

Paul Biya



Communal Liberalism

Dynamic thinking in keeping
with the times

FAVRE
SOPECAM

Tous avec S.E Paul BIYA President de la republique du Cameroun

Communal liberalism

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Groupe Libella, Paris

Legal deposit in Switzerland for the original edition in French under the title
Pour le Libéralisme Communautaire, March 2024.

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Translation: Antoine Bousomog

Cover photo: © Mr ZOA Barthélémy

Layout: Lemuri-Concept

ISBN: 978-2-8289-2161-3

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Éditions Favre receives structural support from the Federal Office of Culture
for the years 2021-2024.

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Editors' Note

Communal Liberalism was an editorial event upon its publication some thirty years ago. Indeed, the book was and remains a huge success, standing the test of time. The fervent support and passionate convictions that it drew (and continues to draw) from the general public were and remain reflective of the relevance and consistency of the opinions and arguments contained therein. From a solid doctrinal and intellectual basis, Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, presents the reader with an essay of outstanding lucidity and depth. *Communal Liberalism* is a major reference book as its themes and issues, its analyses and proposals are, more than ever before, so relevant to the challenges of our times.

Known for his dynamic thinking and action, the illustrious author has opted to revise and recast his programme-book, with a view to publishing a new edition. He has chosen to check his analyses and proposals against the passing time and the coming time, in order to consolidate his contribution to development thinking and action.

It is thus in a revised and expanded format, born of the dialogue between words and actions, that the publishers – who are honoured and humbled by President Paul Biya's trust – have the pleasure to present this edition of his great book to the public.

Introduction

More than half a century after our political independence, reunification and unification, and at this decisive stage in our economic, social and cultural development, our Emergence in short, I believe it is the appropriate and right time, in view of the multiple and complex contemporary challenges, and the aspirations of our society, to appeal for renewed ownership of the doctrine underpinning our vision for society, to reaffirm the vitality of Communal Liberalism in our times and faced with current and future challenges. By moving successively from the federal State to the unitary State and, finally, to the decentralized unitary State, the Republic of Cameroon resolved an artificial problem invented by colonization, thereby providing a springboard for political action during the first quarter century of our independence. The after-effects of colonization are so numerous that we must be constantly vigilant and continually working to assert our hard-worn identity. Our continuous action has consisted and still consists in overcoming artificial schisms created by colonization, decolonizing mentalities and transcending the colonial past in order to build and consolidate, together with Cameroonians and for Cameroonians, a Cameroon that stands tall and is jealous of its freedom, as reflected in our national anthem.

It must be acknowledged that being fixated on the past could prevent properly appraising the present and preparing for the future accordingly. Yet, we are aware that today we must address current and future challenges. Thus, now more than ever before, we need to strengthen and specify the common ideological referent for rationally and methodically fast-tracking Cameroon's Emergence.

It is not about ignoring the past, but rather about not remaining its prisoners. It is about carrying out a lucid review of the past and resolutely fitting the times so as to steer our country, Cameroon, triumphantly to Emergence through the methodic use of my proposed compass.

My humble intention in penning these lines and putting my thought to the test of time is to consolidate, for all my fellow Cameroonians and a larger public, the underlying principles, values and ideals of the vision of society that we are implementing, and their relevance to current and future challenges. It is a vision of society from whose implementation we have drawn useful lessons for the Cameroon of today and tomorrow. For our nation, it is about giving fresh impetus to building a democratic and prosperous society, a society of freedom, equality, collective and individual development, responsibility and solidarity.

For, it still holds true today that the Cameroonian society remains fascinated by values that are not adequately tested, and is caught up in a prolonged ethical and ideological odyssey. The country's true reality is complex in the urban and rural areas and villages. Such a plurality of living

environments and conditions engenders diverse ways of thinking, acting and doing things.

It should also be stated unequivocally, that the country's wealth remains unequally shared among the various population segments, despite actions geared towards equitable sharing of the fruit of the national development effort. Regarding the said unequal sharing, how can one fail to highlight the case of those who till the soil, namely farmers, true economic growth drivers, who do not reap the benefits they deserve for their hard work? How can one fail to mention youth unemployment which is a veritable scourge? How can one fail to mention informal sector workers who are grappling with instability? How can one overlook the status of women who remain inadequately rewarded for their hard work? The numerous public and private sector jobs created remain insufficient for the rising jobseeker numbers. In our country, as in many others, material comfort remains the prerogative of the happy few, while the majority of Cameroonians wallow in poverty, despite our middle-class expansion, our policy of social justice and equal opportunity, and Cameroon's huge economic potential. I think the reason why most citizens in this country strongly reject destabilization attempts fomented by adventurers at home and abroad is that they have experienced the benefits of tranquility and are imbued with the strong conviction that only in an atmosphere of peace and stability can they develop the numerous national resources and enjoy them in the most honest way possible. Therefore, I affirm, in this regard, that a significant segment of Cameroon's population is in need of material comfort despite the outcomes achieved by implementing our policy of poverty reduction

through capacity building, creating opportunities for all and promoting the middle classes. Additionally, there is a need for cultural development. The need for material comfort has always been taken seriously so as to create and consolidate the conditions and environments for the emancipation of the greatest number from hunger, disease, illiteracy or poverty. Of course, we can boast to the world of having a literacy level which puts us among Africa's most educated countries. However, I am aware that such rate should not overshadow the disparities between and within regions, let alone the amount of effort required to consolidate universal access to education. Better still, this rate should not blind us to the need to change mentalities in all areas and all age categories.

The exponential development of educational infrastructure (primary schools, high schools and colleges, universities, etc.) is a palpable aspect of the cultural revolution induced by our vision of society. However, the growing number of educational infrastructure may seem at odds with the ever-increasing demand for education. Therefore, the government and the private sector should pay greater attention to their quantity and quality, given that our need for learning will not be met solely in schools strictly speaking, but also through a wider and appropriately structured information system within families, in the neighbourhoods, on the Internet or social media, subject to their responsible use.

