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THE FUTURE OF THE TRUST TERRITORIES OF THE CAMEROONS
UNDER FRENCH ADMINISTRATION AND THE CAMEROONS UNDER
UNITED KINGDOM ADMINISTRATION

Letter dated 24 February 1959 from Mr. Abessolo Nkoudou,
General Secretary of the Union des Jeunesses du Cameroun,
addressed to the Chairman of the Fourth Committee

Note by the Secretariat: The following statement is circulated
to the members of the Fourth Committee in accordance with the
decision taken by the Committee at its 872nd meeting.

Mbal Mayo, 24 February 1959

In reply to your telegram of 20 February indicating the date of our hearing before your Committee, and in response to our desire to be heard by the Fourth Committee, we have the honour to convey to you our humble apologies for being unable to appear owing to the many difficulties existing at present within our young organization. We wished, however, to make this statement to you, in order to express the desire of Cameroonian youth and the Cameroonian people for self-determination and national independence, followed by reunification.

In November 1958, when your last Visiting Mission was in the Cameroons, we presented to it a petition setting out at length our ideas on these key aspirations of the youth and people of our country. We consider that, because of our absence, this petition should be regarded as a formal statement submitted by our young movement.

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Your telegram above-mentioned reached us too late and we cannot effectively act on your invitation. Moreover, our organization's continuing financial difficulties prevent us, in our present situation, from acting on our previously expressed desire for a hearing before your Committee. This communication should, therefore, be recognized as constituting the official statement made by the UJC to the representatives of the Members of the United Nations.

Permit us, on behalf of the young people of the Cameroons, to salute you most warmly and sincerely on your decision to decide as the supreme authority the fate of the Cameroons. We wish you all success in your efforts to achieve a peaceful and final settlement of the Cameroonian problem.

It would, we think, be out of place here to review the history of the coming of European colonialism to the Cameroons, but the relatively short time granted us by your Committee does not permit us to waste a single second. We would rather get to the heart of our statement.

This is what we wish to say:

It is well known that under an agreement between the United Nations and France concluded on 13 December 1946 the Cameroons was placed under the International Trusteeship System. The basic objectives of this System are as follows: (1) achievement of the essential aims leading either to self-government or to independence; (2) application of a policy which will promote the social, cultural, educational and political advancement of the peoples of the territories placed under trusteeship, having regard to the wishes of the peoples concerned.

The Fourth Committee is called upon today to determine and decide, as the supreme authority, whether the objectives laid down in the United Nations Charter and the Trusteeship Agreement aforementioned have been achieved and respected according to your wishes and in the spirit of the international conventions concluded between the United Nations and France and the United Kingdom with regard to the Cameroons.

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We can come out at once and say that these conventions have been complied with and applied in the true spirit of your Organization which is today to ratify or confirm the decision taken by the two mandatory Powers, France and the United Kingdom, which by their own desire have just given their decision on the future of the Cameroons and fixed 1 January 1960 as the date of the country's independence. The people and the youth of the Cameroons are in favour of that date. The United Nations Mission which recently visited this country is also in agreement on this point. The conclusions in its report clearly reflect this magnanimous spirit of the two mandatory Powers and the wishes of the Cameroonian people.

However, the young people of the Cameroons, through their organization, the Union des Jeunesses du Cameroun, are forced to express the misgivings which the determination of these guardians inspire in them when they note France's offer of membership in the Community and Great Britain's offer of membership in the Commonwealth. This clearly proves the desire of these Powers to perpetuate their domination in the Cameroons after United Nations supervision has been abolished. In addition, there is the matter of the monetary zones into which they are trying to incorporate us by force.

We are in favour of complete and sovereign independence. But we are opposed to any solicitations to join a particular community. The young people regard these many solicitations as an imminent threat to their future and wish to accede to independence in the community of African peoples for the resurgence of Africa, freed completely from the legacy of colonialism.

In the light of all these considerations we submit to the Fourth Committee of the United Nations the claims we presented to the last Visiting Mission during its stay in the Cameroons. While it is true that our guardians have promised faithfully to grant some of these claims, others have still not been satisfied and we continue to press them.

(1) Independence for the Cameroons preceded by the reunification of the two territories at present held by France and the United Kingdom, this reunification to take place before the end of 1959 so as to enable the Cameroonian people to achieve independence on 1 January 1960.

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(2) Dissolution of the present Legislative Assembly of the Camercons and the holding of general elections simultaneously in the two Cameroons under the supervision of a strong United Nations commission with the task of observing all the electoral operations from the preparation of the voters' lists to the actual ballot, with the object of electing a Constituent National Assembly for the country as a whole.

Since our resolve is to struggle for independence and reunification, we feel that we ought to describe to you the form that we consider the struggle for the resurgence of the Cameroons should take.

This struggle is tied to the social, cultural, educational, artistic and political advancement of the Cameroons. In the present state of our country, education is a problem of enormous difficulty.

Ninety-five per cent of the adult population is still illiterate. The young people of school age do not have access to education.

In the South Cameroons, where primary education is generally widespread, this form of instruction is still embryonic and serves the propaganda ends of the religious missions. Matters have come to such a pass that public schools account for barely 40 per cent of the school population, whereas the missions in question account for 45 or 50 per cent. In the North, where the population is wholly Moslem, 5 per cent of the children of school age attend school. This is due to a survival of the influence wielded by the aristocracy of the sultans and the lamidos.

With a view to speeding up the advancement of the young, we proposed to the Visiting Mission the establishment in the Cameroons of four lycées and possibly of a Cameroonian university; colleges in each administrative unit, village schools in each population centre or group of villages, and itinerant teachers to wipe out illiteracy throughout the Camercons.

We should like to be able to train skilled workers. For this we need vocational schools to train the necessary teachers for the country's needs. In addition, we would suggest that the States Members of the United Nations should grant the Camercons as many fellowships as France used to grant each year. This would promote educational development in the Cameroons. We realize that all advancement is based on the instruction and education of the masses.

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In order to ensure the economic and social development of the country, agricultural advancement should be tackled first. Our agriculture is shackled to ancestral, primitive methods, and a start could be made with the introduction of industrialization and mechanization. This will ultimately be followed by mechanical, leather and textile industries and others. United Nations assistance in this field would be most useful to us in that it would enable us to frustrate the ambitions of the colonialists who would like to exploit our economic backwardness and subject us to colonial imperialism.

Our absence does our cause great damage but we hope that the above statements will help you to prepare your report sincerely and to submit proposals to the General Assembly with a view to a resolution and recommendation on the future of the Cameroons.

(Signed) ABESSOLO Nkou
