

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTERE DES RELATIONS EXTERIEURES

DIRECTION DES AFFAIRES D'EUROPE



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

DEPARTMENT OF EUROPEAN AFFAIRS

SPEECH BY

H.E. PIERRE MOUKOKO MBONJO

MINISTER OF EXTERNAL RELATIONS

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS SPEECH AT CHATHAM HOUSE

**WITHIN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE FIRST SESSION OF
THE CAMEROON-GREAT BRITAIN JOINT COMMISSION**

(2 September 2013)

Your Excellencies,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start by expressing my great pleasure to being here, and my satisfaction with the warm welcome given me and the delegation accompanying me. I also wish to thank you for inviting me to address this renowned institution, the Royal Institute of International Affairs (RIIA).

My address in this prestigious institution affords me the opportunity not only to discuss the importance and quality of Cameroon's action in its Sub-Region, but also and more importantly to update you on the progress made by Cameroon, in your capacities as researchers, scholars, parliamentarians, pressmen and presswomen, political personalities and financiers.

➤ **The Internal Political System and Potential of Cameroon**

Cameroon has a presidentialist political system, with a demarcation of the three powers: the Executive, the Legislative and the Judicial Powers. The Executive Power is exercised by the President of the Republic, who is the Head of State. The Prime Minister is the Head of Government. On its part, the Legislative Power is exercised by a bicameral Parliament made up of the National Assembly and the Senate. The Judicial Power, which is exercised through all the courts that make up Cameroon's judicial system, is characterized by its independence. The principle of separation of powers is applied.

At the economic level, Cameroon possesses various assets, of which **political stability** and **social peace** are not the least. The country is a haven of peace and stability in a conflict-plagued Sub-Region.

To this, I would like to add its **human potential**, with a youthful, dynamic and highly educated population. Cameroon is a breeding ground of technocrats. With **generously endowed mineral resources and one of the largest forest reserves in Africa**, Cameroon also possesses the **second highest hydroelectric potential in Africa**.

From his accession to power, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, instituted the New Deal Policy based on two main principles: rigour and moralization. It is in this light that he engaged the country in an ambitious project to modernize State institutions and other sectors of national life.

➤ **Progress made in Democracy, Governance and Human Rights**

Since then, Cameroon has made significant progress in various aspects and, in accordance with the political programme and vision of the Head of State, H.E. Paul BIYA, it is determined to carry on with the reforms initiated in the areas of Democracy, Governance, Human Rights, individual freedoms and business environment.

The Government of Cameroon believes that equity, participation, transparency, accountability, the rule of law, respect for Human Rights, freedom of expression, freedom of association, press freedom, play an important role in the development of nations. It is against this backdrop that Cameroonian authorities are resolutely committed to promoting

democracy, good governance and Human Rights. They concretize this commitment by adhering to international and regional instruments on these issues, as well as the gradual setting up of a suitable national institutional framework.

Cameroon is on the path to democracy. As a matter of fact, since the return of multiparty politics in 1990, one can clearly observe the spring up of more than 300 political parties carrying out their activities in total freedom. Meanwhile, it should be noted that the strengthening of democratic institutions and of the electoral process is equally underway, notably with the substitution of the Government with Elections Cameroon (ELECAM), an independent structure in charge of organizing elections; the adoption and enactment on 19 April 2012 of the Law on a Single Electoral Code, the revision of voter's list, and the effective use of biometric technology in the electoral process.

The President of the Republic, once again, proved his willingness to put in place reliable democratic institutions on 14 May 2013, a date which marked the completion of the process that led to the effective institution of the Senate. Henceforth, the Legislative Arm, whose MPs of the Lower House will be renewed on 30 September, will fully play the legislative role assigned to it, and will control government action. Similarly, the decentralization process, which aims at an effective transfer of powers to regional and local authorities, is on the right track, even though the main challenge in its implementation remains the preservation of State unity, for the peaceful coexistence of the different components of the Cameroonian State.

