elections and referendums.

The controversial political nature of local elections (municipal and regional elections) often leads to the argument that the administrative judge is not a judge of political conflicts. However, if we take a close look at the French constitutional jurisprudence in the Caledonia case, where the judge qualifies local elections as "political elections", we can argue that the administrative judge, as a judge of electoral conflicts, intervenes as a judge of political conflicts of an electoral nature.

As far as the constitutional judge is concerned, there is no doubt that he is a political judge in view of the political issues he deals with, such as electoral disputes, even if he remains a judge from the legal point of view, or a judge in the literal sense of the word, who deals with legal issues.

2. The penal judge

The involvement of the criminal courts in the resolution of political conflicts is based on the reform of article 241 of the Cameroon Penal Code, concerning contempt for tribe, ethnicity, race and religion. Tribal and ethnic contempt is usually fueled by political contexts, and most often occurs in situations of political opposition. They can therefore be classified as political conflicts. The jurisdiction of the criminal courts extends to political demonstrations in public establishments or in schools or universities (article 231-1 of the Penal Code).

3. The military court

The jurisdiction of the military court relates to the offence of insurrection, which most often finds its expression in situations of post-electoral political conflict.

4. Non-jurisdictional bodies to resolve electoral disputes.

In addition to these jurisdictional institutions, there are non-jurisdictional bodies that manage electoral disputes in Cameroon. These include the Electoral Council and the Divisional Commissions, which rule on electoral disputes concerning voters' lists and cards.

II. ALTERNATIVE METHODS TO RESOLVE POLITICAL DISPUTES

There are several types of alternative dispute resolution. They include amicable negotiation, conciliation, mediation and good offices.

1. Amicable negotiation

The aim of negotiation is to resolve conflicts amicably, by seeking a satisfactory solution for all parties through dialogue and compromise. Unlike mediation and collaborative law, negotiation is not subject to specific rules or a specific setting. Nor does it require any specific training on the part of those involved.

2. Conciliation

Conciliation is a voluntary process in which the parties to a dispute decide to call on a neutral third party, called a conciliator, to help them settle their dispute in a confidential setting. A third party specialized in a particular area of expertise may also be called in.

The conciliator plays an active role, hearing the parties' points of view and giving his or her opinion. After expressing their views, the parties expect the mediator to propose settlement options or solutions, which they may or may not accept.

3. Mediation

In mediation, the parties to a dispute are helped by a mediator to find their own solutions to their difficulties. The mediator does not settle the dispute. Parties are therefore at the forefront of the debate, and play a very active role. The mediator - neutral, independent and impartial - will help them to find and implement a fair and reasonable solution that takes into account the interests of all parties. The mediator does not act as a legal advisor, judge or arbitrator. In other words, unlike a judge, the mediator does not impose a decision; it must come from the parties.

4. Good offices

The mission of good offices refers to the assistance offered by one State to another in resolving a conflict in which it is involved with a third State³¹.

III- BEST PRACTICES

IMPORTANT NOTE

1.	Promoting respect and tolerance:	Political actors must be role models, avoiding hate speech, personal attacks and inflammatory rhetoric. They must promote mutual respect, tolerance and inclusion, recognizing diversity of opinion while encouraging civilized political debate.
2.	Encouraging political engagement	Political actors can help build social cohesion by encouraging the participation of all segments of society in the political process. They must also ensure that the rights of all citizens to express themselves, assemble peacefully and form associations are respected. This also includes the inclusion of marginalized groups and minorities.
3.	Promoting transparency and integrity	Political actors must promote the transparency and integrity of the electoral process. This means respecting electoral rules, declaring their funding transparently and cooperating with electoral supervisory bodies. This responsible attitude strengthens public confidence in the fairness of the electoral process.
4.	Establishing constructive dialogue	Political actors must foster constructive dialogue with other political parties, civil society and the media. They should be ready to discuss, negotiate and compromise. Open dialogue can help resolve differences and tensions, and prevent conflict.
5	. Avoid manipulation of information	Political actors must refrain from manipulating or propagating false information during the election period. They must promote access to reliable and verified information, and encourage voters to inform themselves critically. Misinformation and fake news can fuel polarization and weaken social cohesion.
6.	Accepting election results	Once elections are over, political actors must respect the results and accept them peacefully. They must recognize the legitimacy of democratic institutions, and use legal mechanisms to contest the results if necessary. Respect for election results strengthens political stability and social cohesion.

