

MOUVEMENT POUR  
LA RENAISSANCE  
DU CAMEROUN



CAMEROON  
RENAISSANCE  
MOVEMENT

AUTORISATION MINATD N°000221 DU 25 JUILLET 2008/ LETTRE MINATD N°0002249/LMINATD/DAP/SDE/STP DU 02 AOÛT 2012

## **STATEMENT OF THE CAMEROON RENAISSANCE MOVEMENT ON THE OCCASION OF THE 40 YEARS OF MR PAUL BIYA AS THE HELM OF THE COUNTRY**

At a time when some are preparing to celebrate with frenzy the 40th anniversary of the accession of Mr Paul BIYA to the supreme office of our country, it is useful to recall, for our compatriots who are in the age group of 0 to 40 or even 45 years old, the context of its advent, and to revisit the itinerary followed, which sheds light on the progressive drift that led Cameroon to the torments where it finds itself today.

On Thursday, 4th November 1982, the Cameroonian people learned of the resignation of Ahmadou AHIDJO, first President of the Republic of Cameroon, by a message delivered on the national radio. President AHIDJO handed over power to his constitutional successor, Mr Paul Biya, then Prime Minister, on 6th November 1982, after 24 years in power. It is therefore through a legal gateway, with questionable constitutionality, that Ahmadou AHIDJO offered power on a golden platter and without any election, to Mr Paul BIYA, whose path he had prepared by appointing him, among others, Secretary-General of the Presidency of the Republic, Prime Minister in 1975, then in 1979 with right of succession. For the Cameroonian people, the accession to power of this 49-year-old man, reserved, with the profile of a technocrat, opened a new era full of hopes and dreams. Like many other Cameroonians, I literally exploded with joy at the announcement of his advent, and with other compatriots from our university city 6000 km from our country, we spent the night imagining the new country under construction which we wanted to contribute to quickly.

The prospects were bright. A young and literate man, who was believed to be open to modernity, took the reins of one of the most dynamic countries and one of the proudest peoples of Africa. Ahmadou AHIDJO had left a radiant country economically and diplomatically, with full State coffers and an enviable and envied industrial and social level

in Africa, which placed us among the middle-income countries, therefore expected to emerge from underdevelopment in a generation.

Forty years later, the question we all ask ourselves, openly for some and covertly for others, is: What happened to us, both as a country and as a people, with this regime called "New deal"?

We will refrain from drawing up here an economic and social balance sheet of this regime, keeping it during the election period when this kind of exercise guides voters in their choice, faced with an alternative offer.

It will suffice to recall, in the context of the event which gave rise to this declaration, that as soon as he took office, the new President, carried by the fervour of an entire people, promised rigour in the management, the moralisation of behaviours, and, later, wished to be considered as the one who will have left his country democracy and prosperity.

In 1982, Mr Paul BIYA inherited a country governed under the influence of a single party, in reality a party-state. After his accession to power, Mr BIYA was in no hurry, far from it, to return to the multiparty system which ruled political life before and after independence, until 1966. Quite the contrary, when what one dubbed the 'wind from the east' in the early 1990s, its supporters demonstrated across the country against the 'rushed' multiparty system. Under international pressure, he ended up establishing a multiparty system, not without having first imprisoned citizens whose crime was to have formed political parties. That was a curiosity for a self-declared democrat, especially when the creation of these parties was in accordance with the Constitution then in force.

After the first multi-party legislative elections in 1992, lost by the ruling party, the CPDM, Mr BIYA restricted the electoral system, paying lip service to limiting the number of presidential terms to two terms of seven-year, as part of the 1996 constitutional reform. This barrier was removed in 2008 through a revision of the Constitution, hotly contested with dozens of deaths. However, he will not return to the five-year term, which existed before the 1996 Constitution.

In 1985, President Paul BIYA sowed the seeds of political instability in Cameroon by unilaterally deciding to change the name of the country, replacing the United Republic of Cameroon by Republic of Cameroon only. This unfortunate decision will be the centre of the challenges of our compatriots in the English-speaking regions, which will lead, since 2016, to secessionist demands. Decentralisation, however adopted by the constitutional reform of 1996 as a response to the federalist demands of these compatriots, and whose application could have been an acceptable response for many of them, had remained a dead

letter. Cameroon, considered an island of peace, will fall into a fratricidal war, long denied by the government.

The solutions for a way out of the crisis proposed by the Cameroon Renaissance Movement and other institutions, including religious ones, will be ignored, the power in place having opted for a sham pompously called Major National Dialogue (MND) in November 2019, whose results for peace are still awaited.