Concerning the promotion of Human Rights and Civil Liberties, Cameroon has made remarkable progress. For instance,

apart from ratifying and implementing the main international and regional agreements on these issues, it is worth mentioning that Cameroon has enhanced the operational capacities of the National Commission on Human Rights and Freedoms (NCHRF) created on 22 July 2004, improved police custody and detention conditions, modernized the judicial system, cleaned up the prisons, and its successful and brilliant presentation before the Universal Periodical Progress Review at the UN Human Rights Council in May 2013 .

Moreover, **Cameroon's media landscape confirms the fact that Rights and freedoms are guaranteed**, with a profusion of press organs carrying out their activities throughout the national territory hitch-free. In effect, in Cameroon, there are about 13 Television Stations, about a hundred radio stations, more than 600 print media organs, some five cyber press organs, and about 500 cable TV enterprises.

It is an obvious fact that the Government of Cameroon is determined to develop a democratic system that guarantees the rights and freedoms of all Cameroonians. Nevertheless, Cameroon's socio-cultural and economic realities have dictated a process that enables the preserve her historical successes. Under no circumstances should this situation be mistaken for a refusal by the Cameroonian people and Government to uphold democracy and Human Rights. In fact, though the level of economic and human development is an essential condition for the building of democracy, the authorities are convinced that the promotion of democratic values and the respect of Human Rights favour the development, especially human, of the Cameroonian population.

Democratization is a dynamic process that is based on the transformation both of mentalities and of institutions. It cannot be imposed, and must stem from within, from the grassroots, from the population, which is supposed to be democracy-oriented.

The Government is also committed to improving governance. In this regard, it seems appropriate to recall that the Head of State, H.E. Paul Biya has taken bold steps to strengthen the fight against corruption, through instruments such as Operation Sparrow hawk, the creation of the National Agency for Financial Investigation (NAFI), the National Anti-Corruption Commission (NACC), the National Governance Programme (PNG), the Special Criminal Court, and of course the increasingly perceptible action of the Ministry in charge of the Supreme State Audit.

Economic governance is no exception. Since the beginning of this year, the Government has opted for a budget programming system, a result-oriented management system, and for the establishment of commissions for the award of public contracts in all jurisdictions in order to ensure better management of public finances. Furthermore, Cameroon is a candidate to join the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) since 2005, and in the coming weeks, Cameroon hopes to accede to the status of "EITI Compliant Country". Like 77 other countries, Cameroon is a member of the Kimberley Process since 14 August 2012, and is striving to strictly implement the principles and requirements relating thereto.

➤ **Economic recovery and the Improvement of the business environment**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On the economic front, I would like to state that during the long years of economic reconstruction Cameroon went through, and in accordance with the recommendations of the International Monetary Fund, our priority was **debt repayment**, which in turn affected the objectives of economic growth. However, after attaining the completion point of the HIPC Initiative in 2006, **the Head of State set the country on the path of economic recovery**, whose fulcrum is today known as the Greater Achievements Policy.

In so doing, Cameroon designed its own development programme, which is not only compliant with the Paris Declaration of 2005 on the effectiveness of the official development aid, but also reflects the desire of the Head of State and the Cameroonian people to raise Cameroon to the level of emerging countries by 2035.

As such, through its **new strategic vision for development, our country intends to become "an emergent, democratic country, united in its diversity."** The Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP) that covers the first ten years of the programme, outlines priority government actions aimed at promoting economic growth and employment. Cameroon is now bent on carrying out major projects in the electricity and infrastructure sectors, as well as the improvement of the business environment, in order to make Cameroon more attractive and provide foreign investors with all the necessary legal and institutional safeguards to effectively secure their investments in Cameroon. In this regard, the new law to lay down private investment incentives in the Republic of Cameroon, promulgated last 18 April 2013,

offers local and foreign investors, the appropriate framework for the development of their businesses. Similarly, the setting up of **institutions especially aimed at accompanying private investors**, such as the Standards and Quality Agency (ANOR), the Investment Promotion Agency (IPA), are part of this new dynamics instilled by the President of the Republic.

