

**OFFICIAL VISIT OF MS MICHAELLE JEAN, SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE  
INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION OF LA FRANCOPHONIE**

(Yaounde, 13-16 April 2015)

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**TOAST BY THE HEAD OF STATE**

*Yaounde, 14 April 2015*

**The Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie,**

The Cameroonian people, my wife and I are very pleased to have you in our country. Welcome to Cameroon.

Before addressing the lady who is currently at the helm of the International Organization of La Francophonie, I would like to say a few words to an exceptional woman.

Following an outstanding academic career, you had a brilliant stint in your country's media. It is no surprise that such varied experience qualified you for the prestigious post of Governor General of Canada, making you ipso facto a Head of State. At the end of your tenure, you accepted to undertake many humanitarian missions to Haiti to which you have naturally remained much attached. Your success in the said missions was universally recognized and commended.

As a widely respected woman of action and conviction, your candidacy for the post of Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie, which was put forward by your Government, was approved by consensus in November 2014 in Dakar. That decision, which makes you the first woman to hold this high office, pays tribute to your personal record. It also recognizes Canada's prominent role in the francophone world.

As an African, I can only be pleased with your appointment. You are familiar with our continent, which you have visited many times. Like me, you are aware that the French language we share is among the five most spoken languages worldwide and particularly in Africa. If demographers' projections are correct, in 2050, Africa's population will be approximately one billion seven hundred million, and the majority French-speaking.

The bulk of our Organization's members are still developing countries. Some, if not the majority, belong to the so-called least developed countries. This is why, in Dakar, I advocated that the solidarity amongst us should be tangible, ongoing and sustainable in terms of development. It was in the same vein that in Montreux, I proposed the establishment of a solidarity fund for disaster-stricken countries.

Madam Secretary-General, as you are aware, contrary to our commitments, the Millennium Development Goals have not been achieved. The Post-2015 Agenda will take over. It is imperative to close the huge gap. In so doing, we will roll back poverty which is the crucible of extremism and rebellion.

In this struggle for human dignity, the International Organization of La Francophonie has its role to play. Its new strategic framework is a valuable asset to this end. By advocating more active solidarity for least developed countries, our organization will contribute towards reducing inequalities between the North and the South.

French is the main link between member countries of the International Organization of La Francophonie. Our Organization should not be a “closed world”. How could it be otherwise? Many of its member countries, particularly Canada and Cameroon, belong to other like-minded bodies. Such being the case, I see no reason why such bodies should not work together or pursue common goals such as peace, democracy and economic and social progress. In this regard, I wish to hail the ever-increasing opening up of our Organization to countries belonging to other linguistic and cultural spheres. I am referring to Arabic-speaking, English-speaking and Portuguese-speaking countries.

We hail our Organization’s contribution to the advent of the future civilization, the universal civilization.

### **The Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie,**

To conclude, I would like to thank you for your visit which comes a few months following your accession to the helm of our Organization. During your meetings, you will surely discover that we have a lot in common.

I will add that you have a huge task. Your distinguished academic career and your record as an admired stateswoman augur well for the successful discharge of your duties. You can count on Cameroon’s as well as my own personal support.

### **Ladies and Gentlemen,**

My wife and I now invite you to raise your glasses to that success and in honour of Ms Michaëlle Jean, Secretary-General of the International Organization of La Francophonie.

Thank you!