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**THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION AND ITS APPLICATION TO  
PEOPLES UNDER COLONIAL OR ALIEN DOMINATION OR FOREIGN  
OCCUPATION**

**Written statement\* submitted by the International Federation for the Protection of the  
Rights of Ethnic, Religious, Linguistic and Other Minorities,  
a non-governmental organization on the Roster**

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[11 February 2005]

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\* This written statement is issued, unedited, in the language(s) received from the submitting non-governmental organization(s).

## THE RIGHT OF PEOPLES TO SELF-DETERMINATION

1. In October, 1961 the UN sponsored a federal union between its former trust territories of Southern Cameroons and La Republique du Cameroun. The two territories emerged from the German Protectorate of Kamerun, after Germany was forced to renounce all claims on its oversea territories, at the Peace Treaty of Versailles. While the Southern Cameroons from the end of World War I was under the British administration, La Republique du Cameroun was under the French administration. The new federal union, the Federal United Cameroun Republic was to become an inter-parliamentary union of two states with equal status, with each partner in the union maintaining control over its territory, political and administrative system, culture, educational, legal and social systems as inherited at independence.

2. Regrettably, the United Nations (and of course, its member states) failed to implement resolution 1608 of April 21, 1961, which called for a post plebiscite conference to work out modalities of the federation. Nevertheless, delegates of the two territories met in July 1961 and agreed on some constitutional provisions to meet the UN deadline of October 1, 1961 for the establishment of the federal union. Among the constitutional provisions that emphasised the equality of the two states there was Article 47(I) of the Federal Constitution, which stated: "No bill to amend the constitution may be introduced if it tends to impair the unity and integrity of the federation."

3. Although President Ahmadou Ahidjo of La Republique du Cameroun, promised at the UN never to interfere in the Southern Cameroons, he used French experts to draft a unitary constitution and using all the political power and taking advantage of the large francophone population he violated the constitution and his earlier pledge. In a fraudulent referendum, the two peoples were asked to vote for a unitary state. With troops deployed on high alert, the arrest of suspects and no campaigning allowed, President Ahidjo got the result he wanted when 99.9 % people were said to have voted in favour of a unitary state.

4. With this referendum, the UN sponsored federal union was abolished by Presidential decree. Southern Cameroons institutions were abolished and the territory was split into two provinces of La Republique du Cameroun. French Cameroonians were appointed as governors and divisional officers with the imposition of the francophone administrative system. The two star federation flag symbolising the union of two distinct states under the UN, was replaced with one star. Southern Cameroons became heavily militarized. In 1984, President Paul Biya, the handpicked successor to Ahmadou Ahidjo, by a Presidential decree completed take over of Southern Cameroons when the whole region came to known as a country of La Republique du Cameroun. By this move (and that of 1972), La Republique du Cameroun, a member of the UN and OAU (AU) violated UN Resolutions 224(III) of November 1948, and 2625 (XXV) of 24 October 1970 that forbid the absorption of Southern Cameroons. From the African perspective, this illegal act equally violated OAU Resolution AGH/Res.16 (I) Cairo, July 1964 that declared the non-violability of boundaries inherited at independence.

5. It should also be recalled that the mandate and Trusteeship Agreements were binding international instruments, which created objective border regimes. “They defined territory under international control”, and to define “a territory means to define its boundaries” and a boundary established by treaty acquires a permanent character.

6. From the League of Nations perspective, it is a fact of history and international law that there were two separate Cameroons, with international boundaries, two separate cultures, two separate colonial histories, two separate Trusteeship Agreements and two separate peoples. The present exercise of sovereignty by La Republique du Cameroun over Southern Cameroons should be recognized as a colonial rule. Therefore, decolonisation of the Southern Cameroons is the central issue. The people of Southern Cameroons cannot lose their right to self-determination by virtue of the take over of their territory by La Republique du Cameroun.

7. The people of Southern Cameroons have made constant efforts to get the regime in Yaounde to negotiate. Unfortunately, such efforts have been met with arrest, imprisonment, torture, contempt and extra-judicial killings. The people of Southern Cameroons believe that they are entitled to their own sovereign state because denial of their right to self-determination would amount to a betrayal of international law. Self-determination is an integral part of human rights law with a universal application. Experience has shown that it is an ingredient of the condition for enduring world peace. Without the enjoyment of the right to self-determination a people forfeit the freedom to exercise all other human rights and fundamental freedoms, be they civil, political, economic, social or cultural.

8. It must be understood that, in the exercise of the right to self-determination the problem does not lie with the claimants of this right; the antagonism, fear and even bloodshed that this right often provokes is consequent upon the denial of by oppressive regimes. The Southern Cameroons National Council (SCNC), which is committed to the peaceful restoration of statehood and sovereignty of Southern Cameroons is labeled as a secessionist movement by La Republique du Cameroun. Cameroun describes the SCNC as a terrorist organisation to undermine the image of this law-abiding peaceful organisation. The government in Yaounde has gone to the extent of sponsoring state terrorism to provoke the SCNC into armed conflict. In such situations, for how long should the international community continue to ignore the legitimate aspirations of Southern Cameroons – the only ex-UN trust territory colonized and occupied by another ex-UN trust territory.

9. UN General Assembly Resolution 1803(XVIII) declares the “right of peoples and nations to permanent sovereignty over their natural wealth and resources” and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights Human Rights affirms in its Article 1(2) the right of peoples to “freely dispose of their natural wealth and resources” for their collective welfare and development. It is only a people who enjoy self-determination that exercise control over their destiny, control and manage their land and natural wealth and resources. The oppressed Southern Cameroonians have lost the control over their destiny, land and natural

wealth and resources. They have been reduced to tenants on their own land and the resources of their land are exploited and managed for the exclusive development and benefit of La Republique du Cameroun. Although Southern Cameroons accounts for 70 percent of the GDP, due to petroleum, it does not receive more than three percent of the investment budget. Even the roads, airports, seaports, agro industries, among others, that existed in Southern Cameroons prior to 1961 have all been closed to make the territory dependent on and subservient to La Republique du Cameroun.

10. In conclusion, the people of Southern Cameroons believe that their right to self determination is to restore the Southern Cameroons which existed as a UN Trust territory under the British Administration, became a self-governing entity in 1954, adopted its constitution (Constitution (Order) in Council 1960, in 1960), attained independence on October 1, 1961 and went into a UN-sponsored federal union with La Republique du Cameroun as equal partners. What La Republique du Cameroun, did to Southern Cameroons is what Ethiopia did to Eritrea, the consequences of which constitute part of the sad history of the abusive use of state sovereignty. The people of Southern Cameroons seek international understanding, support, intervention and mediation to end the occupation of Southern Cameroons by La Republique du Cameroun.

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