Let me seize this opportunity to invite you all to the economic forum scheduled to hold tomorrow, during which Cameroonian as well as British officials and businessmen currently operating in Cameroon, will give you an insight to the economic, industrial, mining and energy potentials of Cameroon, a country with enormous opportunities.

By the way, I want to commend the increasingly growing number of British businessmen operating in Cameroon, which is a clear indication of the efforts Government is putting in place to make the country attractive.

➤ **Cameroon's Foreign Policy and Priorities**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

While assuming that you are now more informed on progress being made by Cameroon, let me thus invite you to appraise the importance and quality of Cameroon's actions beyond its frontiers, notably its foreign policy within the Central and West African sub-regions.

I would start by recalling that Cameroon's action abroad is exclusively and strictly based on its foreign policy. These principles

include non-interference, observance of international law, non-alignment, African unity and the claim for a new global economic order.

Cameroon enjoys friendship ties with other States, based on the principle of non-interference in their domestic affairs and the respect of their sovereignty. In this context, its priorities include the fight against terrorism and insecurity in all its forms, the unflinching defence of our national sovereignty and territorial integrity, against the backdrop of peace and good neighbourliness, the reinforcement of regional and sub-regional cooperation, supporting the action of international organisations, such as the African Union and the United Nations, as well as the development of all forms of cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral, with all countries.

Cameroon is, in fact, a founding member of the African Union (AU). In this light, it is worth noting that two Cameroonians have occupied the position of Secretary General of this prestigious Pan-African Organisation, and the country is also a member of the AU Peace and Security Council. Cameroon also advocates for greater integration in the Central African sub-region, where it holds a notorious leadership, position mainly built on diplomacy as the instrument of confrontation and construction of the common space.

➤ **Peace, peaceful resolution of conflicts and respect of the sovereignty and integrity of States**

Cameroon advocates for peace and gives preference to the resolution of conflicts through peaceful and non-military solutions. It is in this sense that we can understand the wise choice made by the President of the Republic, H.E. Paul Biya, when he opted to solve the

border conflict between Cameroon and Nigeria, pertaining to the Bakassi Peninsula, through international justice mechanisms.

Let me seize this opportunity to express our gratitude to the United Kingdom, for its decisive contribution in the process leading to the resolution of this conflict. This came through the provision of maps and legal experts, as well as its support, under the banner of Witness Country, during the Green Tree Agreement, as part of the implementation phase of the ruling of the International Court of Justice of 10 October 2002, in favour of Cameroon.

We are also proud of the end, on 14 August 2013, of the transition period that granted to Cameroon, full sovereignty on the Bakassi peninsula, following the final transfer of authority on 14 August 2008, in compliance with the afore-mentioned Agreement.

Cameroon also stands for respecting the territorial integrity of each country, and the principle of non-interference in the domestic affairs of other States. As such, it actively participates in common initiatives aimed at resolving political crises within member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). As an illustration, our country took an active part in the resolution of the military and political crisis in the Central African Republic, by participating remarkably in all the ministerial meetings and the summit organised to that effect. They include: The ECCAS Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting of 28 December 2012, the Heads of State Summit of 8 to 11 April 2013 and the Extraordinary Summit of ECCAS Heads of State and Government of 18 April 2013.

➤ **Terrorism, Illegal Trafficking and Maritime Insecurity**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

Just like all African leaders, the Government of Cameroon is preoccupied by the fact that Africa has become one of the strongholds of scourges such as the illegal traffic in crude oil, money laundering, illegal trafficking in arms and drugs, human beings, environmental crimes, piracy and armed robbery at sea, and the spill of toxic waste and maritime terrorism. Besides, it shares the view that maritime insecurity is a serious threat to peace and stability within African States, as it impedes on the development and well-being of local populations.

