

PRESENTATION OF 2013 NEW YEAR WISHES BY THE DIPLOMATIC CORPS

ADDRESS BY THE HEAD OF STATE

Yaounde, 3 January 2013

- The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Ambassadors and High Commissioners,
- Representatives of International Organizations,

If one looks back at the events of the year that has just ended, two facts stand out in one's mind:

- On the one hand, the effects of the crisis that disrupted the global economy and finance from 2007/2008 are still being felt,
- On the other hand, the international community has virtually been unable to resolve problems that have been pending for decades as well as new crises arising within or between States.

How did we get there?

In recent years, the financial crisis has abated and markets are relatively calm, despite intermittent turbulence. Governments have mobilized, but the global economy continues to experience a slowdown.

This slowdown took different forms according to categories of States.

Industrialized countries were more severely affected than others to the extent that some teetered on the brink of bankruptcy. In all cases, it was necessary to curb the rising debt burden, combat budget deficits, halt the decline in growth and growing unemployment. Some countries opted for strong recovery and others for austerity measures. The long-standing debate between pro- and anti-keynesians resurfaced, producing varying results: a slight increase for some and virtual stagnation for others. However, a general collapse was avoided.

Emerging markets were more resilient. For a while, they continued to record enviable growth rates. Subsequently, deceleration occurred due to the downturn experienced by their trading partners. They boosted domestic consumption to maintain the industrial production capacity.

Developing countries for their part were least affected due to their minimal involvement in the global economy. However, they deferred some investments as foreign donors became hesitant due to the crisis. Nonetheless, in anticipation of the revival of the global economy, investors rapidly positioned themselves in countries endowed with raw materials.

In my opinion, this is roughly where we are today. The international community has certainly avoided the worst, that is, a widespread return to protectionism that would probably have caused global recession, like in the past. Does this mean that we will soon return to the pre-crisis situation where economic progress seemed limitless? Nothing is less certain. In this respect, IMF and World Bank growth forecasts remain cautious.

These institutions may be right because the problems that caused the crisis have not been resolved. The last UNCTAD conference that was held in Doha addressed the failings of globalization. It was noted that despite significantly increasing trade, its main objective of ensuring the smooth functioning of the global economy and finance, which takes into account the interests of all stakeholders, has not been attained.

This relative failure highlights the urgent need for regulation, which is universally recognized. Major consultations during G20 or WTO forums have repeatedly considered this issue and proposed solutions likely to guide globalization so as to retain its positive aspects and eliminate its excesses. However, it must be said that, at the moment, it is not clear how and when these good intentions will be put into practice.

This is why rebuilding trust, which is at the heart of economic progress, is difficult. Giving globalization another chance will definitely require getting to the bottom of the problem and establishing a system that strikes a balance between fair remuneration and solidarity in line with Millennium Development Goals.

Without delay, Cameroon opted for recovery. Like I explained to my compatriots a few days ago, if, as I believe, we win the energy battle, we would be better positioned to develop an industry capable of processing our raw materials. Similarly, we are laying the groundwork for a modern infrastructure network that will ease the movement of people and goods within the country and to and from neighbouring countries, and will boost our economy. We will also continue to implement our "agrarian revolution" to

make this sector one of the pillars of our development. At the rate things are going, the targeted 6.1% growth rate is reasonable. If this forecast is confirmed, we can look to the future with confidence and attain our objectives much faster.

- The Dean of the Diplomatic Corps,
- Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Besides economic uncertainty, the international situation is marked politically by a number of persisting stalemates and the outbreak of open conflicts which the laudable efforts of the UN Secretary-General and the influence of major powers have failed to resolve or appease. However, things are clear with respect to principles and method. The high-level meeting on the rule of law that was held in New York on the sidelines of the last UN General Assembly, and which Cameroon attended, dwelled on the primacy of international law in conflict resolution as well as the key role of the International Court of Justice and the Security Council.

The prevailing tension in the Middle East between Israel and Palestinians is a good example of a long-standing stalemate, interspersed with bloody clashes, which has defied all settlement attempts. Yet, both protagonists, each claiming to be acting within its rights, need to find the road to peace someday. It is the duty of the international community, particularly the major powers, to help them. To that effect, the latter will have to shove aside their strategic interests and consider only the merits of the case.

