

PUBLIC RELEASE ON THE JOINT GOVERNMENT CONFERENCE ON THE COST OF LIVING IN CAMEROON FOLLOWING THE RUSSO-UKRAINIAN CONFLICT.

On 10 August 2023, five Cameroonian ministers held a joint press conference to make public the government measures for the fight against the high cost of living due to the so-called Russian-Ukrainian crisis for our country. On this occasion, the government spokesperson, Minister René Emmanuel SADI, made an introductory statement presenting in nutshell the "efforts" provided by the power in place.

The Cameroon Renaissance Movement (CRM) notes to denounce it that the introductory statement in question, by a sleight of hand, presents the collective budget resulting from the ordinance of 2 June 2022 supplementing certain provisions of the finance law of the 2022 financial year by the Head of State as a subsidy for petroleum products when it was more effectively a matter of taking into account the increase in oil revenues due to the explosion in the price of crude oil on the international market, following the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. Thus, the increase in the so-called subsidy, which would go from 120 to 480 billion, i.e. an increase of 360 billion CFA francs, rather reflects the revenue garnered by the State which could have led to a drop in the prices of various petroleum products at the pump, especially since it largely covered the reduction in the taxable values applicable to imports of refined petroleum products decided in the finance law.

In addition to petroleum products, the introductory statement highlights the emphasis placed on basic necessities for which the State devotes efforts through exemptions and tax and customs reductions. These measures are taken for the exclusive benefit of importers without any impact on citizens insofar as current market prices are not affected by them. Freezing the prices of basic necessities, after having brought them back to official levels approved by the State, is a more effective instrument in such a situation, which directly impacts the shopping basket. If the Audit Bench is today opening an investigation into the companies awarded the measures taken for the import of basic necessities, it is almost obvious that, as in the case of the Covid-19 contracts, it

would appear that members of the government and their associates are those taking full advantage of it.

The decision to keep unchanged the price of the kilowatt of electricity and the cubic meter of water for households raises questions about the influence of Russia or Ukraine in the production of these two resources in Cameroon. . Is the primary role of government to raise prices so that when it backs off for a moment it is to be applauded?

When he talks about the structural measures to be implemented to contain or attenuate possible shocks, the words of the government spokesperson are at the same time vague, fleeting and baseless without any concrete proposal. However, the high cost of living is a palpable reality that breaks many Cameroonians on a daily basis and which, well beyond the Russian-Ukrainian crisis, highlights the resignation of the government in its missions to support citizens. Indeed, it is at least since October 2021, four months before the outbreak of the crisis in Eastern Europe, that Cameroonians have decried the growing phenomenon of the high cost of living in our country, without arousing the appropriate reaction from leaders. Do price controls still exist in our country?

Because he refers to other countries in his introductory remarks, it is good to remind the government spokesperson that Ivory Coast has frozen prices on its market, that wages have been increased there to compensate for the inflation and give people purchasing power and that the private sector benefits from support measures to continue to meet market demand. This is one example among many. 2

It is therefore clear that Cameroonian citizens are left out of government measures to fight against the high cost of living.

Since in the end, the prices of the products will remain out of their reach, their purchasing power low, while a privileged few and associates of the government will benefit from the state measures decided in this framework as always.

Done in Yaoundé on 16 August 2023

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