Terrorism, various forms of trafficking and maritime security are therefore, some of the many problems Cameroon is called upon to address, in a geographic zone where some countries are exposed to political, social or even economic instability, while others are facing the proliferation of extremist groups.

With regards to terrorism, specifically, we cannot but deplore the activities of the extremist group Boko Haram. Also, we are determined to prevent the expansion of the ideology of this sect on its national territory, through communication actions targeting mainly religious leaders and Muslim communities in Cameroon, as well as through a surveillance and consultation approach, based on the Cross-border Security Agreement signed with Nigeria on 28 February 2012.

As concerns maritime security, notably in the Gulf of Guinea, our country is committed to fighting against this phenomenon. As a matter of fact, in addition to the signing, on 6 May 2009, of the Technical Agreement on the implementation of a surveillance plan for maritime

security within the Gulf of Guinea, by ECCAS member-States, we can pride ourselves of the organisation in Yaoundé, from 24 to 25 June 2013, of the Summit of Heads of States and Government of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the Gulf of Guinea Commission (GGC), on Maritime Security and Safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

This summit, which was preceded by the Yaoundé International Symposium, that held on 21 June 2013 on the theme "Security Challenges in the Gulf of Guinea" and the Foreign Affairs Ministers' Meeting of 22 June 2013, brought together 25 member States of ECCAS and ECOWAS, 13 of which were represented by their Heads of State. Equally in attendance, as observers, were a host of other countries (including Germany, Belgium, Brazil, Spain, the United States of America, France, Japan, the United Kingdom and Russia) and institutions (European Union - EU, International Maritime Organisation - IMO, West and Central African Maritime Organisation- OMAOC, US Africa Command -AFRICOM and the Centre for Strategic African Studies - CESA).

In terms of results, beyond the historic character of such an initiative, this Summit resulted in the publication of the Yaoundé Declaration and led to the adoption of a Memorandum of Understanding between ECCAS, ECOWAS and the GGC as well as the adoption of a Code of Conduct for the prevention and repression of acts of piracy, armed robbery against ships and illegal maritime activities in the common maritime space in West Africa, and finally, the setting up of the Centre for Interregional Coordination of Maritime Safety and Security, to be headquartered in Cameroon.

At this point, I would like to mention the satisfaction of the African Union with regards to the achievements of the Yaoundé Summit as well as that of the UN Security Council for this initiative which, I must recall, was organized as part of the implementation of Resolution 2039 of the Council.

I would also plead for increased cooperation in the fight against the phenomenon of maritime piracy, which is a serious threat to peace and international security, state the need for strong action by the international community and emphasize the importance of a comprehensive approach to peace and security. Also, I would like to urge the United Kingdom to support initiatives that are inherent to the implementation of the regional strategy for maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

➤ **Support from external partners, notably the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

We have embarked on many projects at the national, sub-regional and regional levels. As you must have noticed, Cameroon, under the esteemed leadership of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic has come a considerable way in various areas of national life. Much remains to be done, and I hereby call upon all friendly countries, foremost among which is the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland, to support us in this far reaching project. A strong signal sent by British authorities to the Cameroonian people would, among other things, be the reopening of the bilateral cooperation program with the United Kingdom, which was closed in 2008. As a matter of fact, Cameroon, like many other African members of the

Commonwealth, would like to be top on the priority list of the British bilateral aid program, in order to consolidate progress achieved and underway.

My country is also ready to take advantage of the success stories coming from elsewhere. In this regard, let me express my gratitude once again to the British authorities for arranging this visit to your beautiful country, and which in my opinion, will set the stage for a new dynamics in the relations of friendship and cooperation binding Britain and Cameroon.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I remain at your disposal to shed more light on any particular point and thank you for your kind attention./-