

Statement by the Bakweri Land Claims Committee (BLCC) following the announcement on the Privatisation of the Tea Estates of the Cameroon Development Corporation

In the last few days, information has been carried by the public Radio and the Press to the effect that the Cameroon Government has decided, unilaterally, to privatise the tea estates of the Cameroon Development Corporation.

The position of the BLCC has always been that most of the lands on which stands the plantation development of the Cameroon Development Corporation are private native lands, so declared before independence by the Colonial Administration, and which are contained in the German Land Register called the Grundbuch. In 1974, the Land Law promulgated by the President of Cameroon stipulated that all lands contained in the Grundbuch are private property, thus re-affirming the declaration of the Colonial Administration in this regard.

The stand of the BLCC is that while privatisation may result in the better management of this giant agro-industrial corporation, it must be done after proper consultation and agreement of the indigenous landowners for, it requires the three elements of land, labour and capital to effectively exploit plantation development. The BLCC which has spearheaded the battle for the restoration of native ancestral lands for over half a century now, is totally bewildered by the action of Government, seemingly acting as trustee over native lands, at a time when the country is independent, and as if the indigenous landowners are still a subject people colonised by the Government of Cameroon.

The Bakweri people, sitting in a General Assembly of Chiefs, Notables and Elites, unanimously mandated the BLCC to speak for them on matters pertaining to their lands expropriated without compensation by a ruthless Imperial Government. To this end, the BLCC has contacted the IMF and the World Bank, the main sponsors of the Privatisation Programme, and have petitioned the Secretary General of the United Nations pursuant to the 1503 Procedure concerning Violation of Land Rights of an Indigenous Ethnic Minority. This Communication has been acknowledged and the Government of Cameroon has been served notice. Accordingly, at an extra-ordinary meeting of Trustees of the Bakweri Land Claims Committee held on Wednesday 5th June, 2002 under the distinguished chairmanship of Chief David Ikome Moline of Muea, it was resolved as follows:

1. That any attempt, however disguised, to cede Bakweri private ancestral lands to third parties, on terms unknown to the landowners, will be stoutly resisted, as no person in this country is above the laws passed by Parliament and promulgated by the President of the Republic.
2. That urgent instructions be issued by the Secretary General of the BLCC to the Chief Legal Adviser of the BLCC, Professor Ndiva Kofele Kale, to initiate legal proceedings against any person, group or company that enters into *ex parte* arrangements over Bakweri lands and, if the allegation that the Hon. John Niba Ngu, a former General Manager of the CDC, is fronting for such a group, he would be well advised to inform his backers that they risk losing their capital should they persist in speculative adventurism.

Chief David Ikome Moline

1st Vice President, For: President, BLCC

Mola Njoh Litumbe

Secretary General BLCC