



# International Trade Committee

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Rt Hon Elizabeth Truss MP  
Secretary of State  
Department for International Trade  
King Charles Street  
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London  
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12 May 2021

Dear Liz

I am writing to you regarding the UK's continuity agreement with Cameroon and the current situation in respect of human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law in that country.

On 9 March, the UK and Cameroon signed a continuity Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which has been provisionally applied. The text of the agreement was laid before Parliament on 20 April ([CP 418](#)).

The [Parliamentary Report](#) accompanying the text of the continuity agreement explains that the EPA reproduces "non-execution" provisions in relation to the corresponding EU agreement (the EU-Central Africa interim EPA):

*Annex IV of the United Kingdom-Cameroon EPA replicates the language of the Cotonou Agreement [the EU's agreement with the African, Caribbean and Pacific (ACP) States, signed in 2000, which "provides a framework for the EU's political, development and trade relations with these 79 developing countries" (para 95)] and the EU-Central Africa iEPA to ensure that respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law, and good governance remain as essential and fundamental elements of the United Kingdom-Cameroon EPA; and that if needed, appropriate measures can be taken in the event of a violation of these elements. (para 97)*

Annex IV ([CP 418](#), p 593) states that "Respect for human rights, democratic principles and the rule of law [...] shall underpin the domestic and international policies of the UK and of Cameroon, and constitute the essential elements of this Agreement" (para 5). If either party "considers the other to be failing to fulfil an obligation stemming from respect for the essential and fundamental elements of this Agreement", they are to attempt to address this in the first instance through dialogue, information-sharing and consultations (para 7). Annex IV further provides that:

*If this process does not lead to an acceptable solution for both the UK and Cameroon, if consultations are refused, or in exceptional cases of particularly serious and flagrant violation of the essential or fundamental elements of this Agreement, requiring an immediate reaction, appropriate measures may be taken. (para 9)*

*Such measures would be taken in accordance with international law, and proportional to the violation, with priority given to those measures which least disrupt the application of this Agreement. Suspension of this Agreement would be a measure of last resort. (para 10)*

Serious concerns have been raised in the international community regarding the conduct of Cameroon government forces in the current conflict with Anglophone separatists. Notably, a resolution unanimously agreed by the US Senate ([Resolution 684](#), 1 January 2021) stated that:

*numerous credible reports from human rights monitors, including the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, have documented the excessive use of force by government security forces against Cameroonian civilians living in the Anglophone regions, including the burning of villages, the use of live ammunition against protestors, arbitrary arrest and detention, torture, sexual abuse, and killing of civilians, including women, children, and the elderly*

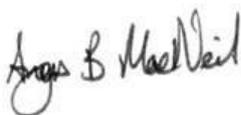
The Senate resolution noted with approval that in December 2019 the US Government terminated Cameroon's ability to benefit from preferential trade terms under the African Growth and Opportunity Act because “the Government of Cameroon currently engages in gross violations of internationally recognized human rights”.

In view of all this, I wish to ask you what consideration the UK Government has given to invoking the non-execution provisions in Annex IV of the UK-Cameroon EPA in response to the current situation in Cameroon.

I would also like to request that you set out the general principles which underlie the Government's approach to determining when and how it might potentially invoke the non-execution provisions in the continuity agreements with ACP countries.

In accordance with our usual practice, this letter, along with your reply, will be published on the Committee's webpage.

Yours sincerely,



Angus Brendan MacNeil  
Chair of the International Trade Committee