

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace – Work – Fatherland

NATIONAL ASSEMBLY

SPEAKER'S OFFICE

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(November 2016)

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix – Travail – Patrie

ASSEMBLEE NATIONALE

OPENING SPEECH
BY
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SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY OF CAMEROON

Yaounde, 10 November 2016

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

After His Excellency Paul BIYA, President of the Republic, Head of State, on behalf of all Members of the National Assembly of Cameroon and myself, I wish to first and foremost discharge the duty of recalling to mind the several compatriots who lost their lives in the Eseka train tragedy on Friday 21 October 2016 on the Yaounde-Douala railway line.

I equally wish to express our sympathy and compassion to the numerous families bereaved. Lastly, I wish to extend our wishes for a speedy recovery to all the injured who are still hospitalized.

May you rise for a minute of silence in remembrance of the departed victims of that ghastly accident.

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SILENCE
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- **Mr President 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, Ambassadors and
Representatives of International Organizations;**
- **Honourable Members of the National Assembly and
Dear Colleagues;**
- **Distinguished Members of the Civil Society;**
- **Distinguished Guests;**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen;**

In spite of Cameroon's bereavement, I wish to warmly welcome you to the National Assembly for this plenary sitting that is devoted to the opening of the third ordinary session of our House for the 2016 legislative year - an exceptional circumstance as this session is coming up at a moment of great expectation.

In actual fact, the Africa Women Cup of Nations (AFCON), which our country has the honour to host for the first time, kicks off in a few days. The organization of this competition in Cameroon is not only an honour to us but it is equally a sign of the strong political will of the country's leadership to support the national sports movement, and to promote all the disciplines whether they are male or female competitions. The President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, has made the event a point of honour.

The awaited competition is therefore organized under his aegis so as to offer Cameroon, Africa and the rest of the World, a spectacular sports jamboree. Moreover, this competition is, undoubtedly, another opportunity for compatriots to enhance Cameroon's image and confirm our country's legendary hospitality.

Beyond the challenge linked to a perfect organization, the women's AFCON in Cameroon should equally be the moment for us nationals to show through our behaviour and patriotism, our unreserved respect and total consideration for women. Let us therefore support the Indomitable Lionesses against all the odds. Whether they are leading or being led, they must remain

our valiant and courageous Lionesses. **Therefore, forward the Lionesses!!!**

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

In accordance with the provisions of the Constitution and the usual practice in our House, the present session of the National Assembly is devoted mainly to the scrutiny and adoption of the State budget for the new financial year which for the case in point starts on 1 January 2017.

This session is opening in a world context characterized by growing insecurity and the persistence of a sluggish oil market. As it is the case with several other States, Cameroon has not been spared from the repercussions of this global context.

However, there is need to note with satisfaction some resilience at the national level, thanks to the pertinent development options initiated by the President of the Republic and implemented by the Government. The ambassadors of our House to the National Commission charged with the Monitoring and Execution of the Investment Budget have, for instance, noted a significant improvement in the execution of the said

budget, as compared to the preceding years, in spite of the fact that dishonest entrepreneurs continue to indulge in bad practices with the complicity of authorities and engineers charged with monitoring works. The good results of tax recovery should equally be pointed out. Our wish is to see this action continue with improvement so as to enable the State to always honour its commitments.

Concerning treasury bonds, given the results achieved, the People's Representatives express their satisfaction with the success recorded in the operation. The initiative actually arouses enthusiasm which, I am convinced, heralds a better future as concerns cooperation between the State and national or international investors. The huge amount of money raised is testimony of the involvement and especially the adherence of financial partners to the Head of State's manifesto.

On this latter point, we already express our satisfaction with the significant progress made concerning major anchor projects. They are implemented on a scale of preference, as concerns the policy of Greater Achievements which, as you know, is the hobbyhorse of the ongoing seven-year term of office. We also note with satisfaction, the development of infrastructure in the

health sector. This heralds an obvious improvement in the technical equipment in future. Nevertheless, it would be recommendable to brainstorm with a view to improving this sector, so that public health should really be within the reach of the public. The discontent of the health personnel has intensified somehow of recent and people's protests are legion, owing especially to the difficulties faced by patients in accessing treatment. The cost of treatment is reportedly exorbitant compared to the purchasing power of a low class Cameroonian, who is a potential patient.

- **Your Excellencies,**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

On another score, the resilience I mentioned earlier was equally, I am convinced, the outcome of the policy of diversifying Cameroon's economy embarked upon for some time now, with agriculture as the main priority. It is necessary that we reinforce its competitiveness especially with the new dispensation resulting from the Economic Partnership Agreement that our country has just signed with Europe. I strongly wish that this free trade agreement should actually be a vector of development, an instrument to combat the high cost of living and to enhance the home industry in Cameroon.

With regard to markets, the achievements noticed in 2016 especially in the area of trade give us a lot of hope. These achievements have to do with the promotion of local consumption and the exportation of Cameroonian products, as well as containing inflation. This is an opportunity for me to tell the relevant services not to rest on their laurels but to redouble vigilance especially in this period of end-of-year festivities. Any unjustified shortage, unnecessary speculations and unholy practices such as the siphoning of cooking gas or the reconversion of tainted rice must be severely curbed.

