



End of year message to the nation December 31, 2020

Fellow Cameroonians,

My dear compatriots,

We have now reached the end of 2020. Like the previous years, 2020 has been another trying year for Cameroon. In our country, the years go by and look alike, marked as they continue to be by the advanced downgrading of a country yet so rich and bearer of a unique flame whose imminent incandescence will mark the rebirth of Africa. On the path to the upcoming awakening of the Cameroonian people, the cathartic events of the year 2020 are broken down into four main points.

- Firstly, the stagnation of the situation in the North-West and South-West regions, still entangled in a civil war caused and maintained by Mr Paul BIYA.
- Secondly, the social regression of the country, particularly illustrated by the accentuation of the deplorable impoverishment of most Cameroonians.
- Thirdly, the deterioration of the economic situation and the business climate.
- Fourthly and finally, 2020 has been the year of the slide of the CPDM regime towards an assumed totalitarianism, marked notably by the barbarity of the entire State apparatus, which has institutionalised repression and serious violations of fundamental rights and freedoms in an uninhibited and persistent manner.

My dear compatriots,

In 1982, Mr Paul BIYA inherited from his predecessor, Ahmadou AHIDJO, a peaceful, stable and prosperous country in which, after years of bloody nationalist struggles and a fierce dictatorship, the focus was on the overall development of the country, leading to a gradual and significant rise in the standard of living of the people. Those times are now so far away. For, unfortunately, in nearly forty years of absolute power, Mr BIYA and his party, the CPDM, have methodically deconstructed all the achievements of yesterday, particularly national unity and living together. Mr Biya has transformed Cameroon into a country at war, in which chronic insecurity competes with assumed state tribalism and ethnic hatred.

It is therefore with a heavy heart that I am obliged, for the fifth year in a row, to evoke the disaster that continues to take place in the North-West and South-West regions, and where the destiny of our country as a united Nation is now being played out. The continued decay of the situation in these two regions must necessarily stem from a political agenda of the CPDM government. Otherwise, how else can we understand the obstinacy of the government for a military option whose failure is predictable? True to form, Mr Biya has chosen political chaos to gain time. To perpetuate his power for life, whatever the price, he stops at nothing and multiply shams, among which the National Commission for the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism; the National Committee for Disarmament, Demobilisation and Reintegration; the Grand National

Dialogue; and even pseudo-attempts to open negotiations with leaders of the Anglophone cause; etc. Everything goes, except the seriousness and the will necessary to solve problems as a statesman. He prefers politicking which, at this level of responsibility, can only be a source of misfortune for the country.

And indeed, the year 2020 has given us additional illustrations of the pernicious nature of his indifference to the suffering of Cameroonians. The tragedy of Ngarbuh will remain as a symbol of this unimaginable laissez-faire attitude. The massacre that was perpetrated there, on the 14th of February 2020, on innocent and harmless civilian populations, including babies and pregnant women will surely remain one of the indelible stains of the tragedy of the dirty war that continues in the two martyred regions. I reiterate the call for an international investigation into the Ngarbuh massacres and all other massacres of civilians in the North-West and South-West regions, including the killing of children in search of education on the 24th of October 2020 at the Mother Francisca International Bilingual Academy private school complex in Kumba. I take this opportunity to reiterate my deepest condolences and expression of sympathy to the families of the victims of these repeated tragedies.

As you know, I have continuously proposed a concrete solution for the resolution of this crisis, which has become a detestable fratricidal war. This solution comes in three main points:

- The immediate establishment of a ceasefire.
- The immediate release of all prisoners of the Anglophone crisis, including Mr Sissuku Ayuk Tabe and his comrades.
- The opening of an inclusive political dialogue involving all the actors to discuss all issues, including the form of the State and the consensual reform of the electoral system to enable people to have legitimate leaders. Indeed, there is a need for dialogue with all Cameroonians without exception, including those who defend, for the time being, the thesis of secession.