The Cameroonian society has numerous aspirations, namely: education, communication and telecommunication, housing, road infrastructure, basic amenities including water supply and rural electrification, as well as health coverage

and, of course, security, unity, peace, etc. Such multiplicity of aspirations is a factor of our people's dynamism. The aspirations are commensurate with their capacity. There is no question that the country's population is growing rapidly, as in various African countries, which is proof that hygiene and health conditions have improved sharply over the years. However, I am fully aware that our country's dispensaries and hospitals must make greater effort to provide better health care and reassure patients and their loved ones. Here, as in the spheres of culture, training or public infrastructure, I am aware of an urgent need for social justice, which I consider to be among the priorities which we must continue to address.

The Cameroonian society refers to a people who intend to live together as a physical and moral entity. What should we then do about "tribal or ethnic reality", which is still, in multiple instances, a big drawback to this move towards unity, when ethnic group or tribe is used to reject, shut out or exclude others? Also, what should we do about colonial language legacies whose exploitation by an illegitimate minority of our compatriots seeks to eclipse the powerful and overwhelming reality of national unity, the sharing of common values and aspirations? We should remain close to our age-old anthropological cultural and ethical roots, and to the bedrock of our common values which was strengthened on 1 October 1961 and 20 May 1972, instead of wiping them out for the benefit of an inhibitive fixation on the colonial period: a period we accept and transcend in defining who we are. United we are, and more united we will be. United, we are respected and credible on the international scene. Divided, we will not be. Separation is

not a vision. Our past, present and future sing the chorus of unity, and challenge us to constantly strengthen our national community.

In this regard, fast-tracking our progress towards an emerging Cameroon means addressing all these expectations and many more, which I intend to dwell on in the lines below. To build an emerging, democratic and united Cameroon is the lofty and noble task which I continue seeking resolutely to accomplish, with the help of all Cameroonians who are sensitive to the need for harmonious living together and meaningful and fruitful co-existence, with renewed vigour and no prejudices.

After reading this book, some people will certainly seek to fit our world view in one ideological pigeonhole or another, by sticking one of the most familiar, or at least, trendy labels on us. We have no doubts as to the interest that would be aroused if we were to expound our personal stand on renowned ideological trends that have been tested with varying successes around the world.

However, our goal is not to align Cameroon with any ideology whatsoever, no matter fascinating it may be, but rather to accelerate the country's progress towards Emergence. My ideology is Cameroon, Cameroon again, and Cameroon always in a prosperous Africa and an interdependent world. First off, we are convinced that political science has to do with day-to-day reality as experienced in a given country, in dialectics of order and movement. And a political theory is worthy of note only if it helps understanding of such reality. Objective knowledge of reality must lead to

action for its transformation. Cameroon has its own values and peculiarities, as well as its unique trends and specific dynamics, from which we try to learn and consolidate the lessons required to guide our progress, instead of borrowing from other countries rules of conduct and action that are ill-adapted to the substrate and national life in Cameroon. As we see it, there is no human community which, if well observed and studied, would not inspire the action of other peoples. Communal Liberalism, which I want to promote in Cameroon, is the outcome of careful observation of our country and the progress of the world, of an action at the helm of State, of dialogue with players on the international scene and reflection on answers suited to current challenges. So, instead of comparing ourselves to others, we should try to define the content of the concept of Communal Liberalism, the dual dimension of which seems to represent two fundamental factors of Cameroonian culture and our world view, namely freedom and solidarity. These two factors are interdependent and indivisible in our intellectual and practical approach.

Communal Liberalism is construed here as a dynamic and pragmatic vision of the achievement of balance between the national community and the individual, in the generous spirit of African social humanism. We will revert to it below.

The overall approach of this book consists in moving from the overall view of the world to our specific view of Cameroon. Indeed, our vision of society should not be construed as a closed monad. The society of Communal Liberalism we seek to build is one of openness, and one that fits into the modern world, for more interdependent

humankind. Such solidarity forms the basis of the *democratic society* that we henceforth have to consolidate, a society whose economy, concerned about *environmental protection*, will be at the service of *Man* and *the needs and aspirations of each and every one*, and where social justice will be the guiding principle in the distribution of the fruits of our growth. To us, material fulfillment and the intellectual and moral development of Cameroonians should be sought as part of *developing each and every one's humaneness*. To us, such humaneness is the stimulus to help Cameroonians blend their ethnic cultures with the national culture in a spirit of tolerance, freedom, solidarity and responsibility that justifies our ideal of Communal Liberalism.

Chapter I

MORE INTERDEPENDENT HUMANKIND

Bringing about more interdependent humankind is one of the main objectives of Cameroon's foreign policy. This policy is essentially intended to serve the foremost interests of our people in an increasingly interdependent world which, unfortunately, is still characterized by the yearn for dominance and the exploitation of weaker nations by some powerful nations, and by increasingly deadly confrontations between and within States.

In foreign as well as domestic policy, my basic stand remains the rejection of fatalism. Cameroon, just like an individual, can assert itself and grow only in a stable and extremely peaceful environment.

Today, the basic requirements for such peace are to consolidate the independence of States and strengthen cooperation among them. Therefore, our diplomacy which prioritizes States and accords importance to non-State players of international bodies should be at the forefront of the struggle for the advent of this new international order for more justice and solidarity in international relations.

1. Towards a new world political order

Reinforcing the independence of nations appears to be the primary condition for peace and progress in the world

today. Cameroon's foreign policy, through its doctrine and action, has always reasserted these essential requirements.

We lay special emphasis on respect for the sovereignty of States, on the protection by the entire international community of their exclusive, autonomous and full authority over the societies they govern and on the preservation of their immunity abroad. This should lead especially to strict respect for the principles of the equality of nations, of non-interference in their internal affairs and of their freedom to provide the most appropriate means for their defence. It is for this reason that the UN is a forum par excellence for international diplomacy, the promotion of the principles and values that help to ensure international peace and security.

Guaranteeing the independence of nations requires that they be tolerant, accept cultural and ideological differences, and refrain from the use of force to impose their own vision of the world or a socio-political system. Accordingly, Cameroon's diplomacy embraces all the principles of peaceful co-existence leading to a policy of true political cooperation and friendly relations in the world.