The civil war that has been tearing Syria apart for months now, recording tens of thousands of casualties, has also proven too difficult for successive mediation efforts. How many more deaths will it take to move the international community? Here too, one would be tempted to say it has shown total indifference. Compared to these fratricidal conflicts, the turmoil that the "Arab Spring" countries are going through seems of lesser importance. Yet, the people involved continue to pay dearly for the transition from authoritarian regimes to democracy.

South of the Sahara, examples abound of situations that have continued in violation of international law. Such is the case of Mali where part of the national territory is illegally occupied by armed factions. The same applies to DRC which has been temporarily invaded by forces with outside support and is consequently not under the authority of the central power.

Another hotbed of tension has appeared over the past few weeks in CAR, one of our closest neighbours. Faced with the risk of a civil war, we are appealing for a cessation of hostilities and the start of dialogue without delay

between the government of this brotherly and friendly country and the opposition, in a bid to reach a compromise acceptable to the two parties.

These different examples – and the list is not exhaustive –, which show that international law is violated with impunity, raise a fundamental question:

- Does the United Nations Organization, which is supposed to ensure compliance with the provisions of the Charter, have the means to accomplish its mission, when such provisions are openly transgressed?
- Or is it limited only to making resolutions and recommendations, sending observer missions or peacekeepers, often in insufficient numbers?

Of course, I am aware that the issues I have raised have been discussed in the Security Council where disagreement between the permanent members made it impossible to consider any decisive action.

But such helplessness in the face of acute crisis situations severely affects the image of the United Nations. It only emphasizes the urgent need for reform of the composition and functioning of the Security Council.

If the provisions of the Charter do not necessarily inspire Security Council decisions, and if the relationship of permanent members with international law is based on unequal expression of power, then one cannot help being worried about the future of international democracy.

Take my word for it, I am not addressing you as an opponent of the United Nations. A former United Nations trust territory, Cameroon knows what it owes that organization. The UN showed its understanding to Cameroon not so long ago during the settlement of the Bakassi conflict. International law was the real winner in the dispute. That is why I believe it can serve as an example.

Within the quite disappointing context that I have described above, we continued to observe or take part in international life.

We attended or were represented at the Summits of ECCAS in Ndjamena, the African Diaspora in Johannesburg; the Rio de Janeiro Conference on Sustainable Development, the Summits of CEMAC in Brazzaville, the African Union in Addis Ababa, the Francophonie in Kinshasa, and of course the United Nations General Assembly. These meetings were an opportunity for us to talk with the leaders of countries with which we have cooperation and friendly ties.

We also received in Yaounde, special envoys of foreign governments wishing to establish partnership ties with Cameroon; but also representatives of major groups willing to invest in certain sectors of our economy. With many of these visitors, we have signed agreements and consider launching joint projects.

So, I may say that Cameroon's diplomacy has not ceased to be at the forefront to make known our positions and defend our interests.

May I avail myself of this opportunity to thank our external partners: governments, international organizations, private groups, who have come forward to participate in our major development projects.

- The Dean,
- Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

Earlier on, I spoke of an uncertain world, because I think it really is. But in concluding, I would like to qualify my remarks somewhat: I also think that the idea of progress is inherent in human nature. Indeed, history shows us that mankind has seen alternating periods of darkness and "light". Undoubtedly, the crisis of the late 2000s, which has been compared to that of the 1930s, will be among the leading ones. But history also teaches us that human affairs are unique in that they often generate their own "rebirth".

This vision, which is perhaps idealistic - some would say utopian - seems well-founded to me. This is why I still believe that, through reason and ... humanity, world leaders will, sooner or later, find the path of hope and progress.

- Distinguished Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The time has now come for me to thank your Dean heartily for the kind wishes extended to me on your behalf and for his encouragement which I do appreciate.

In return, I would be much obliged if you would extend my best wishes to the high authorities that you represent.

To you, your families and your loved ones, I extend my most sincere wishes for happiness, health and success.

Thank you for your kind attention