

End of year 2021 message from President-Elect Maurice KAMTO

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear compatriots!

Here we are at the end of the year 2021 which was particularly difficult, as previous ones:

- On the health sector, like practically all countries in the world for the past two years, Cameroon has suffered and is still suffering severely from the Covid-19 pandemic. A foggy official communication deprives us of precise data on the evolution of the situation in our country. It is nevertheless constant that this epidemic is a reality which, in addition to causing deaths, seriously impacts the national economic activity. This is why I invite you to strictly respect the barrier measures and all other effective measures recommended both at the national and international levels. For the moment, this is the only solution to protect ourselves and others against this virus, which we have no reason to believe will disappear any time soon.

As usual in our country, the Covid-19 pandemic has been transformed into an opportunity for large-scale misappropriation of public goods and funds by those who are responsible for managing them to preserve the lives of the people.

The Audit Bench of the Supreme Court has published a damning report on this subject. We demand that judicial follow-up be given to this umpteenth financial scandal under the current regime. In addition to the funds allocated by international donors, large sums of money from the State budget or from donations from companies and individuals have also been swallowed up in the fight against this pandemic in our country. We also demand an audit of all these resources collected at the national level, and whose mismanagement has exposed the gluttony of those who are responsible for the affairs of the country today.

They tried in vain to hide their plunder through a shameless campaign of slander and manipulation of public opinion about an imaginary misappropriation of funds by leaders of the Cameroon Renaissance Movement in the management of the humanitarian operation Survie Cameroon Survival Initiative (SCSI). In contrast to the government's management of funds intended for the fight against COVID-19, the collection of donations within the framework of SCSI has been exemplary in its transparency, as shown by the independent international audits that I engaged, and which have never been called into question technically or scientifically.

-The security situation in Cameroon remains a serious concern. Indeed, while Mr. Paul BIYA had inherited a united, stable and totally secure country, both at its borders and within the national territory, he will leave a disunited country, divided by ethnic hatred, torn by armed conflict, particularly in the English-speaking regions of the North-West and South-West and in the Far-North region. In addition, the incursions of Central African rebels into the

eastern region and kidnappings for ransom, which are becoming commonplace, particularly in the Adamaoua and northern regions, and which are making inroads into the major cities, constitute security challenges.

More specifically, the ongoing civil war in the two Anglophone regions is a national disgrace for our country. Its military, humanitarian, economic and social consequences are disastrous. Nothing justified this war at the time of its outbreak, nothing justifies it nearly five years later.

The autism of the ruling power on all proposals aimed at politically settling this fratricidal conflict undoubtedly takes advantage of the incredible indifference of the international community and of countries considered to be friends of Cameroon, to crush the Anglophone populations of our country with impunity.

So, Cameroonians are asking themselves: what is the use of international organizations such as the Economic Community of Central African States, the African Union, the United Nations and especially its Security Council, if they cannot, as in Sudan, Ethiopia or elsewhere, act for the return of peace, in the respect of our sovereignty and our cultural diversity which is the wealth of Cameroon? Our proposals for solutions and the method to achieve them are known, and have been known for several years. I will not repeat them here. One thing is certain: the lasting solution to this conflict is not military but political; it requires an inclusive and sincere dialogue, the conditions for success of which we have outlined on several occasions.

- In the wake of the global economy, the Cameroonian economy in the year 2021, has been impacted, as in 2020, but with less direct effects, by the persistence of the Covid-19 pandemic.

On the macroeconomic level, Cameroon is characterized by a high level of debt of a singularly toxic nature, which clogs its horizons in various aspects. Indeed, our country is currently the most indebted country of the franc zone to China, with 6 billion 202 million US dollars of debt in April 2021, according to the World Bank; it holds the 6th rank of African countries indebted to the same Asian giant at the continental level. Similarly, Cameroon is the first French-speaking country with the highest debt to France, with a debt of 945 billion CFA Francs in December 2020, and ranks second in Africa among countries indebted to that country.