In fact, true peaceful co-existence cannot be restricted to relations between great powers alone, since it is obvious that international peace would be meaningless if conflicts are settled in certain parts of the world only for them to be transferred to or break out again more violently in other parts. Neither can it be left in the hands of the great powers alone to decide the fate of the rest of humanity. In this regard, Cameroon always endeavours to protect

its freedom and that of other peoples to decide on the direction of foreign policy options and actions. In the same vein, Cameroon contributes its modest quota to the advent of an interdependent, fair and tolerant world order within the United Nations Organization, the “*Organisation Internationale de la Francophonie*”, the Commonwealth of Nations, the Organization of the Islamic Conference and the African Union. Such constant diplomatic option constitutes the indelible hallmark of our vision of interstate relations. To this end, I must renew my attachment to the virtues of multilateralism. Based on the principles of consultation, solidarity and inclusion, multilateralism enables lasting and effective cooperation between States, as well as the promotion of balance between States in the current international system. Indeed, the permanent quest for balance in the forces at play on the international scene helps to ensure the autonomy of peoples, hence our attachment to the advent of a multipolar and inclusive world.

In our context, balance of power is still advisable, although total disarmament is the best guarantee for peace and security for all. Furthermore, the great powers must shoulder their responsibility regarding international peacekeeping and security, the promotion of peaceful conflict resolution as well as the principles of the United Nations Charter. Moreover, given the prevailing situation in the world today, less developed countries should become more united in order to counter-balance the influence of the big and medium powers which often, deliberately or not, tend to undermine their independence once they depart from the principles of the United Nations Charter. International peace and security are not the sole responsibility of big or

medium powers; they are the common responsibility of all States. I believe that peace and security at all levels are global public goods that should be protected and promoted by all States, including States enjoying the benefits thereof, and whose indivisibility requires that equal attention be paid to all pockets of tension, irrespective of place.

Strengthening African unity is still of major concern in our foreign policy. It is the first link in the strategic alliance network which should be consolidated with all countries that share our condition.

At a time when large groups are being formed, achieving such unity in the continent is a vital necessity. The AU is of primordial importance as a forum for dialogue and concerted action by all our States that are grappling with the challenges of globalization and emergence. It is important to immediately embark on implementing African Union's Agenda 2063. The Africa we want is:

- “a prosperous Africa based on inclusive growth and sustainable development”;
- “an integrated continent, politically united and based on the ideals of Pan-Africanism and the vision of Africa's Renaissance”;
- “an Africa of good governance, democracy, respect for human rights, justice and the rule of law”; “a peaceful and secure Africa”;
- “an Africa with a strong cultural identity, common heritage, shared values and ethics”;
- “an Africa, whose development is people-driven, relying on the potential of African people, especially its women and youth, and caring for children”;

– in short “Africa as a strong, united, resilient and influential global player and partner”.

Enriched by the consideration of our past, the knowledge of our present and our projection into the future, African Union’s Agenda 2063 should be energetically owned by States and societies, elite groups and the people. In this regard, African unity will not be achieved by agreement amongst States alone, but must increasingly become a matter for the masses, whose intermingling across borders should be encouraged through the movement of people, the development of complementarity of interests and the invention of new forms of solidarity. Similarly, a more realistic approach to unity requires the promotion, wherever possible, of new forms of union, in line with the aspirations of our respective peoples who should increasingly see the AU as the tip of an institutional pyramid with a solid foundation in all African regions and sub-regions, an embodiment of the most effective and dynamic expression of their capacity for collective action.

It is in this connection that the continued implementation of regional integration in Central Africa within the current framework of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) deserves our country’s full backing. Similarly, the institutional convergence between CEMAC and ECCAS (Economic Community of Central African States), in which we are actively involved, is among our aspirations. Mention must be made of Cameroon’s role in the establishment of AfCFTA (African Continental Free Trade Area). Beyond its importance for inter-African trade, job creation and growth support, I believe it is a wonderful

opportunity for a rapprochement between our States and societies.

Furthermore, the African unity drive should continue to be boosted for better positioning of Africa on the international scene. The United Nations Organization is an ideal forum for expressing this aspect of our action to achieve greater balance and increased democracy in the global system which, once freed from the domination of great powers, will instill in the other States more self-confidence and greater authority with regard to our partners from the North.

The new world political order is a factor of stability and peace, given that it takes into account the aspirations, concerns and all the components of the international society. Democratization of international institutions and the reform of the global financing architecture must remain a major item on the international institution reforms agenda. The purposes, values and principles of the United Nations Charter are still relevant. I am convinced that strengthening interdependence between States can become an opportunity for mankind only if it is underpinned by the ethics of peace, equality, justice and collective progress.

2. A new world economic and cultural order

Beyond the need to strengthen the independence of States, world peace and progress also require more substantial development of their economic and socio-cultural cooperation.

In the same vein, Cameroon's international action seeks greater intensification of equitable trade between peoples. Accordingly, it avails itself of all intervention opportunities to establish a new world economic and cultural order fervently desired by all peoples.

For us and the other growing or emerging countries, the advent of a new world economic order presupposes the preservation of economic independence through better control of the national economy and international trade. At the domestic level, it helps to maintain national sovereignty over natural resources, and to continue to implement a truly indigenous economy which is, however, open to increasingly diversified foreign partners. On the external front, in conjunction with friendly countries, a struggle should be waged against the causes and effects of international economic domination with a view to putting an end to the continuously deteriorating terms of trade and the reinforcement of the unbearable debt cycle of our States.

Culturally, this new international order will require our country and continent to acquire the wherewithal to make a greater contribution to dialogue between cultures and an increasingly universal civilization of the world of tomorrow. Such task can be accomplished only if, while opening up to other peoples, we constantly preserve, promote and transmit our own original and varied cultures that are regularly diluted in a sea of imported patterns and models, in a flow of images and ideas that are obviously at variance with our realities, our history and our culture. A vivid example is our urban music which admirably blends rhythms from within

and without or, better still, locally reproduces what comes from abroad.

To this end, Cameroon's action at the international level mainly seeks to build our nation's scientific and technological capacity by prioritizing fluid circulation of knowledge, skills and know-how, on the one hand, and pooling our efforts with those of other nations involved in the search for a new information and communication world order to enhance our ability to resist ideological pressures exerted by mainstream news agencies and other communication mediums through which ideas and images are disseminated today, on the other hand. Consequently, we must strive to prevent the digital revolution from being a factor of new forms of political, economic and security vulnerability for our States, or a synonym of cultural dependence of African societies with regard to foreign public and private players who call the shots in the area of information and communication technologies. Hence the importance of the Internet governance issue, which has political, economic and cultural ramifications.

