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PETITION FROM THE KAMERUN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONCERNING
THE CAMEROONS UNDER UNITED KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

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Office of the Premier,
Buea, Southern Cameroons

30th March 1961

The Secretary-General
United Nations, New York.

Sir,

I forward herewith a petition by the K.N.D.P. concerning the plebiscite held in the Northern Cameroons and shall be grateful for its circulation to the distinguished Delegates of the United Nations Organisation,

I have the honour to be, Sir, Your obedient Servant,

J.N. Foncha

- CC. 1. Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, Buea.
2. Colonial Secretary, London.

PETITION ON THE NORTHERN CAMEROONS PLEBISCITE BY THE
KAMERUN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY, THE GOVERNMENT
PARTY IN THE SOUTHERN CAMEROONS AT ITS EMERGENCY
CONVENTION HELD IN MAMFE ON 26th TO 28th FEBRUARY, 1961.

Through the Secretary-General of the U.N.O. at the re-convened session of the General Assembly beginning on 7th March, 1961.

To the distinguished delegates.

Sirs,

At the Emergency Convention of the Government Party in the Southern Cameroons, the Kamerun National Democratic Party, held in Mamfe soon after the recent

plebiscite in the Northern and Southern Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration, the motion here annexed was unanimously adopted.* "The Convention resolved to petition the General Assembly of the United Nations to reject the results of the Northern Cameroons plebiscite as being a true reflection of the wishes of the Northern Cameroonians regarding their future, and called for a fresh plebiscite in that section of Kamerun at a future date after conditions in the area shall have been made comparable to those which existed in the Southern Cameroons at the time of the last plebiscite."

Sir, in presenting these views to you as the views of our people on the conduct of the plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons, we would like to make the following case:

In 1958 the United Nations sent a Visiting Mission to the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration to assess the feelings of the people in this Territory as to their future. This Mission recommended to the General Assembly that no plebiscite was necessary in the Northern Cameroons since in the opinion of the Mission almost everybody in the Northern Cameroons desired continued association with Northern Nigeria. The General Assembly, however, rejected this recommendation and ordered a plebiscite to be conducted in the Northern Cameroons. The result of the plebiscite vindicated the rejection of the Visiting Mission's recommendation since the freely expressed wishes of the Northern Cameroonians clearly showed that they desired no association with Northern Nigeria. We wish to suggest that this fact be borne in mind in examining the case submitted by us through this petition.

The vote of November, 1959, plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons truly reflected the independent wishes of the Northern Cameroons people, whereas the vote of the recent plebiscite in February, 1961, does not. The Northern Nigerian Government and the other Nigerian political interests, Sirs, after reading the report and conclusions of the above-mentioned Visiting Mission, lived during the November plebiscites in absolute confidence that the Northern Cameroonians were certain to vote in favour of joining them, and therefore did not intervene and interfere seriously in the conduct of that plebiscite. They were shocked by the results which showed that an overwhelming majority of the people did not desire any association with Northern Nigeria. Perhaps with sincerity and goodwill, Sirs,

* Note: Quoted from the minutes of the Mamfe Convention.

but definitely as a result of the terms of reference or the questions put to the people, the United Nations Commissioner at that plebiscite stated in his report that the vote was merely a negative vote against the system of local administration rather than a positive one in favour of complete secession from Nigeria. Because of this provision, a second plebiscite was ordered to be conducted. The Northern Nigerian Government and the other Nigerian political interests took this opportunity to intervene and influence the decision of Northern Cameroonians, and we maintain that its result does not reflect the true and independent views of Northern Cameroonians as to their future.

To illustrate to you that there was strong Nigerian influence and that the views represented by the votes do not truly represent the wishes of Northern Cameroons, we would like to reveal the following:

(a) There was a planned and carefully directed propaganda campaign by the Northern Nigerian Government and the Nigerian political parties as can be proved by the following:

(i) There was a truce between Nigerian political parties to enable them work as a single team towards the retention of the Northern Cameroons within the Federation of Nigeria. The Nigeria "Daily Times" of December, 2nd 1960, stated:

"The Northern peoples' Congress has said that all political parties in Northern Cameroons including the Action Group have agreed to work together in order that the Territory should vote for continued association with Nigeria during the plebiscite of February 11th."

