

HEAD OF STATE'S WORKING VISIT TO FRANCE

(28 January – 2 February 2013)

Speech by H.E. Paul BIYA, President of the Republic of Cameroon, read by his personal representative, the Minister of External Relations, Pierre MOUKOKO MBONJO, at the meeting with the Cameroonian community in France.

Paris, 1 February 2013

- **The Representative of the Cameroonian community in France,**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen,**
- **My very dear compatriots,**

Let me start by thanking you for extending your good wishes to me and my wife. For my part, I am once more extending mine to you since those of last 31 December were obviously meant for all Cameroonians, including you.

I also wish to say how touched I was by your enthusiastic and warm welcome during this winter season, upon my arrival in France last Monday.

As you are aware, I am visiting France at the invitation of the President of the French Republic, Mr Francois Hollande.

You also know that President Hollande and I held talks on 30 January during which we discussed issues of common interest and agreed to strengthen and consolidate our excellent bilateral cooperation. We also discussed peace and development issues concerning our continent. We underscored the need for concerted actions in that regard.

On 31 January, I met with the French employers' union within the framework of a forum under the theme "*Cameroon-France: for a sustainable economic partnership*".

The forum was an opportunity to present to French business people Cameroon's current situation, as well as the investment opportunities in our country and invite them to support us in our vast development programme aimed at making Cameroon an emerging country by 2035.

My impression is that the message was well received and the French employers' union is committed to joining us in the implementation of our major projects.

I wish to seize this opportunity to urge you to be part of this momentum and make your own contribution towards realizing them.

- **My very dear compatriots,**

During my official visit to France in July 2009, I urged members of our Diaspora in France – and through them our compatriots abroad – to use their skills to serve our country. You certainly noted that I repeated this appeal in my swearing-in speech before the National Assembly so as to make it more solemn. I know that among our communities abroad, there are highly skilled and devoted “treasures” that remain untapped. Today, I am once again making this appeal. For, your contribution to the implementation of our Major Accomplishments policy is decisive.

Now is the time for action. I remain convinced that you will be able to mobilize accordingly. In the past, you have been able, when called upon, to demonstrate a high sense of responsibility. Proof of this is your outstanding participation at the 2011 presidential election during which you exercised your voting right. In fact, this was an opportunity to satisfy one of your grievances.

I have taken good note of those you have submitted to me through your Representative during this meeting. Rest assured that I will give them my full attention and will not fail to provide solutions to them in due time.

To conclude, I once again urge you to continue to be excellent ambassadors of Cameroon and to respect the laws and regulations of your host country. That is one way of contributing to our country’s good image on French soil.

- **My very dear compatriots,**

As you yourselves say, you are a Diaspora of progress. Personally, I have never doubted it.

Long Live Cameroon!

Thank you for your attention.