LETTER DATED 11 SEPTEMBER 1987 FROM THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CAMEROON TO THE UNITED NATIONS ADDRESSED TO THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE CONFERENCE

May I request that my closing statement in the plenary, on behalf of the delegation of Cameroon be issued as a document of the Conference.

(Signed) Paul Bamela ENGO
Chairman of the Delegation of Cameroon
Ambassador, Permanent Representative
Annex

STATEMENT BY THE PERMANENT REPRESENTATIVE OF CAMEROON TO THE UNITED NATIONS AT THE 14TH MEETING OF THE INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE, ON 11 SEPTEMBER 1987

... As a member of the Non-aligned as well as the African Groups, the Cameroon delegation would like to preface its brief comments by thanking the Chairmen of both peace-oriented movements for expressing clearly the broad concerns of Cameroon. We also wish to register our particular appreciation to our brother, Ambassador Mudenge, the Chairman of the Non-aligned Group, for the maturity and dedication he brought to bear on the final phases of the negotiations.

We cannot omit to welcome the presence of the non-governmental organizations (NGOs), who continue to make a tremendous contribution to global peace and development by postulating alternative ideas based on an inspiration for the common good. We regret that they were excluded from some of our endeavours and hope they will always be given the opportunity of presence and participation. The United Nations was inspired by the will and determination of the "peoples of the world". The actions of States tend sometimes to ignore the universal aspirations of "peoples". The NGOs are perhaps our best source of information and ideas, representing as they do the voice of the silent majority of the world's peoples.

... My delegation had hoped that we could, in silence and serenity, adopt the Final Document, which has emerged from very delicate negotiations and in circumstances in which no interest group at this Conference can claim victory. Unfortunately, we have listened to requests for the views expressed to be documented officially, a step that would depart from the ideal of submitting to the international community a single statement of our collective will at this stage.

We would have liked not to follow this precedent, but it seems to us imperative that we give an indication of the sacrifice which Cameroon, in an African setting, has made, a sacrifice in perspectives as well as aspirations.

Looking back at the African proposals formally submitted in document A/CONF.130/4, we cannot be overly enthusiastic about the Final Document. There appears to us to be no evidence that any other alignment of interest has reason to be less enthusiastic.

The preamble of the Final Document forcefully declares our joint desire to enhance and strengthen the commitment of the international community to disarmament as well as to development, giving impetus to renewed efforts in both fields.

To most of contemporary Africa, the absence of peace and security is the direct result of the absence of development. One of the critical causes, if not the central cause of underdevelopment, is the undesirable resort to armament,
inflicting on the planning process tremendous waste in terms of human, financial, natural and technological resources, blocking the international flow of trade upon which our earnings depend and hindering the role which friends in the developed countries could play in providing true development assistance. The boom of the military industrial complex has meant doom for our fragile economies on a continent which offers, as it did previous generations, sustaining natural and human resources. Young nations embrace imposed illusions and a false sense of security.

It is for this reason that we regret the over-emphasis on the issue of security. The reference to these adverse conditions has found sustenance only in the oasis of a preambular paragraph.

We do not wish to comment in detail on the plight of the proposal to give concrete substance to the clear role that disarmament would play in the development process. We would merely place on record our dismay that the proposal to establish a fund has not been welcomed as we had expected. It is our hope that in the United Nations review recommended, this issue will receive the appropriate attention it deserves.

A follow-up mechanism to the agreed Action Programme has proved to be an imperative. We regret that this Conference concludes without a clear view of the future of the ideas we have postulated for enhancing the endeavours of generations to come. We may, at best, expect that the little door opened in the Action Programme will provide opportunity to plan a productive strategy for implementing what we have adopted here today.

All told, we did not object to the adoption of the Final Document because we regard it as a political statement, reflecting a consensus of ideas from which concrete action will emerge. While the nations represented here may take comfort from the success of its production in such a short time, it is to the application of its contents in international relations that historians will judge the scope of our commitment to development and human survival.

We, as an African nation, have swallowed bitter pills. Yet we do not share the despondency of those who go so far as to insinuate that the Conference has failed.

If this Document represents no victory for any nation, it remains a victory for our universal commitment to multilateralism and for the highest aspirations of the United Nations system to provide a haven for the harmonization of the actions of States. No international accord can satisfy everyone in a world of such diversity of interests. It is enough that it inspires reasonable hopes for the future. This text has launched a relationship never before universally recognized. Failure or success will be judged, not by its contents, but by what States make of it.