In the final analysis, Cameroon's foreign policy is required to make a courageous and generous contribution to the peace, equality, justice and prosperity of peoples. For, the solidarity we wish to consolidate among peoples of the world will be nothing short of solidarity between peoples enjoying freedom and dignity. Genuine solidarity is one that has the greatest respect for the equal dignity of others.

Such requirement, which also applies at the international level, has already been fulfilled at the national level with the building of a democratic political society.

Chapter II

A DEMOCRATIC SOCIETY

What I have been proposing to the Cameroonian people is a profound transformation of political principles and institutions with a view to providing an even more fulfilling environment for all citizens, based on political legitimacy and the quest for broad-based consensus. My vision is to pursue our country's significant political change in order to consolidate a society marked by "heightened citizen trust" in their leaders and among citizens themselves.

The ongoing political change that must be continued is based on three main thrusts, namely: consolidation of national unity, strengthening of genuine democracy and contribution towards the advent of a more peaceful and more interdependent international society.

1. Reaching the nation's zenith

Nation-building, the salvation of all peoples

Taking into account our country's human and material potential, and our achievements in various spheres, I can safely keep asserting that a great destiny awaits Cameroon. We are constantly striving to realize this great destiny, despite obstacles and difficulties. We know where we are heading to and how to get there. However, it is absolutely necessary and urgent for each Cameroonian citizen to face the fact that the realization of this dream is still facing a major obstacle,

that is the fragility and delicate nature of nation-building due to the continued perverse instrumentation of ethnic, religious and language particularisms by some misguided compatriots ... It is important to always inculcate in all Cameroonians a sense of their own necessary existential solidarity which is the basis for the optimum deployment of those active forces required to accelerate the country's overall progress. Therefore, I consider the strengthening of national integration, which is the ultimate step towards national unity, to be the momentous and priority historical task which I must continue to perform with the support of the Cameroonian people in its entirety.

The task is all the more necessary and imperative as it requires the permanent adherence of all our compatriots, irrespective of their political, religious, linguistic and cultural leanings.

History, which is far from being complacent with regard to this requirement, reveals that all great peoples who have bequeathed major, material and spiritual achievements to humanity were and remain solid Nation-States. Such Nation-States thoroughly combine the most powerful organization of political power, namely the State, with the setting for human solidarity, which is the Nation.

In fact, the State is the best politically organized human community, and the most complete from the standpoint of its system of authority. A very sophisticated division of labour between the authorities, a complete set of standards and sanctions which determines roles and social status, and a concentration of the most imposing deterrent material

forces (army, police and prisons) to ensure order within the State and at its borders are some of the elements that constitute the State machinery.

The nation, for its part, is characterized by a partial or total combination of certain specific material and spiritual elements which reinforce its homogeneity and its members' awareness of unity: common race, language, territory, economic life and history. Although the various schools of sociology and philosophy hardly agree on the nomenclature and the combination pattern of these elements, they all admit that the co-existence of a minimum of them is the essential substance of the life of a nation. Peoples who have relied on such exceptional assets in the world have always played a key role in the history of their times.

The Nation-State we are building is linked to our history and our cultures. We believe that it is this osmosis between the State institution and its socio-cultural environment that brings about great achievements. We are not refusing the influence of colonial heritage on our organization. Actually, not only do we accept it under the benefit of inventory, we also take into account the elements of our political and cultural heritage as well as our development objectives.

Gone are the days of the debate on the arbitrary demarcation of borders during the partition of our continent between colonial powers who never took into account the ethnic or socio-cultural homogeneity of the peoples, some of whom found themselves in distinct territories whereas others, with no particular affinity, were placed under the same political authority. Independent Africa happens

to have adopted the principle of inviolability of borders inherited from colonization. It became the responsibility of the leaders to the populations living on their territories to create or consolidate the feeling of national belonging. Colonial heritage should not be an excuse for inaction.

The Cameroonian nation has progressively become an objective and subjective reality based on our desire to live together, our shared memories, the internalization of the national territory in the collective and individual consciousness, shared values and standards, etc. Faced with internal aggression of country owing to secessionist terrorism, I decided to preserve the nation by implementing a policy of dialogue, collective discussion and pardon (granted to ex-combatants). The Cameroonian nation that I have in mind and incarnate is and remains at the crossroads of the One and the Multiple. Our Republic is one and indivisible; our cultural, religious and linguistic diversity is recognized and protected. It is in this connection that the National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism, and the Special Status for the North-West and South-West Regions were established. This approach is balanced and conciliatory, based on the transformation of heterogeneity into an asset.

No African country has so far successfully eliminated definitively the permanent risk of inter-ethnic explosion which, when ultimately manipulated from within and from without, undoubtedly remains the most powerful factor of political destabilization in the region. Thus, nation-building is an ongoing endeavour. Within our borders, we are constantly building and consolidating the nation,

notably through the emotional ownership of the national territory by all ethnic groups living on it. In this regard, I must say that the identification of all Cameroonians of the ten Regions on the one hand, and in the Bakassi peninsula during the Cameroon-Nigeria border dispute, on the other hand, with the victims of the Boko Haram terrorist grouplet in the Far-North Region, or with the victims of secessionist terrorists in the North-West and South-West Regions is a powerful message of common belonging. Our national territory inhabits the minds and hearts of our compatriots.

Fast-tracking national integration

National unity in our country has definitely made great strides, to go by some positive elements, such as shared joys and sorrows, common references, symbols and signs, common territory, values, historical memories, bilingualism, etc. However, such unity must be continually consolidated. Furthermore, there is a need to continue working towards consolidating co-existence and mutual acceptance between the ethnic groups in order to accelerate our progress to the apex of solidarity among our people, to the zenith of nationhood so aptly symbolized by the 20th May National Day.

I consider it an absolute necessity to implement a policy for the rapid building of this strengthened national community which, alone, can calmly face all dangers from within or without the country. It is thus necessary to inculcate in every Cameroonian a deep-seated national awareness which cannot be shaken by primary and instinctive attachment to tribal and regional or linguistic values and interests:

allegiance to the nation must always supersede various forms of ethnic, regional, religious or linguistic solidarity, under any circumstances whatsoever.

