

**15TH SUMMIT OF THE INTERNATIONAL
ORGANIZATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE (OIF)**

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**SPEECH BY H.E. PAUL BIYA,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

Dakar, 29 November 2014

**Mr Chairman of the Conference,
Heads of State, Government and Delegation,
The Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie,
Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

We have long known that the world is unfair. We also know that overcoming poverty and exclusion will require much time and effort.

We equally know that the world is a dangerous place and that trouble can break out at any time in the form of civil or foreign war, ethnic or religious rivalry, oppression of the population by factions, you name it.

Faced with these challenges, one may wonder what more our Organization can do.

The answer will be that it is already greatly involved in the preservation of peace and the furtherance of democracy and human rights. Mention will also be made of its role in the defence of solidarity between nations and its support for education and training. That is true. And on that score, I wish to heartily congratulate my brother and friend, President Abdou DIOUF, for all the remarkable work he has done.

I simply wish to say that lately, we have been facing new challenges.

The first of these challenges concerns our security. Hitherto, we had to deal with local conflicts whose consequences rarely went beyond the sub-region. Today, we are threatened by a multifaceted global destabilization campaign. From the offensive in Iraq and Syria, it has spread its tentacles right to Mali and to the entire Sahel zone in recent years. It is also threatening the whole world through terrorism.

For instance, I would like to draw your attention to the situation in my country which is currently facing attacks from the Boko Haram sect. I will mention in passing that all of Nigeria's immediate neighbours are OIF members and just like Cameroon, are concerned.

Faced with a common "enemy" who rebuffs every value we hold dear, solidarity must come fully into play. Recent history teaches us that there can be no compromise with such an opponent.

I need not say that we remain determined advocates of peace. We will not give up the "dialogue of cultures" so dear to President SENGHOR, champion of universal brotherhood.

Secondly, I believe that the spirit of solidarity existing between us must be kept up in the area of development. We are aware that the Millennium Development Goals scheduled to end next year will not be achieved. The Post-2015 Agenda will take over.

Making up for lost time is an imperative. There is no other way to roll back poverty which is a breeding ground for extremism and revolt.

To that end, OIF's new strategic framework will be a precious asset. By advocating for more active solidarity towards least developed countries, our Organization will contribute towards reducing inequalities between the North and the South.

I would like to add that if women and youth, who make up three quarters of the population of most of our countries, have equal access to health, education and training as OIF is striving to ensure, we would have made great strides towards progress in our societies. Therefore, the theme chosen for our 15th Summit, namely "Women and Youth in La Francophonie: vectors of peace, actors of development" is apt. In this regard, we will focus on the aspirations of women and youth through concrete programmes and projects. By so doing, we will be providing women and youth with the wherewithal to combat poverty, hunger and disease. "This new frontier" is fully in line with our Organization's humanist tradition.

Besides these fundamental tasks, many other issues require our in-put, not least among which is environmental protection.

The countries of the Central African sub-region feel that by preserving the great Congo basin forest, they contribute significantly towards reducing greenhouse gases. Hence, they are pleased that China and the United States of America seem to have embarked on that. This augurs well for next year's Paris Conference on Climate. The situation of Lake Chad is another cause for concern to us. We are almost helplessly watching its tragic progressive disappearance. In addition, there are security and socio-political challenges. The Paris Conference should work towards establishing a Lake Chad rescue plan. It is a suggestion.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I believe that our Organization has what it takes to be in the vanguard of the international community. To continue to be a veritable think tank, it should remain true to its values and be bold enough to adapt to an ever-changing world.

In these threat-filled times when barbarism is once again raising its ugly head, OIF must show that the destiny of humankind lies in a future of brotherhood and tolerance, and not one of hatred and violence.

I would now like to thank the Senegalese authorities and people for their warm welcome and brotherly hospitality on the occasion of the 15th Summit of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

Thank you for your attention.