(ii) The "Daily Times" of November 30th, 1960, also stated that the Action Group had sent a delegation which included some Northern Cameroonians to the United Nations on the Northern Cameroons question. This indicates that Nigerian organised and participated in that delegation and that is open interference in an entirely internal affairs of the Northern Cameroons. We wish to say that it was not even a question of indigenous Northern Cameroonians who had sympathies for the Northern Peoples' Congress, Action Group, National Council of Nigeria and the Cameroons, Northern Elements Progressive Union, etc., campaigning in favour of Nigeria in the Northern Cameroons, but a question of the open interference of indigenous Nigerians belonging to these parties and holding responsible positions in them, who

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moved into the Northern Cameroons without restriction to organise campaigns in favour of Nigeria and to campaign there themselves.

(iii) A Minister of the Northern Nigerian Government was appointed "Plebiscite Minister" and sent to the Northern Cameroons to operate and direct campaigns in favour of Nigeria. We quote from the "Daily Times" of February 24th, 1961:

"Big Welcome for 'Plebiscite Ministers'". - Alhaji Muhammadu Bashar, Wambon Daura, Northern Nigeria Minister of Local Government, was given a hero's welcome at Kaduna airport on his return from the Northern Cameroons.

The Minister had been away to Mubi as the political adviser to the Federation of political parties, which campaigned for the return of the Northern Cameroons to Northern Nigeria. He was welcomed by the Premier of Northern Nigeria, Alhaji Sir Ahmadu Bello and members of the Regional Executive Council, as he stepped out of the aircraft.

In a short speech, the Premier congratulated him on successfully representing the Nigerian cause. In reply, the Minister thanked Sir Ahmadu for the honour done him."

(iv) One of the clearest and indisputable proofs of the organised interference of Nigeria, is the fact that £30,000 was voted by Nigerian Federal Government for the plebiscite for a territory which was supposed to have severed all administrative relations with her. This act came to be revealed to the public as a result of a quarrel which broke out between the other Nigerian political parties and the N.P.C. which was accused of using this money to boost up only its own prestige. The following statement by Alhaji Ahman, Northern Nigeria Minister of Health and Acting General Secretary of the N.P.C. was reported in the "Daily Times" of December 2nd, 1960:

"Alhaji Ahman denied the allegation made by Alhaji Ibrahim Imam, Opposition Leader in the Northern House of Assembly that the N.P.C. was spending £30,000 voted by the Federal Government for propaganda purposes to further its aim in the Territory.

He declared: 'I can assure Alhaji Ibrahim Imam that all money voted by the Federal and Northern Regional Governments is being spent on publicity campaign in the interest of the people of the Trust Territory so that when they make their momentous and permanent decision they will all know the issue involved.'."

This statement reveals, firstly that there was a further sum of money voted by the Northern Nigeria Government as distinct from that voted by the Federal

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Government. Although Alhaji Ahman prefers to call this "publicity campaign" designed merely to make Northern Cameroonians "all know the issue involved", we all know that neither the Northern nor the Federal Governments of Nigeria were made the Administering Authority in Northern Cameroons after October, 1st, 1960.

(b) The Local Government reforms which were introduced by the Northern Nigerian Government shortly after the 1959 plebiscite were intended to give the Northern Nigerian Government the administrative machinery through which to intervene and influence the next plebiscite. The Government Administrative staff (mainly Nigerian and British) as well as the Native Authority staff were all carefully screened before being posted to Northern Cameroons. In order to force their influence and wishes on the people they intimidated and victimized the local workers and the local people. Natural rulers or chiefs who tried to resist were humiliated in many ways and disgracefully treated until life became difficult for them.

(c) Therefore, contrary to the United Nations' resolution, there was no complete separation of Northern Cameroons from Nigeria. Nigerian Police, Nigerian Administrative Officers and Nigerian Civil Servants carefully chosen were still serving in Northern Cameroons. The so-called Northern Cameroons Consultative Council was made up of people who were carefully chosen to support Northern Nigeria and who still had vested personal political interests in Nigeria. All these greatly increased Nigerian influence on Northern Cameroons politics in general and in the plebiscite in particular. Even a distinguished representative of this great Organisation took notice of this state of affairs in May last year long after the Northern Cameroons had voted not to become part of Northern Nigeria on the latter's attainment of self-government. The "Daily Times" of 25th May, 1960, reported:

"N. Jacques Kosciuszko-Morizet of France said today that the administrations of Nigeria and the British Northern Cameroons were not being separated quick enough to ensure that there would be no Nigerian influence in the forthcoming plebiscites to determine the future of the Cameroons".