Unfortunately, insecurity in Cameroon is not limited to the North-West and South-West regions alone. It continues to rage in the northern regions of the country where the populations of the Far North, in particular, suffer the assaults that have become endemic by the Boko Haram sect, despite the efforts of our defence forces. The sufferings and sacrifices of our soldiers, as well as those of our populations in the north are, it must be said again, the dramatic consequence of the serious political fault of the government which, for four decades, has chosen to abandon these populations and entire parts of the national territory at the mercy of various predators.

My dear compatriots,

In addition to the many other challenges already present in Cameroon, the year 2020 was marked by the irruption of the COVID-19 pandemic in our country. The appearance of this pandemic has highlighted the shades and lights in our society. On the one hand, COVID-19 confirmed the government's notorious unpreparedness to anticipate disasters or to deal with them with the efficiency that one is entitled to expect from any responsible public administration. After this catastrophic initial phase, the government deployed its usual propaganda, consisting of gesticulation and orchestrated incantations to cover up enterprises of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. Deplorable scenes of this nauseating spectacle of shameless enrichment on the misery of Cameroonians are still unfolding before our eyes, in total impunity. This situation is all the more regrettable as the pandemic is far from being under control and the immediate future could get darker not only because of the ongoing spread of new variants of the virus, but also because of the urgent need to have adequate financial resources for the timely deployment of vaccines.

On the other hand, the occurrence of COVID-19 was an opportunity to show the sense of solidarity and generosity of our people, to demonstrate the extent of what we can achieve together when we are united around a cause and mobilised behind legitimate and trusting leadership. We were thus able, within the framework of the citizen and non-partisan initiative, *Survie-Cameroon Survival Initiative* (SCSI), which I launched on the third of April 2020, to design and operationalise an emergency humanitarian operation of historic proportions. Such an Initiative made it possible to bring assistance to the Cameroonian people who were disoriented and left to themselves in the face of the COVID-19 pandemic. This operation was made possible thanks to the unprecedented mobilisation of Cameroonians from the interior and the diaspora. I wish to reiterate here all my gratitude to all our compatriots and friends of our country who responded to our call. I also wish to congratulate the chairman of the SCSI Management Committee, Mr Christian PENDA EKOKA, for having accomplished the mission I entrusted to him with determination, commitment and transparency vis-à-vis the public. Finally, my gratitude goes to the soldiers of national solidarity who made up the many teams of SCSI volunteers, in Cameroon and in the Diaspora, for the sacrifices made in adversity to give full effect to the Initiative.

Despite the difficulties encountered, SCSI's goals were largely achieved to the great satisfaction of our compatriots. Having accomplished its mission, the SCSI emergency humanitarian operation will cease its operational activities on the 31st of December 2020, as SCSI was never intended to become a permanent entity. However, the activities of the management committee already in place will refocus on the administrative closure of SCSI. It is within this framework that an independent audit will be carried out, in the shortest possible time, to examine, on the one hand, *the reliability of the information and procedures of the collection platforms up to the transfer of funds to the bank account used by SCSI and*, on the other hand, *the use of the funds collected for the needs of the SCSI initiative*. The procedure for selecting, on a competitive and transparent basis, an auditing firm slowed down the audit mission and did not allow to keep the date of the 20th of December that I had set for this purpose; but the mission is now under way and, to my knowledge, all the persons and structures concerned are fully collaborating with the independent auditor.

My dear compatriots,

The economic impact of COVID-19 has been disastrous for our country. It is reported to have led to the closure of many businesses and caused some 54,000 workers to be placed on short-time work and some 14,000 people to be made redundant, in an environment where very few Cameroonians have jobs. In the May/June 2020 edition of its economic note on the repercussions of COVID-19 on companies, the *Groupement Inter-Patronal du Cameroun* – (Inter-Management Group of Cameroon), GICAM, estimated at 3,139 billion CFAF compared to 2019, the loss in business turnover, and 521 billion the corresponding loss of income for the State in terms of tax and other revenues.

