

**State Visit to Cameroon of H.E. François HOLLANDE, President of the French Republic
Yaounde, 3 July 2015**

Joint Press Conference by Presidents BIYA and HOLLANDE at Unity Palace

Opening Statement by President François HOLLANDE

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is almost fifteen years since a President of the French Republic paid an official visit to your country.

Mr President, I wanted to come here also because there are human ties binding our two countries. Some of these ties stretch back many years into our history. They may be painful, but France always faces up to its past with lucidity to better prepare for the future, and that is what we have done.

I had a long discussion with President Biya and reminded him that France stood by Cameroon in the face of threats from the Boko Haram terrorist group. I commended Cameroon's commitment because you had to deal with brutal attacks by terrorists capable of causing bloodbaths. The Cameroonian army has shown courage. It was able to beat off the attackers although they are still at the borders and pose a threat to the security of the entire region.

Just a few hours ago, the Boko Haram group committed atrocities, killing 150 people in a place of worship in Nigeria. Muslims were cowardly slaughtered during prayer time. I also confirmed France's cooperation with all countries in the region to further strengthen our intelligence, information, and training systems so that the most affected countries can carry out necessary operations by themselves.

A year ago, we called for greater coordination of our actions and I must say that the results are encouraging. We have an intelligence-sharing structure and a military liaison unit ; the French Air Force regularly carries out over-flights in areas where Boko Haram is wreaking havoc. We can therefore provide the armies of Cameroon, Chad, Niger, and Nigeria with expected images. I also told President Biya that we will further strengthen this cooperation, notably to supply images, train military personnel and better coordinate our actions.

I have also taken cognizance, and would like the international community itself to be fully informed, of the number of refugees that have been accepted and provided shelter here in Cameroon. I thank the Cameroonian population for its generosity and solidarity. These refugees are tens of thousands of people who have generally fled Nigeria to Cameroon. They are also Cameroonians who are forced to leave their homes and flock to towns to avoid

danger. This calls for international community assistance. The European Union is already providing support with the participation of France. We have released huge sums under the World Food Programme. I am aware of what the Red Cross and the High Commissioner for Refugees are doing. I will ensure that France continues to provide and even increase its assistance because the issue of refugees we are talking about is sometimes at the centre of debate in Europe. African countries grapple with these displaced persons and refugees, which worsens development conditions and creates or can create unrest. So, our solidarity must be total.

We also talked about the Central African Republic because when France once more decided to intervene in the Central African Republic to prevent mass killings, and prevent the worst from happening, we were initially assisted by regional organizations, the United Nations Organization and the European Union. But nothing would have been possible if neighbouring countries, especially Cameroon, had not supported us politically and militarily since African troops were deployed in the Central African Republic. Today, most of the territory of the Central African Republic has been secured. Some regions are still affected by division and the activities of armed groups. However, it is now certain that elections will be organized. The date has been set and the process will be completed. Moreover, this enables the French army to reduce its presence in the Central African Republic, thereby naturally allowing the presence of other contingents, including the United Nations and particularly African forces.

In terms of development, we have worked towards concluding a third Debt Relief and Development Contract (C2D) which will be even more substantial than the previous one and which will finance a number of projects and ensure the concretization of what we have signed today. We are aware that there can be no development without security or development without democracy. We are, therefore, attentive to all efforts that can be made for pluralism to take its rightful place. The electoral commission has been established, institutions have been set up and the fight against corruption must be carried out everywhere. I mean everywhere, so we can be sure that we will achieve our development options.

We are equally attentive to the freedom of expression and human rights. I am aware that regarding justice, we cooperate with the Cameroonian justice system. The French and Cameroonian justice systems must be independent.

I thank President Biya for the support he has assured us regarding the challenge of the Conference on Climate Change. That is very important. I was in Angola and in Benin. I welcome all the support given to us by African countries and, today, Cameroon which is Africa in miniature. Here in Cameroon, you are Africa and you are the symbol of Africa: French-speaking Africa, English-speaking Africa, Africa with all its religions represented here, an African continent that enables or should enable people to live in peace.

That is why the climate issue is important- as Africa has the lowest CO2 and greenhouse gas emission levels. Likewise, Africa is undoubtedly one of the continents that are most affected by global warming. Africa therefore supports France. France is aware of Africa's

stakes in this conference which should also be a growth cycle. Growth for Africa and for France, provided France is willing to put its technology at the service of Africa.

I have not come here just to secure contracts for enterprises. Managers of enterprises have accompanied me throughout my trip. I have come to also ensure France's continued presence. France is not imposing anything. France expresses solidarity with Africa. France is aware that it is expected in Africa not to decide for Africans, but to bring development principles which can be beneficial to the African continent.

Thank you for your attention. I will also field questions.