(d) There was no freedom of speech or movement allowed anybody who preached the doctrine of unification, but no restrictions were imposed on integrationists. Instances of intimidation and victimization abound: e.g.

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(i) In Mambilla Gashaka Native Authority area, the District Head of Gembu, Mallam Kabri, caught and locked up people who lectured on Unification. They were released by the District Officer, Mambilla who intervened some time later. Mallam Kabri who was formerly President of the Northern Kamerun National Democratic Party was turbaned as District Head of Gembu.

(ii) Political leaders from the Southern Cameroons and Cameroun Republic were not allowed to lecture in Northern Cameroons. We were in fact advised not to go to Northern Cameroons.

(e) Qualifications of voters at the Plebiscite were rather loose and left much room for dishonesty. Anybody "normally resident in the Northern Cameroons" was entitled to vote. Thus Nigerians were qualified to vote, and as the frontier of Nigeria was still open, many Nigerians could enter and register and vote. It is our belief that the United Nations did not foresee this loophole opened to dishonesty.

(f) The period of two days allowed for voting left much room for manoeuvring. It was stated that the reasons for this arose from the fact that the men and the women in the territory desired to vote on separate days. But it is known that both men and women voted on the first day and again on the second day. It is therefore our belief that the official reason given for the grant of two voting days in the Northern Cameroons cannot be the genuine one.

In the light of the foregoing Sirs, and in the interest of justice and fairplay, as well as the principle of self-determination which the United Nations accepts as one of the guiding principles, we would ask that this august organisation will consider the views expressed by our people in the motion annexed and nullify the results of the plebiscite just completed in the Northern Cameroons.

We would strongly recommend, Sirs, that when you order a fresh plebiscite, its conduct and administration should not be entrusted in the hands of the Administering Authority. In the particular problem of the Cameroons under United Kingdom Administration the choice between joining the Federation of Nigeria and joining the Republic of Cameroun has wider dimensions, which may not have come to the notice of the distinguished members. It is a choice between joining the British Commonwealth on the one hand and quitting the said Commonwealth on

the other, and it would be expecting too much of the British Administration to be absolutely impartial in its conduct of such a plebiscite. The Southern Cameroons, Sirs, has a higher degree of political maturity than the Northern Cameroons. It has a developed local Government system, an indigenous Government staff in almost all fields of Government Service and above all, a Cabinet and Government that are composed mainly of Cameroonians. Yet these factors were not able to render the activities of the British Civil Servants completely impartial. Twenty-six plebiscite supervisors were employed by Her Majesty's Government and sent into each of the 26 electoral constituencies in the Southern Cameroons to conduct a so-called "enlightenment campaign" which turned out in many instances to be an enlightenment campaign for joining the Commonwealth.

If this was so in Southern Cameroons in spite of the safeguards we have mentioned, how much more in the Northern Cameroons where they were lacking? In our view the United Nations themselves should therefore administer and conduct any future plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons or anywhere else in the world if need be.

(illegible)
Secretary-General, K.N.D.P.

(J.N. Foncha)
President-General, K.N.D.P.

- cc. 1. Commissioner of the Southern Cameroons, Buea.
2. Colonial Secretary, London.

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ANNEXE

KAMERUN NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC PARTY CONVENTION AT MAMFE MOTION BY
THE HON. SAM MOFOR

I move that this Convention, taking note:

- (1) Of the unsatisfactory manner which characterized the conduct of the Plebiscite in the Northern Cameroons;
- (2) Of the interference of Nigerian political parties in the Northern Cameroons plebiscite;
- (3) Of the connivance of the British Administering Authority in such interference;

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(a) Deplore the attitude and activities of the British Administering Authority and Northern Nigerian Government as well as of all the other Nigerian political parties for their interference in the Northern Cameroons during the period of the plebiscite.

(b) Declare that the result of the Northern Cameroons plebiscite are not a true reflection of the wishes of the Northern Cameroons people and call upon the United Nations to reject such result as being binding on Northern Cameroonians for their future.

(c) Approach the U.N. that another plebiscite be conducted in the Northern Cameroons at some future date after conditions in the Northern Cameroons shall have been made comparable to those which existed in the Southern Cameroons at the time of the last plebiscite.

(d) Request the National President of the Party to convey these views to the United Nations Organisation.

Moved by: Hon. Sam Mofor
Seconded by: Mr. B.S. Lawan

Dated at Mamfe this 27th day of February, 1961.
