

HEAD OF STATE'S ADDRESS

On the Occasion of his Visit to Flood Victims of the Far-North and North Regions

Guirvidig, 20 September 2012

My Dear Compatriots of Guirvidig,

Let me first of all thank you from the bottom of my heart for the very warm and cordial welcome you have accorded me and my wife, as well as my delegation.

You know why we are here. The reasons are twofold. The first is to comfort people, men, women and children who were victims of floods and their effects, and ask them to always show solidarity. Also, I am here because I want to confirm that the Government is behind you and will always be with you.

My Dear Compatriots of the Far-North and North Regions,

As I conclude my visit to the northern Regions, I would like to say how touched I was by the kind and warm welcome you accorded me despite your plight.

From the bottom of my heart, I say thank you.

The challenges you have been facing for some time now are tough and even tragic in some cases. I hereby salute the dignity and courage you have displayed in such hardship.

To those in particular that have lost their loved ones in these mishaps, I wish to extend my heartfelt condolences and deepest sympathies along with those of the Cameroonian people as a whole.

Of course, I was greatly saddened to learn of the disaster that struck many localities of your Regions, causing huge losses of all kinds.

Upon receiving the information, I gave instructions for emergency measures to be taken. I also dispatched special missions of the Government and the Party to bring to you my consolatory message and assess the situation on the ground.

Naturally, as soon as I could, I came to the field to share in your grief and see for myself the gravity of the situation.

I must say that the floods have been particularly destructive. Besides the tragic loss of human lives that I mentioned earlier on, the rise in water level has also led to the displacement of people and the destruction of crops and livestock. Such a situation can seriously jeopardize food security and the health conditions of several thousands of people.

I wish to commend the outpourings of solidarity witnessed following these tragic events, at both the national and international levels. Our people have thus received multifaceted support from some friendly countries and specialized agencies of the United Nations.

However, we will definitely need further support to be able to offset the invaluable loss caused by this extraordinary natural phenomenon.

Hence, in addition to what has been done thus far, I have instructed the Government to disburse the sum of one and a half billion CFA francs as emergency assistance.

I have also prescribed some short-term and medium-term measures, including notably the construction of a 330 km long dyke-road, stretching from Gobo to Kousseri. I have also given orders for repairs to the Maga and Lagdo dams.

Furthermore, I have ordered an assessment of the destruction caused, be it in terms of houses, schools, roads or other infrastructure, so that arrangements can be made for them to be rehabilitated or reconstructed without delay. The same goes for crops and livestock.

Lastly, for flood victims, I have decided to set up a support fund at the Ministry of Territorial Administration and Decentralization.

Unfortunately, natural disasters are most often unpredictable. Earthquakes, volcanic eruptions, floods, tsunamis and so on occur in all regions of the world, without any warning, claiming many lives and destroying what human beings often took centuries to build. Recent events are rife with such painful examples.

Although it is difficult to control the rage of the forces of nature, we cannot remain passive before a permanent and generalized threat. We should, as much as possible, through anticipation and prevention, put all the chances on our side.

That is why I have instructed the competent State services, in particular Civil Protection, to carry out, if such is not yet the case, an updated inventory of high-risk zones and propose adequate actions, to ensure that the consequences of events like those that recently affected the Far-North and North Regions cause the least possible damage.

Also, there is a need to provide meteorological information at all levels and systematically, to enable the population to access useful information on climatic variations.

Once again, I extend my sincere sympathy and compassion to all families, villages and communities that were so severely affected.

I wish to extend my sincere encouragements to the population of the northern Regions who have always supported me and shown me their unflinching loyalty. I urge them to preserve their dignity. I want to assure them that the President of the Republic will always be attentive to their needs.

Thank you for your kind attention.