Cameroon's public debt is estimated at the end of 2021 to be about 43 percent of its GDP. Some believe that this level of debt gives our country a comfortable margin to increase its public debt. In reality, our country is experiencing significant difficulties in mobilizing financing from foreign investors, reflecting the toxic nature of this debt. The last fundraising on the Eurobond market thus required support and a guarantee from the International Monetary Fund.

The result of this situation is the almost systematic stoppage of major infrastructure projects undertaken by our country. The 196 km Yaoundé-Douala highway, begun in 2014 and now in its seventh year of construction, is at a standstill after its 60 km, of which barely 40 km are totally done ; the Yaoundé-Nsimalen highway ; the Kribi-Edéa highway ; the Kribi-Ebolowa

road via Akom 2 ; the Ring Road in the Northwest, started in 1988 and covering 365 km, of which only 60.5 km were completed by the end of 2020; the 14 toll gates on barely tared tracks; the Bini-Warak dam, blocked for a question of insurance of the construction site; sports infrastructure, such as the Olembé sports complex, miraculously transformed from a complex to a simple stadium, whose completion announced since the end of 2018 is not complete on the eve of the 2022 AFCON. It must be noted that, having failed to close the championship in 2021, the football champion club in Cameroon was decided by FECAFOOT, and not as the result of matches delivered on the playground. It will be too long to list all the ghost projects shimmered by the regime and which have never started. Just some examples : the Mballam to the Kribi sea port railway ; the Douala and Yaoundé trams ; the deep sea port and industrial complex of Kribi, including its new city ; the six stars hotel complex of the lake in Yaoundé ; the national railway network ; the 500 metallic bridges etc.

In terms of governance, the Cameroonian economy has continued to be marked by several financial scandals, including the so-called "Covidgate", those of AFCON, the generous funds of line 94 of the state budget managed by the Ministry of Economy, distributed despite common sense to individuals for their private activities, and so on.

This accentuation of the deterioration of public morals seriously affects the most vulnerable, deprived and underprivileged segments of our populations, by depriving them of the means to support a galloping inflation which empties the basket of the housewife and worsens the phenomenon of the expensive life.

The state is aggravating this situation by setting record prices for certain public services, such as passport issuance. Apart from a few ineffective communiqués from the Minister of Commerce, no serious measures have been taken by the government to curb this state of affairs, which will certainly lead to an increase in poverty in Cameroon by 2022, with the risk of social tensions.

Moreover, the 2022 finance law, which has just been adopted by the Parliament, paves the way for the reinforcement of social inequalities through a fiscal policy that is part of a desire to despoil the most disadvantaged segments of the population. While cell phone money transfers were conceived as an instrument for the financial inclusion of the poor, the Cameroonian government has just made them a source of its own financing by inflicting a sort of "double punishment" on these poor populations in the form of a double deduction, both on deposits and on withdrawals of transferred funds. Similarly, the attempt to tax non-profit associations and “njanguis” highlights both the government's difficulties in finding funding for its operations and its clear desire to further impoverish the poor. The need to broaden the tax base in our country does not mean condemning the poorest to economic death.

A policy directed towards the industrial development with facilities to the creation and the establishment of industrial units and services with strong added value in our country would have permitted the State to gather consequent financial resources allowing him to cover the essential of its needs.

Dear Cameroonians,

2021 is a new year in which you have barely seen the President in office, Mr. Paul BIYA.

On April 3, 2020, while Cameroonians were without any news of him, more than a month after the beginning of the Covid-19 pandemic in our country, I had seized the President of the National Assembly, in his capacity as such, of a request for the purpose of establishing the vacancy at the top of the State.

In a manipulation that the regime is accustomed to, I was accused of having announced the death of Mr. Paul BIYA. This was followed by a vast national and even diplomatic campaign on this false allegation.

More than a year after this referral, my request, which was already well-founded and perfectly republican at the time, has gained in relevance.

Indeed, where is the President of the Republic in office? Is he aware that the country is in trouble? Some will answer that during the past year they have seen him fly to or from Geneva; others, that they have seen him say a few words during a video conference from an unknown place; others, finally, will answer that they have seen a few seconds of images of him with the Executives of some international football organizations, or on the occasion of the anniversary of his party or his wife.