Overall, most companies are dissatisfied with the support measures announced by the government. They expect more substantial support from the State in the fiscal and financial fields, in the form of various facilities.

But has the CPDM regime ever understood the essential driving role of businesses in the modern economy and the development of a country? Otherwise it would not have made Cameroon so unattractive to investors. To understand everything, it suffices to note that our country is placed at the lower positions of all the world rankings: whether it is the corruption perception index of Transparency International, the Doing Business of the World Bank, the Mo Ibrahim Index of

Governance, or the various rankings of the best universities and research institutions in Africa, I dare not say in the world. No attentive ear is being paid to the national business community. The State struggles to honour its domestic debt and penalises local businesses by not trusting local entrepreneurs in the awarding of important public contracts. With whom does this regime want to develop Cameroon, if at all? The disillusionment of structuring projects, which are as many great failures, where one expected "great achievements", "great successes" and "great opportunities" for a phantasmagorical "emergence", have completed the denuding of an autistic regime, a directionless voracious predator.

At the time of assessment, we have to make do with nothing and Cameroonians have only their tears in front of the overestimation of project costs and the exceeding of deadlines in the realisation of infrastructures, or even the abandonment of some of them in the chimera forest. Suffice it for me to cite here: in energy matters, the Bini-Warak dam project whose works have been blocked since 2018 due to the inability of the Cameroonian State to pay the 4 billion CFAF insurance costs on the loan obtained from the Chinese funder; the regime's gold medal for the most expensive cost per kilometre of road in the world: 7 billion CFAF in Cameroon, compared to around 2 billion CFAF on average, according to World Bank data; the Yaoundé-Douala highway that started in 2014 and the 11 kilometres of the Yaoundé-Nsimalen slip road that also started in the same year 2014 remain a holy grail; the end of construction is announced for 2024 and, in the meantime, the construction cost of each kilometre will have risen to 42 billion. A new absolute record.

Yes, my dear compatriots, while a few are getting rich through corruption, clientelism and mismanagement that have been institutionalised by the CPDM regime, the impoverishment of most Cameroonians is increasing. The Human Development Index Report 2020 published by the United Nations Development Programme, which analyses data covering the year 2019, i.e. before the appearance of COVID-19, is revealing in several respects. It shows that Cameroon is a profoundly unequal country that is well above the average of countries with comparable Human Development Indexes both globally and in sub-Saharan Africa. Finally, the report shows what we all see on a daily basis, namely a catastrophic multidimensional poverty index, with 64.6% of the population either living in multidimensional poverty or considered vulnerable to multidimensional poverty. Social regression is increasing at a frightening rate, with poverty becoming increasingly concentrated in the Far North, North-West and South-West regions of the country. Access to drinking water remains a challenge everywhere in Cameroon; the availability of electricity, even in localities supposedly connected to the electricity grid, is intermittent; access to basic health care remains out of reach for the vast majority of our citizens in both cities and towns. As a result, the economic and social picture continues to darken, due to the inadequacies of the country's leadership. And yet, solutions exist and are within our reach and commensurate with both our resources and the genius of our people. A Cameroon liberated from poverty remains indeed possible. A Cameroon that returns to the path of growth and solidarity remains possible. This Cameroon is not the one offered to us by the regime, which is more than ever incapable of giving the Nation a worthwhile direction, especially to our numerous and talented youth.

My dear compatriots,

In 2020, the barbarity of the State apparatus, all institutions taken together, has crossed a new threshold that leads us straight to an uninhibited totalitarianism.