This is definitely a challenging task, our country is a land of socio-ethnic diversity, a place of convergence of an unsuspected variety of centrifugal and antagonistic forces, and of an infinite number of sectarian communities. Our urban neighbourhood names often clearly reflect ethnic specificities which, in such a spatial concentration, remind us of the human contradictions of our society. This state of affairs is a source of motivation and renewed determination to act for unity. Spatial concentration of ethnic diversity is evidence of the inclusiveness of our towns. Our towns are open to all.

Our task is thus made easier no doubt as our country abounds in centripetal forces, common identification actors and factors as well as avenues for transforming diversity into wealth. Current events in contemporary societies show us that ethnically homogenous societies are possible theatres of internal conflict, and that ethnic diversity is compatible with nation-building.

Such is the in-between where our approach to accelerating nation-building was formulated and will be strengthened. Of course, speed does not mean haste. The Cameroonian nation, like the other nations, is moving at its own pace, a safe pace. I have always considered ethnic pluralism as wealth and an opportunity. Ethnic diversity in itself is not an issue. It is synonymous with neither adversity nor hostility. Ethnic diversity becomes a threat only when exploited by

unscrupulous individuals, or by spineless politicians with no agenda. The policy I am pursuing and will continue pursuing is based on the consideration of ethnic pluralism as an opportunity to build and consolidate a society of compromise, tolerance and moderation, by developing mutual acceptance ethics.

Our vision requires that, in a constantly changing world, more places of remembrance such as monuments, museums, streets and squares be created and dedicated to our past and present heroes, that places of sociability (art galleries, theatres, cultural centres and areas, etc.) be increased. Of course, the aesthetic development of our towns, safer and more open to all, will not only give their inhabitants a feeling of urbanity, it will also, through the services they will provide, strengthen the citizens' identification with their towns and facilitate their social integration. Urban music has now become a powerful vehicle for national unity. For instance, the "Mbolé" beat, with which we all identify, overall belongs to all ethnic groups, and to none in particular.

Language-wise, Cameroon is *prima facie* a veritable tower of Babel. Our religious differences themselves are no less possible sources of social conflict. The multiplicity of linguistic and religious cleavages should not engender pessimism. My option has been and remains to transform divisions, which could have separated us, into uniting factors. The Cameroon we are building is a beautiful symphony because of the diversity of sounds that together we are orchestrating. Moreover, there is no statement that more aptly defines Cameroon than that constantly heard on

our streets “We are together”. That says it all. It could not be otherwise. In our traditional societies, a friend is considered before a brother or a sister. Such preference for a friend from elsewhere or from afar is proof of transcending various cleavages.

Against this background and despite the multiple and solid achievements garnered on the path of unity, the demons of clanism, tribalism and regionalism remain a permanent and serious threat to the stability of our institutions, hence my option to criminalize clanism, tribalism, regionalism, in a nutshell any stigmatization of other people on grounds of their ethnic group, region, language or religion. Nothing can justify or absolve hate speeches or practices against another person.

With the realities I have described in mind, I will continue to do everything possible to make the far-reaching social change capable of bringing about a new society that is more united, more aware of its specificity vis-à-vis other peoples, in short, a true Cameroonian nation proud of its diversity and jealous of its unity.

It will certainly not be, and moreover has never been a question of embarking on a forcible and arbitrary elimination of the present ethnic and regional specificities, which, in some respects, are national socio-cultural wealth, given their unquestionable contribution to our country’s unanimously recognized dynamism. Not only is there no magic wand for this purpose, but also, it is obvious that any such attempt could generate further social traumas, and be a source of cultural impoverishment. To me, cultural

diversity is an asset for our country's development and a factor of economic growth as part of our policy of inclusion.

It is about consolidating the Cameroonian identity, which is nurtured by our diversity to continue to form a coherent whole that is representative of our singularity and our being in this world. The Cameroonian national identity, which we are building and consolidating through the creative genius of all, has transformed, is transforming and will transform this medley of peoples and cultures into one and the same outstanding and specific entity. It requires constantly moving from socio-cultural diversity to national unity and vice-versa. Does the beauty of a carpet not lie in the diversity of colours, as the Chinese proverb goes? Better still, the polyphonic songs of the orchestras of the Baka pygmies are so admirably harmonious and irresistibly charming. The Baka pygmies of the East Region teach us that polyphonic songs can be played together in one and the same orchestra. Along the same line, mention should be made of the linguistic genius of urban youths who, through an original blend of French, English and local languages, have invented a language of communication known as "camfranglais". Our national pidgin is the pacesetter as far as linguistic innovation is concerned, because it is unique, developed through local ownership of the English language to which national languages are added.

If identity refers to the character of something that is unique among so many others, then our cultural identity will be what distinguishes us from the other peoples, that is, all the characteristic features that are peculiar to the creative genius and dynamism of our population, based in particular

on ethnic and regional plural identities. Beyond geography and history, our unity is the fruit of fraternity, conviviality, complementarity and our resolve to build a strong and supportive nation, entrenched in our territory and open to Africa and the world.

In this regard, the Cameroon Peoples' Democratic Movement, that I chair, will thus continue encouraging and actively participating in the consolidation of the nation's emergence. I call on the other political parties to follow suit, in compliance with the Constitution and the laws and regulations of the Republic. It is by so doing that Cameroon, a sovereign State, will strengthen its expression as a national community.

Some drivers of the rise to nationhood

Such an enterprise, to which no compatriot should afford to remain indifferent, must permeate all the interstices of society and become a foremost factor in the systematic implementation of sector-based public policies (in such diverse areas as demography, culture, town planning, etc.) geared towards eradicating identity politics so detrimental to our living together.

In this light, the universality of the national territory and the constitutional right of every Cameroonian to "settle in any place and to move freely, subject to legal provisions concerning public law and order, security and peace" eases the intermingling of the population and the sharing of common values, ideals and signs".