Can we, in a country where there are so many challenges, economic and social emergencies, political tensions, and where there is a disastrous civil war complicated by pockets of insecurity and inter-community

confrontations, be satisfied with sporadic signs of the effective presence of the President of the Republic? Obviously not!

This unexplained absence is the proof of a failure that greatly impacts the life of the Nation.

The last Council of Ministers was held on March 15, 2018 !

As usual it had lasted only a few minutes. The previous Council of Ministers was held on October 15, 2015 ! It should be remembered, that in countries that are actually governed, the Council of Ministers is weekly. They cannot be replaced by the monthly meeting of government members around the Prime Minister in the form of government councils, because the later are devoid of the power of political orientation and decision that the Council of Ministers, chaired by the Head of State, has.

For the first time since the independence and the reunification of our Nation, the Cup of Cameroon has not been played in 2021. Do we need more evidence to proof the inability of the acting President of the Republic to fulfill its duties permanently ?

Nothing, not even the thousands of victims of the civil war in the English-speaking regions, be they members of the defense and security forces, civilians or rebels, has been enough to bring him out of his reclusion to assume the function of head of state.

Thus, the head of the armed forces is not at the side of his troops, has never visited wounded soldiers, and does not preside over ceremonies of tribute to soldiers who died at the front. The head of the executive, who has become invisible, only gives "very high instructions" transmitted by the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic directly to ministers supposedly placed under the authority of the Prime Minister, Head of Government ! And Cameroonians are asking themselves: what is the use of such a transparent Prime Minister, who can be disowned at any time and with impunity by the Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic, or even by ministers?

Cameroonians measure more than ever the scope of the famous Decree of February 5, 2019 "granting permanent delegation of signature" to the current Secretary General of the Presidency of the Republic.

Since then, Cameroon is managed, as well as possible by proxy, and in a muted war between clans and hostile factions, won by the internal war of succession.

How long can this situation continue?

I respect the great age of Mr. Paul Biya, and I am sensitive to the possible fragility of his health related to this condition. However, I cannot understand nor accept that he should mortgage the future of millions of Cameroonians because of this situation. It would be humanly reasonable and politically correct for him to draw the necessary consequences. Those who idolize him and pretend to believe that he is eternal and irreplaceable are doing neither

himself nor our country any favors. It is time for them to realize that he is a mortal being, that he has given what he can, and that he has nothing more to offer to Cameroon. It is the human condition that wants it that way; the human condition with the limits it imposes on all of us. It is high time to preserve the dignity of this patriarch and the future of our country.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear compatriots,

Since September 22, 2020, hundreds of Cameroonians have been sent into prison for exercising their freedom of expression, in strict compliance with the laws of the Republic and our country's international commitments. These women and men, young and old, have been arbitrarily arrested and illegally imprisoned. Inhumane, cruel and degrading treatment was inflicted on them by men and women acting supposedly in the name of the Republic, but who in reality operate as militiamen of a regime. Our valiant martyred compatriots had for only fault to have dared to express themselves, after all the written interpellations remained vain, by Peaceful Marches, duly declared and never forbidden with regard to the Law of December 19, 1990 fixing the regime of the meetings and the public demonstrations, and preceded by the publication of a Guide of the Peaceful Walker that I had made public well before the day envisaged for the demonstration.

Their crime is to have demanded an end of the civil war in the English-speaking regions of the country and the organization of a true inclusive national dialogue where all the important issues would be addressed, including that relating to the form of the State; to have called for a consensual reform of the electoral system, in order to ward off post-electoral conflicts;

to have called for an audit of the calamitous management of the large public funds allocated to the organization of AFCON 2019, which "slipped" to 2022.

Faced with this injustice, the judicial institution and the magistrates have cowardly chosen the side of the executioners.

The people arrested are all civilians, yet they were brought before military courts in total violation of our laws and our country's international commitments and convicted with heavy sentences, some amount to 7 years imprisonment, aggravated with heavy fines. In so doing, the hateful State wants to strike the militants and sympathizers of the CRM in their flesh and their moral, the CRM itself and the National Resistance in their wallet. Nothing will help. The National Resistance will continue until the final victory.