In Mr BIYA's Cameroon, cynicism has reached new heights. Not only do they massacre, but the victims of the massacres and all other Cameroonians are forbidden to express their pain, their disapproval of the fratricidal war which is bleeding Cameroon and their condemnation of the

electoral hold-up, of corruption and of attacks on public wealth. In 2020, for having dared, through peaceful marches across the country on the 22nd of September, to denounce the wrongs of Mr BIYA and his regime and propose solutions to end the crisis, thousands of Cameroonians were brutalised by the regime's army, tortured, mutilated and, for 556 of them, detained illegally and arbitrarily. To date, 137 of these compatriots are still languishing in the regime's jails, 112 of whom, all civilians, are appearing before military courts on charges that are as empty as they are ridiculous in certain aspects such as: attempted revolution, rebellion, lack of a national identity card, aggravated unlawful assembly, attempted insurrection in coaction, conspiracy, insult to the President of the Republic, etc. Among these compatriots are people kidnapped before or after the peaceful marches in which many did not even take part. Many of these compatriots face the death penalty. These people include, among others, Professor Alain FOGUE TEDOM, CRM National Treasurer; Mr Olivier BIBOU NISSACK, Advisor and Spokesperson for the CRM National President; Mr Pascal ZAMBOUE, CRM National Secretary in charge of Development and Inspection; Mrs ASSOMO, housewife, Mr Salomon BEAS, young entrepreneur, to name a few.

These compatriots found in the regime's jails Mr Mamadou YACOUBA MOTA, CRM First National Vice-President, a political hostage taken prisoner following the White Marches of the 1st of June 2019. To all these compatriots, victims of the repressive apparatus of a declining dictatorship, I reiterate my total solidarity and encouragement in this new ordeal on the road to liberation of our country. I once again demand the immediate and unconditional release of all those arrested before, during and after the peaceful marches of the 22nd of September 2020.

As noted by an independent panel of experts from the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights on the 12th of October 2020, “The violence against protesters was indiscriminate, with tear gas and water cannon used to violently disperse them... The Government also heavily deployed security forces to prevent the peaceful demonstrations.” The same experts expressed their concerns to the State of Cameroon and reminded it “that under international law every individual has the right to organise and participate in peaceful assemblies, associate with others, and take part in the conduct of public life. None of these acts is a crime, and Cameroon should celebrate and accept dissent, for a true democracy takes into account public demands instead of suppressing them.”

Therefore, I would once again extend my warmest congratulations to the Cameroonian people who came out in large numbers on the 22nd of September 2020 to express their opposition to the continuation of the civil war in the North-West and South-West regions, and to the maintenance of an iniquitous electoral system that makes it impossible for the Cameroonian people to express themselves democratically. Our people have shown heroic courage in the face of an unprecedented deployment of the regime's repressive machinery, worthy of a state of siege. By their exemplary peaceful behaviour, even in the face of the barbaric and unjustified charge of the repressive forces, these people have shown their political maturity, their sense of patriotic responsibility and their civic-mindedness in expressing their deep desire for peaceful change and respect for the Constitution of our country.

On the 22nd of September 2020, journalists were also victims of acts of torture by the repressive forces deployed by the regime, thus increasing the list of journalists and whistle-blowers victims of the regime's barbarity. The year 2020 is also coming to an end without justice being served to journalist Samuel WAZIZI, whose death looks like a state affair.

On numerous occasions during the year 2020, the rights of lawyers in the exercise of their profession have been violated with impunity. Thus, on the 13th of November 2020, the Bar Council condemned the police brutality perpetrated on lawyers in the courtroom of the Douala-Bonanjou

