



# Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative

working for the *practical* realisation of human rights in the countries of the Commonwealth

## Item 6

24<sup>th</sup> session of the UN Human Rights Council - 20 September 2013

### Oral Statement on the adoption of the Outcome Report on the Universal Periodic Review of Cameroon

*Speaker: Praveen Gunaseelan*

Mr President, Commonwealth Human Rights Initiative or CHRI welcomes Cameroon's ratification of various international human rights treaties.

These are positive steps and we encourage Cameroon to accept recommendations to continue with its efforts to ratify human rights instruments including the Convention on enforced disappearances and the Optional Protocol on torture.

Regrettably, we note that journalists, human rights defenders and political parties that criticise government policies face harassment. Ahead of parliamentary elections this September, reports indicate that eleven media houses have been suspended by Cameroon's National Communications Council. We are concerned about the impact on media freedom and urge Cameroon to accept recommendations to respect freedom of expression.

Cameroon's Penal Code contains provisions that criminalise consensual adult same-sex conduct. This law is incompatible with Cameroon's human rights obligations, entrenches homophobia and reinforces stigma and prejudice based on sexual orientation. Further, arbitrary arrests and detention based on sexual orientation and gender identity are common, often accompanied with the abuse of due process safeguards.

CHRI urges Cameroon to accept the recommendations to review these legal provisions.

We also note that human rights defenders that work on sexual orientation and gender identity issues face threats, intimidation and harassment.

CHRI therefore strongly urges Cameroon to accept recommendations to:

- Protect the rights of human rights defenders working on sexual orientation and gender identity issues;
- Investigate and address threats, harassment and violence against individuals based on sexual orientation and gender identity and
- Halt prosecutions of consensual adult same-sex conduct under the Penal Code.

Thank you.