- **Your Excellencies,**

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

In his address to the Cameroonian youth on 10 February 2016, the President of the Republic announced the launch of a three-year "Special Youth" plan. In 2016, the fundamentals of this initiative were laid. It seems to me that 2017 should be the year of effective takeoff of the "Special Youth" plan. In any case, that is my wish today: the wish to make the Cameroonian youth a complete entrepreneur in various domains. The integration plan in that respect speaks for itself namely: training, funding, support right to the attainment of autonomy.

The National Assembly simply recommends fairness and transparency in the piloting of this important initiative.

The ongoing choice of professionalization in Higher Education, revolving around the duo **training-employability**, falls squarely in line with Government's will to transform today's youth into tomorrow's entrepreneur. At the end of training, a student should be capable of being self-employed. Better still, he or she should be able to create employment.

The National Assembly hereby encourages training in new disciplines. In that regard, I hail the opening of a **High-Tech Centre** at the Yaounde National Advanced Polytechnic School. However, given our present economic context, it would be appropriate not to neglect the classical professions particularly that of civil engineering in order not only to ensure a relay in the domain, but also to enable nationals to become future main designers and technical service-providers in the area of major anchor projects. The second generation agriculture hinged on mechanization also requires young well-trained entrepreneurs with a very profile.

- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would feel bad if I ended this speech without mentioning the peculiar security situation in our country. As you all know, Cameroon has, since 2012, been waging war against the Boko

Haram Islamic sect in its northern region. From some objective points of view, we can affirm that the Boko Haram sect has reduced in its capacity to attack. The security situation in the northern region has therefore improved. To that end, we will never stop hailing the bravery, professionalism and commitment of our defence and security forces.

Nevertheless, **let us not be deceived**. Although the activities of the Boko Haram sect have reduced, the sect is still a nuisance. This is evidenced in the attacks in the night of last 23 October in Mayo-Sava. Suicide missions, sudden attacks with explosives, the theft of cattle and foodstuffs, and other targeted assassinations are therefore the sect's new modus operandi. This means that the war against Boko Haram is not over. It has rather entered an insidious phase that still warrants us to be more vigilant, more supportive to our defence and security forces and more adherent to the will of the Head of State, Commander-in-chief of the armed forces to subdue the Boko Haram. "Global threat, global solution", President Paul Biya had declared. This solution is incumbent on everyone, the Government and all the active forces.

I would now like to, once more, salute the maturity of Cameroonians, especially their spirit of solidarity and patriotism. Above all, I wish to deferentially express my profound gratitude to the First Couple for their constant intervention with multifaceted assistance to the defence forces deployed in the field, the bereaved families, internally displaced persons, refugees and vigilante committees which need guidance and also to stay on.

As regards the management of internally displaced persons and refugees, the National Assembly fully supports the stance of President Paul BIYA as disclosed in New York on 20 September 2016 during the Leaders' Summit on Refugees in the following words: the need for Cameroon to continue to provide and increase relief supplies to the three hundred and fifty thousand refugees in Cameroon and to also seek greater support from the international community.

I would like at this juncture to deplore what is developing into a new form of terrorism - the social malaise now affecting the cyberspace, that is, the insidious effects of the social media.

The social media, which was initially perceived as a medium for online communication and information sharing, is now being

used for misinformation, and even intoxication and manipulation of consciences thereby instilling fear in the general public. In fact, it has become as dangerous as a missile. This unbecoming use of the social media to disseminate misleading information is all the more dangerous because it is the handiwork of amateurs whose ranks, unfortunately, continue to swell and who do not have a sense of etiquette and decorum. In a nutshell, the social media has become a real social pandemic in Cameroon. Hence, the People's Representatives are, through my voice, appealing to all and sundry to adopt responsible behaviour. Hackers should therefore know that they are potential victims themselves, particularly as they run the risk of being indicted. I urge the appropriate authorities to see the pressing need to track down and neutralize the culprits of cybercrimes.

Let us exercise the right to freedom of speech which, on the whole, is a noble right. **However, we should know that there is a limit to freedom, for freedom without limit stifles freedom.**

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

Before rounding off my address, I would like to discharge my duty of presenting the activities of our House during recess. Parliamentary diplomacy was more hectic with a total of twenty delegations that attended meetings namely :

- the Conference of Presidents of African Parliaments in Midrand from 4 - 5 April 2016;
- the Homeland and Global Forum as part of CRANS MONTANA in Brussels from 19 - 22 October 2016;
- lastly, the Annual General Assembly of the Parliamentary Network on the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund in the United States.

Hon. NKODO DANG, the President of the Pan-African Parliament, also led two of our parliamentary delegations: the first attended the Committee Meeting in Midrand from 28 July to 5 August 2016 to prepare the October Session of the Pan-African Parliament, and the second attended the Third Ordinary Session of the Pan-African Parliament in Sharm El Sheikh (Egypt) from 10 - 13 October 2016.

At the internal level, the National Assembly received a delegation of Saudi MPs who were in Cameroon for a working and friendship visit. Apart from that, your humble servant received in audience several heads of diplomatic missions including the new French Ambassador to Cameroon.

All these activities plus those I could not mention here certainly contributed in sustaining the credibility and influence of our House on the international scene.

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

That said, I now declare open the deliberations of the 3rd Ordinary Session of our Chamber for the 2016 legislative year.

- **Long live the National Assembly!**
- **Long live Cameroon with its illustrious Leader, His Excellency Paul BIYA, President of the Republic and Commander-in-chief of the Armed Forces.**

Thank you.