Similarly, increasing transport and communication infrastructure (roads, railways, airports, telephone networks, etc.) is based not only on the requirements of economic progress but even more on those of national integration. The quality and concentration of a road infrastructure must be enhanced to make Cameroon, in general, an integrated and interconnected country, and the capital, in particular, the start point of major communication links to the regions, thereby opening them up to each other. Information and communication technologies provide new opportunities for mental development and the fostering of shared values, provided that hate speeches are controlled, as I have prescribed. If properly used, mobile telephones will increasingly become a tool for bringing Cameroonians closer together, reducing time and space constraints in trade and circulating ideas and images that help each person to avoid falling into the trap of narcissistic identity politics and ignorance of others.

A judicious town planning policy is also essential in developing national consciousness. It should continue to transform our towns into excellent places for showcasing living together. Keeping in mind runaway urbanization, exacerbated by the phenomenon of rural-urban migration, this policy should be extended to an increasing proportion of our people and should further make our urban centres focal points for the changes required to consolidate national consciousness.

In this approach, cultural policy should always progressively inculcate into Cameroonians the same scale of values, standards and social practices. Such policy

presupposes exaltation of values of openness that are peculiar to all ethnic cultures, nationalization of the most varied original positive cultural elements of our ethnic groups (music, dance, cooking, economic practices) and intense or inter-ethnic creativity (history, literature, theatre, etc.). Bilingualism (French and English) should be promoted on a permanent basis in order to further ease communication between Cameroonians and enhance our country's cultural identity in the world, and open it up to other contemporary civilizations, hence the importance of the National Commission on the Promotion of Bilingualism and Multiculturalism.

In this context, classroom education should awaken in our youth a deep-seated national consciousness as well as provide them with conventional knowledge. This is achievable only through appropriate educational syllabuses and a new lifestyle in training institutions. Such a lifestyle must exclude, for teachers and students alike, all forms of ethnic and regional discrimination and all signs of sectarianism. If this bet is won with our youth, who constitute both the majority group and the future of our country, then we would have guaranteed the destiny of our country against any eventuality.

Lastly, religious expression should, in all places and more than ever before, effectively contribute to national salvation. Neither the clergy nor the local or national congregations of a given religious body should have a tribal or regional bias, as is often the case. The pulpits of our temples, churches and mosques should serve as sacred places where an appeal can be made for national solidarity.

It has always seemed to me that the principle of secularity of the State is required in a country with religious diversity, in a country that asserts and protects freedoms of conscience and religion such as Cameroon.

Freedom of conscience, like other freedoms – and perhaps more than the others – must be respected, and the State must remain independent and neutral with respect to religion. However, it must be clearly pointed out that religion, which is a powerful force for social cohesion, and useful for the moral rectitude of citizens, has a major contribution to make towards maintaining and even building national institutions, training Cameroonians and ensuring peace in society. GUSTAVE D'EICHTHAL pointed out that: “the fixity of religious belief contains Man’s ephemeral passions. It fights in the citizen’s soul and heart inclinations that are harmful to social life (individualism, selfishness, a degrading taste for well-being) and spreads therein the taste for the infinite and raises it to the heights of Truth, Beauty and what is Good. De Tocqueville summarized it all in his meaningful statement that “If freedom can afford to loosen the political bond, it is because faith strengthens the moral bond (....) Religion prevents from conceiving everything and (....) forbids to dare everything. Without which, the society would perish if all bonds are loosened at once. The place and role of religion is recognized through secularity, religious freedom and freedom of conscience. That is why to defend our model of life and society, we must permanently keep up our collective and individual fight against the extreme violence of Boko Haram which, although significantly weakened, continues to a certain extent, to affect some localities in the Far-North Region and

partly jeopardizes their development. Here, as elsewhere, the sense of history is the triumph of our approach to preserving pluralism and inter-religious dialogue. Religious intolerance has no place in Cameroon. Undoubtedly, it must be fought in the minds of followers of religions not only by raising the pillars of tolerance, but also through programmes for the reconstruction and development of destroyed localities, as is being done through the Special Programme for the Reconstruction and Development of the Far-North Region.

To be worthy of its great destiny, it is up to our people to constantly keep alive its high sense of creativity in order to always open up new avenues for national integration.

2. Consolidating an authentic democracy

Ideal democracy has a universal value. It is based on Man's unwavering and congenital attachment to his freedom. Such freedom does not mean Man's freedom to behave at any moment as he likes, but the possibility of doing things every day within the limit of what is not forbidden by law and what does not hurt other people. It fosters the development of ideas, scientific and technical research, and arts, and, therefore, constitutes an undeniable factor of progress.

Society is shaped and developed only under the impulse of the creative efforts of individuals. Such efforts can be translated into concrete actions only if the individuals are not subjected to unavoidable and unjustifiable constraints, be they economic, sociological, ideological or political. I am not only always perfectly aware of this fact, but also, it is my conviction.

Democracy, a corollary of freedom, is an incontestable social value insofar as it paves the way for the maximum liberation of imagination and all the potentials of the various components of society. It also enables the proper transformation of society as desired by the majority of its members.

The political party that, following free, transparent and fair elections, is entrusted with the historic responsibility of guiding the destiny of a mature people like Cameroonians, must ensure, through its elected representatives, that our society, which is aspiring to occupy a choice place within the concert of nations, is constantly steered towards ideal democracy and adopts instruments that can guarantee the citizen's progress and fulfillment. There is a need to preserve and nurture in every Cameroonian the feeling of being fundamentally equal to all the others. All the other opposition political parties must do likewise. Consolidation of democracy is a collective responsibility.

It is a constant that a feeling of social equality originates mainly from a certain appraisal of the state of political freedoms, namely: respect for the human personality, freedom of thought (conscience, religion and the press), freedom of association, ownership, movement, work, etc. A democratic society is one in which, first and foremost, the law prevails. It is a society in which all relationships among members are clearly defined in such a way that everyone knows at all times what they can hope for, what they may expect of others, and what other members may legitimately expect of them.

In this regard, how can one not be pleased with the many laws that take into account all spheres of human activity in Cameroon? The Constitution proclaims the equality of all citizens for whom it guarantees fundamental freedoms. What now needs to be done is to ensure the reinforcement and observance of these laws, maintain the indivisibility and interdependence of human rights, ensure respect for them and conquer new territories of equality and human rights.