In all their cases, no right of defense was respected. It was to protest against these multiple irregularities and injustices that their lawyers put down their robes, and that they themselves decided to stop appearing before political judges, concerned only with defending their political party, the CPDM. Thus, our political detainees have become, in fact, authentic political hostages of the regime.

Since then, as if to send a message of terror to all those who would be tempted to claim their rights or to demand accountability from those in charge of public affairs, magistrates who are under orders and, moreover, hateful, pronounce sentences of revenge. This is State terrorism !

Thus, the women and men in charge of saying the law have turned into the criminal little hands of the dictatorship that crushes the Cameroonian people. Our people will remember this one day.

To the women and men who, despite the torture, the various humiliations and the maneuvers of the regime, did not betray the cause, I would like to express my admiration for their patriotism and their dignity in the ordeal. They are a model of courage and abnegation. They should inspire the youth. As long as I live, I will fight so that one day the country will be grateful to them.

Despite this police and judicial barbarity, I ask you not to give up in the face of a crazy dictatorship.

I take this opportunity to thank political parties, civil society organizations, national and international media, national and foreign personalities and Cameroonians from various regions of the country as well as the diaspora for their unqualified condemnation and their support messages following police and judicial barbarism on CRM militants and sympathizers by the Yaounde pyromaniac regime.

In 2022, our country will enter a new stage in its history. A stage fraught with uncertainty, given the war of factions already underway within the state apparatus and the temptation to do worse that seems to animate some of them. We are starting a turning point.

I launch a patriotic appeal to the political parties that claim to be part of the opposition, to intellectuals, academics, actors of the private sector and civil society, traditional and religious authorities, students and other young people, men and women, motorcycle drivers, street vendors, the diaspora, and more broadly to the People of Change without distinction, so that we can overcome our differences and work together for the liberation of our people from the dictatorship of the regime in place.

I call for the Sacred Union of the Forces of Change in which the CRM is ready to fully contribute. Our compatriots, militants and sympathizers of the ruling party or of its allied parties, who think that it is time to build our country together with fraternity and patriotism, have their place in this Sacred Union.

For my part, I reiterate in all simplicity, my willingness to work with all those who want to give our people a chance to regain their dignity and allow our country to regain its rank in Africa and in the world. In this perspective, we are looking forward to the upcoming elections. Our fundamental option of change in peace and through the ballot box remains our compass. We are working on this with the same seriousness and determination as since the creation of the CRM, remobilizing and reorganizing our party, and recalling our firm opposition to any form of dynastic transmission of power, by mutual consent. For, only the sovereign Cameroonian people should freely choose their leaders, through democratic, honest, transparent elections, guaranteed by electoral rules that do not serve electoral fraud.

Ladies and Gentlemen, dear compatriots !

As this very difficult year of 2021 draws to a close, on behalf of the CRM and on my own behalf, I send a message of solidarity, encouragement and admiration to the political hostages of the regime and their courageous families for their sacrifice in the name of freedom and dignity of our people.

I can hear their executioners, who are also the executioners of all the Cameroonian people, laugh at our inability to meet the challenge given to us, in martyring these compatriots they are destroying with jubilation. I just have to remind them what the Ancient Greeks have said: "The gods drive those they want to lose mad".

Some time ago, following a resolution of the Directorate of the CRM, a campaign for the release of political prisoners was launched. In the light of the recent extrajudicial convictions in the framework of illegal and unjust trial, I invite Cameroonians to own this campaign and to take their place in the implementation. Moreover, the CRM and the National Resistance have heard the numerous messages and public declarations from political parties, civil society organizations and personalities in favor of the defense and safeguard of civil and political rights indispensable to a democratic society. The CRM will consider the best way to give an efficient, and as much as possible, concerted follow-up to these citizen and republican exhortations.

I know I can count on each of you to distinguish between the time of pleasure and distraction and the time of commitment for liberation.

To each of you, without any distinction, I send my best wishes for the end year celebrations

Happy New Year 2022!

God bless Cameroon!

Maurice KAMTO, President-Elect

Yaoundé, December 31, 2021