Court of First Instance and demanded, with no follow-up to date, exemplary sanctions against the perpetrators. Repeated measures of frustration and persecution of lawyers have given much more than the feeling that, henceforth, the regime has decided, by humiliating lawyers, to destroy in the imagination of Cameroonians one of the last symbols on which they could still rely to have their rights respected. Allow me here to pay tribute to the lawyers members of the Sylvain SOUOP Collective for the exceptional work they do for the voluntary representation of political prisoners that are our compatriots arrested and detained in connection with the peaceful marches of the 22nd of September 2020. These lawyers are doing a doubly useful work. Firstly, they celebrate the legacy of Barrister Sylvain SOUOP, of late memory, a tireless promoter of the establishment of the rule of law in Cameroon, so brutally taken from life. Secondly, they honour the legal profession in Cameroon and the cause of justice, whose foundation of values gives much more than signs of floating. Indeed, at a pivotal moment in the history of our country where the judicial institution found itself in a position to contribute to the strengthening of the rule of law and democracy in Cameroon by making force prevail over law, a certain type of Cameroonian justice has taken up the cause of the law of force and injustice, by setting itself up as a pillar of dictatorship. History will remember it. History will also remember that it is with the complicity of a certain type of justice that torture centres, worthy of the worst dictatorships, carry out their dirty work in the heart of the capital and our cities.

My dear compatriots,

The CRM informed the public at the time of its decision not to take part in the legislative and municipal elections of February 2020, for two main reasons: the refusal of the government to find a political solution to the crisis in the North-West and South-West, and its refusal of a consensual reform of the electoral system. Following its call for a boycott on this occasion, the voter turnout was historically the lowest ever in Cameroon and tainted the elections with illegitimacy. As usual, the ruling party granted itself majorities as it pleases, even in areas emptied of voters because of war.

According to official propaganda, the establishment of regional executives will trigger the automatic development of Cameroon. This is phantasmagoria. Everyone can see that these regional executives are subordinate to the system that created them and that it is a simple multiplication of the politico-bureaucratic structures of the CPDM-State which will reproduce on a regional scale the numerous shortcomings of the regime. The transfer of resources will be a challenge, not only because of the financial difficulties of the State, which will worsen, but also because the central bureaucracy will find it difficult to divest itself of a significant part of its income. The hardest part is yet to come.

Until we reach our destination, the National Resistance will continue and intensify; for nothing has ever stopped and will never stop a people standing upright, marching for their liberation. Marches are not a permanent activity of a political party; they are a democratic means of expression guaranteed by our Constitution. They will resume whenever necessary. For the rest, we must get down to the political work of informing and sensitising our compatriots on the meaning of National Resistance and the prospects of the Cameroonian Renaissance, preparing them for the upcoming elections, because peaceful change through the ballot box remains our fundamental option. Therefore, the struggle for the reform of the electoral system remains crucial and will never be abandoned until it is successful. The road may seem long, but victory is certain. We must remain more mobilised than ever before.

I know the price that Mr BIYA's repressive apparatus makes all compatriots who dare to stand up and fight for a new Cameroon pay. I know the suffering of our brave compatriots of the Diaspora who are now forbidden to treat the soil of the Motherland by the very man who said nearly 40 years ago that Cameroonians no longer need to leave their country to express their opinions.

I know the difficulties of the compatriots who have lost their jobs because of their struggle for a united and prosperous Cameroon. I know the pressure they are under to extinguish the flame that burns within them for a better future for all Cameroonians.

I would just like to remind all these compatriots that the hours closest to dawn are the darkest hours of the night. The dawn of Cameroon's renaissance is approaching. Braced on their privileges nourished by the sweat and blood of Cameroonians, the forces of the night try their best by deploying their classic arsenal of repression here, spreading divisive and hate speech there, civil war elsewhere. Despite everything, a new day is dawning in Cameroon. A people has risen, a Movement is on the march. Nothing, nothing at all can stop it. Whether it happens through us or through others, we must be aware that change is inevitable.

Never forget, the fate of our country depends on us, collectively, in solidarity, and on us alone. Do not expect it from any one individual, no matter how courageous and determined he may be, nor from any foreign power, no matter how friendly it may be to our country. As I am concerned, I will continue to do my part. May each Cameroonian do theirs.

Happy New Year 2021

May a shower of grace rain down on you and your families throughout this new year!

And peace be upon our country!

May God bless Cameroon!

Maurice KAMTO