Political actors play a crucial role in preserving social cohesion during election periods. Here are some actions they can take to achieve this objective:

³¹ Guillaume SACRISTE et Antoine VAUCHEZ, " Les "bons offices " du droit international : la constitution d'une autorité non politique dans le concert diplomatique des années 1920", *Critique internationale*, vol. 1, vol. 26, 2005, pp. 101-117.

Such actions by political actors can help preserve social cohesion during electoral periods, strengthen public confidence in the democratic process and promote peaceful political transitions.

Template of guideline to prevent hate speech in political parties

Preamble

Aware that the rule of law, democracy and human rights are essential pillars of Cameroon's constitutional heritage;

Considering that the proliferation of hate speech is a major threat to the stability of our State and the security of persons and property;

Considering the aspiration of the Cameroonian people to live in an environment that guarantees the interests of present generations while preserving those of future generations;

Considering the national and international legal framework governing the activities of political actors;

Aware that elections are often sensitive moments in the life of a State;

Considering the many scourges that plague our society and which can be exploited by political actors;

Aware that living together, fraternity, tolerance, mutual respect, justice, solidarity, fair play and the rule of law are essential conditions for the development of peoples;

Considering social peace and national cohesion can only be achieved through the involvement of all political, legal, economic, social and cultural actors;

Aware that political actors have a key role to play in preventing and resolving socio-political conflicts that may undermine the values of our society;

It is necessary to adopt a code of good conduct that enshrines the principles that all political players must respect in the general interest. These fundamental principles are as follows:

Article 1: Respect for Human Rights

Any political actor who joins us must respect basic human rights, such as freedom of expression, freedom of peaceful assembly, gender equality and non-discrimination. These effects can be summarised as follows:

Article 2: Rejection of hate speech

All political actors who joins us must explicitly prohibit hate speech, defamation, personal attacks and any form of discrimination based on linguistic considerations, race, ethnic or social origin, religion, gender or any other characteristic protected by law. They must take to stand to publicly reject hate speech and denounce all derogatory names.

Article 3: Respectful communication:

Any political actor who engages with us must promote respectful and constructive communication between party members, as well as with other political parties and the wider public. They must encourage ideological debates without personal attacks or denigration.

Article 4: Transparency and accountability:

Any political actor that engages with us must be transparent and accountable in its management of financial resources, its decision-making process and its communication with the public, avoiding funding that forces them to behave in an inappropriate way, likely to create hatred and human rights violations. Political parties must also hold their members accountable for any breaches of the code.

Article 5: Integrity and the fight against corruption

Any political actor who joins us must include in the texts governing their movements provisions to promote integrity and fight against corruption. This can include measures such as declaration of assets and conflicts of interest, strict rules on electoral campaign financing and the establishment of monitoring mechanisms to prevent corruption.

Article 6: Compliance with electoral rules

Any political actor who joins us must bear in mind the importance of respecting electoral rules and running fair election campaigns. This includes prohibiting misinformation, protecting the integrity of the electoral process and respecting election results.

Article 7: Respecting and promoting Fair Play in electoral competitions

Any political actor who joins us must bear in mind the main function of elections, which is the pacification of social relations. They must therefore adopt an attitude of fair play and accept election results.

Article 8: Promoting diversity and inclusion

All political actors who joins us must promote diversity and inclusion within their respective political organizations, as well as in their policies and actions. They must support the fair representation of women, ethnic minorities, marginalized communities and other under-represented groups. Their access to the management board and other positions of responsibility within political groups must be guaranteed and encouraged.

Article 9: Commitment to cooperation and dialogue

All political actors who joins us has the obligation to foster cooperation and dialogue with government officials, civil society actors and citizens. He must promote the search for common solutions and respect for different opinions.

Article 10: Training and awareness-raising

Any political actor who engages with us must integrate training and awareness-raising programs for political party members on the principles set out in the code of good conduct. This may include training programs on political ethics, responsible communication and inclusion.

Article 11: Monitoring and sanction mechanisms

Any political actor who joins us must respect the code and accept the application of sanctions in case of violation. They must also accept the decisions of the Ethics Committee, the mechanisms to report violations and clear disciplinary procedures. These mechanisms must be fully operational and effective.

NOTE: The Code of Conduct should be clear, accessible and regularly updated to reflect social and political developments. It should be widely circulated, and political party members should be regularly reminded of their obligations under the code.

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