For, while the law is an instrument for managing the present, it is also a creative image for the future and, as such, can be improved. Therefore, it will be constantly evaluated and modelled so that it remains a practical tool consonant with the aspirations of the people and the requirements of the moment. It is also for this reason that safeguards are prepared to guarantee not only the enforcement of the law but also its evolution and adaptation.

Sovereign democracy in sync with the world

I would like for us to consolidate our adherence to the idea whereby democracy, by virtue of its lofty moral value, is the political system par excellence for consolidating human security. A government of the people by the people and for the people, government of all by all and for all, democracy is indeed a socio-political system in which relations among men are regulated in accordance with the principle of respect for their freedom and equality. In this regard, it is the only form of government which really endeavours to base social order on the requirements of human dignity.

No matter the interpretation given to the concepts of freedom and equality, there is no doubt that their combined implementation is an essential condition for the smooth running of democratic governments, as long as the citizen's person overrides the interest of leaders. In this context, freedom has a twofold dimension. There is freedom and autonomy which require, for each citizen, some guarantee against any kind of arbitrary constraint, for their physical, intellectual and moral security, in short the guarantee for each person to exercise the power of self-determination in all circumstances. There is also freedom and participation which involve the exercise of citizenship rights through participation in various forms public life. The principle of equality, for its part, requires that all citizens should enjoy the same rights and obligations and have the same opportunities in life. Based on the principle of equality, I consider that democracy is indissociable from social justice.

It has never been my intention to establish a regime of anarchy. I have always worked and will continue to work, in reality, to create conditions for a system that requires the complete establishment of a physical constraint force at the service of the law as an expression of the general will. Conversely, anarchy advocates the non-existence of authority. It is the reign of disorder, a return to the primitive state where the law of the jungle prevailed and where the freedom of some people was exercised at the expense of that of others, since there was no common rule. A sign of decadence, anarchy is one of the greatest dangers which democracies in general, and developing democracies in particular, have to guard against through special measures, if necessary, in accordance with the wisdom of the ancient

Roman adage: *salus populi suprema lex esto* (the salvation of the people must be the supreme law). Anarchy is the system which, through intimidation and violence, private violence mongers or some bad election losers want to impose in Africa in order to jeopardize the achievements of democratization and the rule of law.

In contrast, I declare without mincing words that real democracy should not be jeopardized by any form of oppression, tyranny or dictatorship from civilian or military authoritarian regimes which, even when they claim to be serving the aspirations of the people, sacrifice the freedom and equality of citizens on the altar of order. This explains my constant support for the African Union's condemnation of all forms of anti-constitutional change of governments.

Based on the aspirations of the people, the democracy which I am consolidating appears as a political organization geared towards their common prosperity. Democracy which reconciles the requirements of order, liberty, equality and progress has, in our era, become one of the highest aspirations of mankind and the political system of peoples who are masters of their own destiny. However, as attractive as it is, democracy must be freely chosen by the people, as is the case in Cameroon. It cannot be imposed from without, or it will face disapproval and opposition for violating the freedom of each people to choose its type of political system.

Cameroon must continue asserting its political self-determination, to be in sync with positive global developments and, at the same time with its progress towards nationhood, to consolidate the building of true

democracy, without diktat or mimicry, in accordance with its Constitution, and by adapting it, as appropriate, to the needs of the time. To my understanding, democracy and sovereignty go hand in glove: democracy is the system of free peoples, of the sovereignty of the people and the individual. That is why it cannot be dictated from outside by any tutelage body or authority.

A Cameroonian democracy

I have always claimed and asserted a democracy in our country's colours, which is rooted in our history and culture, which is the expression of the exercise and enjoyment of our right to freely choose our own form of political system. It is an authentically and resolutely Cameroonian democracy that we are building and consolidating. A political system prospers and lasts long if and only if the people identify with it, if it is consistent with its social, cultural and historical environment.

Indeed, from the ancient Greek and Roman democracies to today's liberal and socialist systems, passing through the Italian cities of the Middle Ages and our traditional African societies, history has shown that there is no universal standard of democracy, and that no society can claim monopoly over the institutional definition of democracy. Everywhere, it has been and remains the outcome of a specific context which takes different forms depending on the place, time, type of political system and the specific characteristics of the people concerned.

Seen from the angle I am promoting it, Cameroonian democracy is, first of all, democracy, that is a political system based on the principles of freedom, equality and sovereignty of the people and the individual. Secondly, it is a Cameroonian democracy, that is to say a democracy desired and implemented by Cameroonians, based on their aspirations, cultures and sense of history. Lastly, it is an instrument for the promotion of the ideals of independence, reunification and unification.

Considered as a society that is still progressing towards the consolidation of nationhood and emergence, truthful to the charismatic image of a country that is blending tradition with modernity, Cameroonian democracy must remain strong in order to survive.

Strong democracy

We must all be fully conscious of the fact that the past does not give us any example of a successful and lasting democracy other than a community which overcame the demons of irredentism, secessionism and centrifugal forces likely to threaten its existence as a socio-historical unit. The democratic process which we have instituted should neither jeopardize national integration dynamics nor lead to ethnic, religious, linguistic and other antagonisms. Having learned lessons from situations where democratization has weakened the State and deferred the national vision, I construe and practice democracy as an opportunity for nation-building through the adherence of the greatest number, respect for shared values and observance of the same laws and legitimate

authorities. Furthermore, I consider that democracy is viable and reliable only within a strong and legitimate State.

To successfully combine the dialectics of law and order, freedom, equality and prosperity in its own way, Cameroonian democracy is backed by authority and order to acquire the energy required for its consolidation. It can draw this indispensable force only from its basic characteristics which include transparency, progressiveness and a high sense of historic responsibilities. Establishing a society of freedoms, a State effectively run by the people, but strong, and a progressive administration fully meet these requirements for our people's onward march.

A society of freedoms

I have worked resolutely for the advent and consolidation of a plural society of freedoms. My current and future actions are geared towards that.

Internationally, the option and action for a society of freedoms has resulted in the ratification of various international instruments that form the basis of universal and regional international human rights law. They include the International Pact on Civil and Political Rights, the International Pact on Economic and Social Rights, the Charter on Human and People's Rights and the African Charter on Democracy, Elections and Governance. These various instruments now form part of the domestic legal order. The rights that are recognized and protected can be mobilized by all citizens against the State.