The institutions provided for by the constitutional reform of 1996 were painfully put in place, in particular the Senate, whose relevance is increasingly disputed in the current form of the State, and which appears as a budget-consuming instrument used by the President to reward, through nominations, his political supporters.

To date, the High Court of Justice provided for by the Fundamental Law and competent to judge the acts performed in the exercise of their functions by the President of the Republic, the Prime Minister and members of the government, has still not been set up, and for good reason.

With regard to individual and collective rights and freedoms, the achievements of 1990 have been gradually eroded or purely and simply abandoned, leading in particular to an arrogant trampling on the fundamental rights of citizens and public freedoms.

By way of illustration: in January and June 2019, then in September 2020, thousands of political activists, in particular from the CRM, were arrested, brought before military courts, and for some, sentenced to heavy prison terms for their Political Views. They wanted to traumatize Cameroonians by sowing state terror in the city. The false democracy restored in the early 1990s has turned into an openly assumed dictatorship.

After its electoral defeat of 1992, which was all the more unbearable as it was unexpected, the CPDM regime deployed a legislative and institutional arsenal for electoral fraud and to ensure, with the help of the various State organs, an administrative victory that it cannot obtain through the ballot box. He focused on a flawed electoral code, especially after another defeat in the 2018 presidential election; this is how he has so far rejected all calls and proposals for a consensual reform of the electoral system which would allow the country to avoid electoral crises and guarantee to those in power and other elected officials the necessary democratic and popular legitimacy to pursue bold policies. The CPDM regime and its leader have therefore carved out an electoral code for their unique needs; it is their political life insurance. They organize the elections only by declaring themselves winners in advance, the other candidates or political parties, whether real or fabricated candidates, having to accept to act as companions.

But the historic election of 2018 and all the events that surrounded it opened the eyes of Cameroonians.

Insecurity has made its bed, not only with the terrorist attacks of the Boko Haram sect, but much more with the fratricidal war in the English-speaking regions of the North West and South West and the rise of different forms of organized crime, from which Cameroon was rather spared until then.

Living together has become a hollow slogan intended to hide the tribal barriers that the power in place is trying to erect between Cameroonians who, fortunately, are not fooled, and remain determined to live in brotherhood and harmony.

Cameroonian diplomacy, once radiant in Africa and in the world, is now moribund. Devoid of vision, clear objectives and the slightest strategy, often forgotten in the hands of diplomats appointed almost for life to ambassadorial posts, it sails according to the winds and circumstances.

Systematic and widespread corruption has ruined public finances, impoverished the country and plunged the majority of households into misery. Behind the façade of the fight against this scourge, lies impunity which operates as an encouragement to the embezzlement of public wealth. Otherwise, how to explain the delays, even the silence of the State in the face of proven cases of corruption such as in the construction of the afcon 2019-2022 infrastructures, the GLENCORE case, the DIKOLO case, the case of the FUNDS of COVID-19, to name just a few recent emblematic cases?

How to let such situations continue in a country where the minimum wage remains at less than FCFA 37,000, where there has been no increase in salaries in the civil service for years when they are among the lowest for countries of comparable level, where access to education and health care remains out of reach for a large number of Cameroonians, where the phenomenon of inflation, "so-called high cost of living", upsets households and accentuate the impoverishment of populations already eaten away by poverty?

The "New deal" was an empty dream for Cameroon; it led our beautiful country to ruin. Maybe his flag bearer didn't believe it himself. Because we cannot attribute this national disaster to the sole fact of the failed coup attempt of 6th April 1984. Certainly, it was a serious and unacceptable attack on the institutions of the Republic. However, it did not only fail, but President BIYA who was the main target should have overcome this trauma, only after a decade. Otherwise, it is hard to see why he would have done everything possible to retain power more than three decades later. If he did, it's probably because he believed he could still bring something to his country. He probably did the best he could. But he must

have the lucidity to see that he could not bring democracy and prosperity to Cameroon. We can therefore conclude with him that he failed in relation to the goals that he had set himself. Worse, his New deal will have been a national regression, which has worked to divide Cameroonians, installed an inextricable system of predation and embezzlement of public funds, destroyed public conduct, patriotism and civic sense, deliberately plunged the whole country in urban chaos, broke the social elevator and created the culture of contempt for the poor and those who think differently.

It is this country that together we must revive tomorrow from the ashes of its past glory and project it into the world of tomorrow, certainly fearsome but with unlimited possibilities, thanks to science and technology and rooting it in what we are compared to the rest of the world. This is what the CRM and I have been inviting Cameroonian youth to for ten years, whose dynamism, creativity and exceptional talent there is no need to dwell on here, again.

May the National Renaissance come with all Cameroonians and for all Cameroonians!

Yaoundé, 5th November 2022

National President

Maurice Kamto

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