

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace – Work – Fatherland

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

OFFICE OF THE SPEAKER

9th Legislative Period

LEGISLATIVE YEAR 2017

1st Ordinary Session

(March 2017)

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix – Travail – Patrie

**SPEECH BY THE ELDEST MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL
ASSEMBLY AT THE OPENING OF THE FIRST ORDINARY
SESSION FOR THE 2017 LEGISLATIVE YEAR**

Yaounde, 13 March 2017

- **The Eldest Member of the Senate;**
- **Mr Prime Minister, Head of Government;**
- **The Chief Justice of the Supreme Court;**
- **The Attorney General of the Supreme Court;**
- **Members of Government;**
- **Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps;**
- **Honourable Parliamentarians and Colleagues;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

Permit me to first and foremost thank God for the breath of life He continues to give me. This therefore gives me a singular honour to once more address this important assembly of personalities, on behalf of the Provisional Bureau of the National Assembly, at the opening of the 2017 legislative year which is equally marked by the opening today of the first ordinary session of our House for the year 2017.

Permit me to also express the sorrow in my heart. Although our reunions have remained convivial, warm and solemn as usual, they are tainted with death. Indeed, death has struck one of us again. Hon. Joseph Mboui was snatched by death on 28 February 2017 in France from an illness. The CPDM elected representative of the Sanaga Maritime constituency was exercising his third mandate. As Chairperson of the Committee on Education, Vocational Training and Youth, and high-profile University don with proven experience, Hon. Mboui's views had weight during our debates. May his soul rest in peace!

We also commit to the Lord, the soul of Mr Joseph Charles DOUMBA, who died on 5 March 2017 in Yaounde. The deceased was the Secretary General of our august House from 1966 to 1974.

Another death that is still fresh in our memories is that of Major General Jacob Kodji and his companions in misfortune, victims of an helicopter crash on 22 January 2017 in TCHOFO in BOGO Sub-division in the Far North Region. The supreme sacrifice of these brave soldiers, fallen on the battle field, is a call for concern. It should trigger in us more patriotism and more commitment in defending our nation. I therefore wish to

reaffirm the unprecedented support of the People's Representatives to the defence and security forces in the war Cameroon is waging against the Boko Haram terrorist sect. I am convinced that this sacrifice together with that of all the others who have fallen on the battle field will not go in vain.

After the Head of State, Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces, the National Assembly now joins the entire nation to express its deep compassion and extend its sincere condolences to all the bereaved families.

May you rise for a minute of silence in memory of all the departed.

SILENCE

- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Honourable Colleagues,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In spite of the sorrow surrounding us, we have at least reasons to be elated. In actual fact, the victory, the crowning achievement of the Indomitable Lions at the final of the 2017 Africa Cup of Nations in Gabon has reconciled the Cameroonian people with football and, for want of a better expression, its team. Besides the victory, the performance of the Indomitable Lions during this tournament was simply excellent. It was the performance of conquerors on an onslaught for their country's honour first.

On behalf of all the Members of the National Assembly here present, I say congratulations to the Cameroon National Football Team, to its technical trainers and to its entire leadership. **Well done the Lions!** You now have as duty and assignments to go forward, to maintain the lion spirit and to always keep the Republic's flag flying very high.

You were once African champions and today you are again. This is attributed first to your talents, your cohesion spirit, your patriotism, your understanding of a nation and general interest. Your conduct is therefore a good lesson for all compatriots: patriotism, unity and cohesion are the values that you surely

wanted to inculcate in Cameroonians, through your tour of the ten Regions. **Congratulations once more to the Lions.**

- **Your Excellencies,**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This obviously pushes me to broach here what is henceforth agreeably termed "the Anglophone problem". This problem has, for some time now, triggered off social unrest in the North West and South West Regions. Amongst the recent incidents in this regard, I would like to point out and castigate the arson that ravaged the Faculty of Medicine of the University of Bamenda in the night of 3 March 2017 and the destruction of the administrative block of the Government High School AKWAYA

February 2017. These incidents have the effect of reducing the pace of Government effort aimed at infusing knowledge into the youth for the development of the nation.

At the same time, I wish to commend the countermove to normalize things. The political elite, religious figures, members of the civil society, traditional rulers have all joined the Head of State in appealing for dialogue and peace. I encourage all past, present or future initiatives in this regard.

I hail in particular the recent creation by the Head of State, His Excellency PAUL BIYA, of a national commission on the promotion of bilingualism and multiculturalism. We should see this structure as a privileged framework to enhance the value of our bilingualism which, it should be remembered, is one of the major hallmarks of our nation. This commission equally appears to be a platform for unity.

The People's Representatives appeal to all and sundry to continue with the dialogue started. I am therefore happy with the somehow timid improvement being observed now. This is already a significant stride though insufficient. We need to think of the future of Cameroon and that of our children.

Let us allow ourselves to be overcome by the Lion Spirit. Like the Indomitable Lions, let us be united and targeting the same goal. Like the Indomitable Lions, Cameroonians are a team, with differences and individual styles, but moving in total cohesion. Let us not forget the saying that "united we stand, divided we fall". My wish, my greatest wish, is to see the situation normalize once and for all. And we are capable of having a normalized situation provided that it is our wish.

In this regard, all possible avenues should be explored in resolving this matter notably the acceleration of the decentralisation process.

- **Your Excellencies,**
- **Honourable Colleagues,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like to say a word concerning the recess that has ended today. It was characterized by numerous activities that included:

- the organization in this Chamber of the first edition of the Youth Parliament on 9 February 2017. It was an opportunity for youths to be informed about the integration possibilities available in the agro-pastoral sector. The event was one of the major highlights of the celebration of the 51st edition of the Youth Day which was a success nationwide;
- the brilliant participation of the women of the National Assembly in the commemoration of the International Women's Day on 8 March 2017. An occasion that was preceded by a series of activities that confirmed the know-how of the women of our august Institution;

- at the international level, I am delighted to mention the election of our compatriot and colleague, Hon. NKODO DANG Roger, President of the Pan-African Parliament, as member of the African Union High-level Panel charged with reforming the organs of the Union. This happened during the continental organization's recent summit in Addis Ababa.

The panel shall be headed by the Rwandan Head of State, His Excellency Paul KAGAME.

With this good news, I declare open the proceedings of the first ordinary session of the National Assembly for the 2017 Legislative year.

- **Long Live the National Assembly,**
- **Long live Cameroon and its illustrious Leader, His Excellency Paul BIYA, President of the Republic, Head of State and Commander-in-Chief of the Armed Forces!**

Thank you!

