

Flygtningenævnets baggrundsmateriale

Bilagsnr.:	327
Land:	Cameroun
Kilde:	Nationalt ID-center
Titel:	Cameroon: Attestation of documents
Udgivet:	10. november 2023
Optaget på baggrundsmaterialet:	21. marts 2024



10 November 2023

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Cameroon: Attestation of documents

Introduction

The following note provides a description of how documents are attested by the Cameroonian Ministry of External Relations in order to be used outside of Cameroon. The note also includes a description of how a “certified copy” might look and of the stamps certifying payment of the due fees.

The content of this note is based on information obtained by the Danish National ID Centre (NIDC), at meetings with representatives of the Cameroonian Ministry of External Affairs. The meetings took place in Yaoundé in March 2019.

Procedure for attestation

According to the Cameroonian Ministry of External Relations, Cameroonian documents require attestation for extraterritorial validity and it is therefore possible to have documents attested by the “Immunities and Consular Affairs” section of the Ministry of External Relations.¹

Applications of legalisation are submitted by the concerned person to the office of the Ministry of External Relations (hereinafter: MEA) in either Yaoundé or Douala. The application shall contain indication of both the reason why the person needs such an attestation and of the country where the legalised document shall be used.²

Applicants must submit:

- The original document
- A certified copy of the document
- Proof of payment of the due fee, i.e. “a fiscal stamp” worth one-thousand Francs.

¹ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

² Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

As for civil status documents, applicants are also required to submit a document signed by the mayor that certifies the existence of the original document in the register of competence.³

The Office of Protocol within the MEA issues a receipt with a unique number to the applicant, as soon as it receives the required documents. At this stage, the file will be sent to three different offices inside the ministry for controlling the authenticity of the document.⁴ Documents are often verified by phone with employees of the competent ministries – i.e. with the Ministry of Decentralisation and Territorial Development with regard to civil status documents and with the Ministry of Higher Education for diplomas from universities.⁵

The entire procedure, from registration of the application to attestation, takes from one to three days. The final attestation appears on the back of the certified copy as a blue stamp and the signature of the competent employee.⁶

Certified copies

A copy may be constructed in two different ways:

- It may be made as a photocopy of the “souche”, a photocopy of the matrix of which the original document has been detached when issued. The souche can be found at the civil status registry where the event was originally registered, or
- It may be a handwritten “copie - copy”. The process of purchasing the “copie - copy” and how it may be used as a legally valid copy of a civil certificate is, however, unclear. The NIDC team observed copies being purchased from private retailers operating close by some civil status registries, and that the same retailer may also offer to fill in the information for the buyer.

It further appears that the retailers aim to match the layout of the “copie - copy” with the original layout. As the layout has changed over time, the retailer will have to carry many different formats. This information could not be confirmed by Cameroonian authorities.

Whether the copy is a handwritten “copie - copy” or a photocopy of the “souche”, the information should be approved by staff at the local civil status registry, where the original registration was made.⁷ The endorsement of the copy by personnel of the council is visible in the form of a red checkmark.⁸

³ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

⁴ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

⁵ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

⁶ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

⁷ National Civil Status Registration Office, Yaoundé, March 2019.

⁸ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

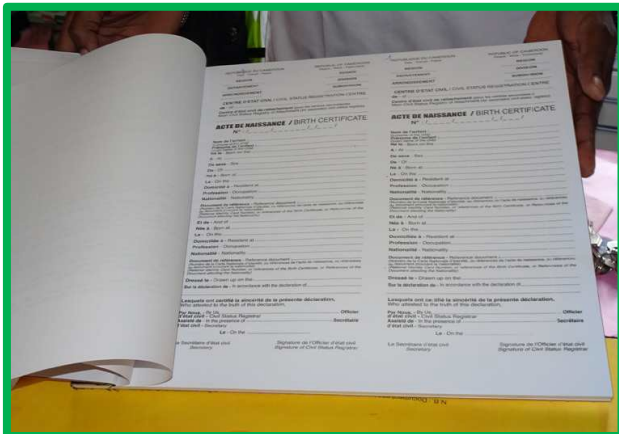


Image 1: The “souche” is a photocopy of the matrix, where from the original of the document is detached. (NIDC reference material)



Image 2: Private retailers selling “copie – copie” forms. (NIDC reference material)

The cost of the attestation by the Ministry of External Relations

The attestation by the MEA costs 1000 Francs that is paid by purchasing “fiscal stamps”. Fiscal stamps are produced by the Ministry of Finance in a format that

changes over time and depending on the place of issuance. There are printed fiscal stamps and regular postmark-like stamps. In rural areas, fiscal stamps are added manually.⁹

In addition, copies must carry a stamp attesting conformity, which is paid by purchasing a “council stamp”. Council stamps are postmark-like stamps, with a value of 200 francs until 2014, 600 francs between 2014 and 2017 and 500 francs since 2017. A sample of a council stamp is visible below. The sample was purchased in March 2019. NIDC has further information pertaining to technical specifics of the sample.



Image 3: Council stamp under normal light (NIDC reference material)

Digital legalisation

The manual attestation of documents is supposed to be digitalised at a later stage. This means that a legalised document is supposed to be scanned and uploaded in DIPLOMAT (Cameroonian consular IT-system) and thereafter sent to the diplomatic mission of the country, where the document is supposed to be used.¹⁰

⁹ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019; General Manager and Director, National Civil Status Registration Office, Yaoundé, March 2019.

¹⁰ Ministry of External Relations, Yaoundé, March 2019.

References

Oral sources

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