

Speech by H.E. Mr Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Ambassador,  
Permanent Representative

to the United Nations Security Council

**ARRIA - THE HUMANITARIAN CRISIS IN CAMEROON**

New York, 13 May 2019

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Mr President,

First of all, we would like to thank the United States, Germany, the United Kingdom and the Dominican Republic for taking the initiative to organise this first Arria meeting on the humanitarian crisis in the English-speaking regions of Cameroon. This initiative is therefore politically very timely and relevant. It could be a first step towards a possible subsequent follow-up by the Security Council, in a spirit of conflict prevention and mediation. We would also like to thank the participants for their informative and poignant speeches.

Mr President,

Today, I would like to focus on a few specific points and questions.

**Firstly, the importance of the humanitarian crisis in Cameroon should not be underestimated.**

- Belgium is concerned about the growing ramifications of the humanitarian crisis at both national and regional level. In addition to the problems of the English-speaking regions, the humanitarian disaster also stems from the terrorist scourge of Boko Haram and the repercussions of the situation in the Central African Republic and the unrest in Nigeria.

- At the same time, we must recognise that the humanitarian crisis remains one of the most under-funded in the world. The available funding represents just half of the required budget. Urgent action is needed.
- The current humanitarian crisis is also closely linked to the human rights crisis. Human rights abuses and violations must be investigated promptly and thoroughly and the authors must be held responsible. The recent visit of UNHCHR Bachelet revealed encouraging signs of Cameroon's willingness to cooperate with the United Nations to find solutions. We hope that this will be a prelude to closer cooperation with regional and international human rights mechanisms.

**My second message concerns the solutions, particularly to the crisis in the English-speaking regions.**

- Only inclusive and committed dialogue between the Cameroonian parties can result in the necessary progress. The Prime Minister's statement last Thursday that his government was ready to engage in dialogue with the armed separatists is an important signal in this regard. Concrete actions must follow.
- Given the holistic nature of the crisis, we must all provide a response: at the sub-regional, regional and UN levels, as well as at the level of Member States and humanitarian, religious and faith-based actors.
- This response must be coordinated in close dialogue with the Cameroonian authorities.

- Belgium also remains fully prepared to support such dialogue. As a federal state, we can share our experience in decentralisation and the promotion of bilingualism.
- Pending such dialogue, it remains absolutely essential that the humanitarian actors and NGOs involved have full access to displaced persons and refugees, in accordance with international humanitarian law.
- In addition, we must become collectively involved in order to guarantee sufficient financial resources to deal with this crisis, in particular by supporting the negotiating capacities of the affected communities.

**Finally, we would also like to take this opportunity to ask some questions about the way forward.**

- As the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, Ms Bachelet, said at the end of her visit to Cameroon, the stakes are high. In this regard, we are convinced that the President's summary of this Arria meeting could form the basis for more regular follow-up. The Council should also receive the regular report on the United Nations Regional Office for Central Africa (UNOCA).
- Finally, how do the speakers see the potential for greater AU/ECCAS involvement in the Cameroonian crisis?