Internally, the 1996 Constitution and various laws promote the society of freedoms. Indeed, the individual freedoms of the Cameroonian people are set out therein and their protection strengthened, especially habeas corpus, freedoms of thought and expression, inviolability of the home and privacy of correspondence, the freedom of conscience and worship, the secularity of the State, racial or ethnic non-discrimination, etc. Similarly, collective freedoms are asserted therein, in particular the freedoms of association, assembly, demonstration, dissemination and trade union rights and freedoms.

The content of Cameroonian democracy is palpable. The society of freedoms is a daily reality and binding on all. It opposes any arbitrariness from whatever source. The aim is to strengthen the society of freedoms (through ongoing creation), the twin sister of the society of responsibility (through constant assertion).

A strong and legitimate State

To democratize a State, as we have been doing for several decades now, in particular through the full multi-party system (after the fruitful experimentation of democratization within a single political party), is an ongoing need linked to the evolution of our society and the logic of our method of political and social change. Such change does not mean weakening the State or rendering it incapable of addressing, in all circumstances, the internal and external dangers that may seriously jeopardize the existence and prosperity of our nation. There is no viable and reliable democracy without a strong State capable of enforcing laws and protecting the

rights of citizens against the claims of others. Democracy succeeds with the State or fails when it is not backed by State authority, as shown by various historical situations in Africa and elsewhere.

The State of Cameroon must therefore remain a strong State, a State capable of enforcing obedience or imposing its legitimate authority on any form of internal individual or collective malicious intent, and dealing with any internal and external aggression. I construe the State as a provider of security in all its forms, namely: individual and collective security in the exercise and enjoyment of fundamental human rights; political security in the consolidation of democracy and the rule of law; food and nutritional security through universal access to healthy, sufficient and nutritive food, and guarantee for good health; environmental security through environmental protection; military security as part of the protection of territorial integrity and the fight against internal and external aggression; economic security as part of wealth creation, citizen capacity building and the creation of conditions for producing and distributing goods required for the development of citizens; health security as part of endemic and epidemic disease control, maternal and child mortality reduction and access to health care; social security to protect individuals against risks, ensure national solidarity, equal access to health care and quality health care to all.

A strong State is not “a national cake” that is shared by those who, for a while, hold positions of political power. A strong State means assuming responsibilities with devotedness and competence to be able to promote and

protect the general interest. Briefly put, in my understanding and action, the State is a public authority at the service of multifaceted security for the development of each and everyone. However, such requisite authority cannot result solely from the concentration of legal prerogatives, even if they are added to a huge concentration of material constraint forces. Countless examples from current events can easily convince us of the fragility of these “State monsters” that can be eliminated overnight to the general surprise. The authority of the State can find real protection only in respect for the Constitution, the discharge of general interest duties, popular support, the legitimate power that it represents and which confers on the public authority its best entrenchment and solidity.

Therefore, I am convinced that only true democratization of its structures can now provide the State of Cameroon with this additional energy. Democratization calls for the reassertion of the people’s sovereignty, a better balance of public authority and a more efficient administration.

(a) Reassertion of the people’s sovereignty

This presupposes the strengthening of the original constituent power and the derived constituent power of citizens and of their ability, through genuinely competitive elections, to freely choose the President of the Republic, Members of Parliament and all other custodians of political power in the regions and councils, as is already the case in our country. My political action consisted, consists and will consist in making elections the principal method of expression of the peoples’ will, in strict compliance with constitutional

provisions. Hence the regular and timely holding of elections in Cameroon, including in the circumstances where secessionist terrorism unsuccessfully sought, in 2018 and 2020, to prevent citizens entered in the electoral register in the North-West and South-West Regions, from exercising their fundamental right to participate in public life. In the same vein, respect for the people's sovereignty through elections explains the constant improvement of the Electoral Code and the setting-up of ELECAM, an independent authority responsible for organizing and supervising elections and popular consultations. The job is ongoing, as each popular consultation is a new experience with its share of lessons and recommendations. Moreover, I consider that there is room for improvement in everything, when and as long as respect for the constitutional and legislative framework is constant. This is why I am open to dialogue and constructive criticism.

(b) Better balance of powers

The separation and balance of powers have been reviewed to ensure maximum efficiency in our presidential system, as part of our constitutional democracy.

In order to ensure that he remains the supreme embodiment of the people's unity and a flawless guarantee against any risks of dislocating national cohesion, the President of the Republic, who is elected by the entire population by direct universal suffrage and who is guarantor of the country's independence and territorial integrity, and of the smooth running of its institutions, must have his prerogatives strengthened in times of crisis and not only

in cases of a state of emergency or siege as provided for in the Constitution. Also, the ordinary relations between the executive and the other State organs should be modified for greater balance. Thus, the bicameral parliament, through the National Assembly and the Senate, enjoys increased national representativeness. It is the place par excellence for political debate and control of Government action.

As a custodian of citizens' freedoms and security, Cameroon's justice system must become a true judicial power vis-a-vis the executive and legislative powers. It is at the core of reassertion of our judicial, administrative and constitutional rule of law. Judiciary rule of law has improved significantly with the adoption of our Code of Criminal Procedure which incorporates human rights in an enhanced manner and thus improves the quality of our justice. In the same vein, I particularly appreciate what has been done for the decentralization of administrative litigation: bringing administrative justice closer to the citizen allows an increase in the possibilities of sanctioning administrative measures taken in violation of laws and regulations; submitting the State to the law is an indicator of qualitative progress. That is why I insisted on operationalizing the Constitutional Council to further mark the supremacy of the fundamental law.

In our methodically and patiently established institutional system, the President of the Republic cannot do everything. He exercises his prerogatives in strict compliance with the Constitution. His prerogatives are strictly circumscribed, as are those of other public authorities.

Alongside the counter-powers which the Legislative and the Judiciary constitute, **civil society** has increasingly asserted itself. It is the offshoot of our democratic process. I have always believed in the need to detotalize our social space as a source of progress. That is why, in our country, everything has been done, everything is being done and everything will be done for the flourishing of newspapers, associations, corporations and non-governmental organizations, reflecting the self-government of citizens and their autonomy vis-à-vis the State. Cameroon's civil society is remarkably dynamic and has made a valued contribution to citizenship education and the promotion of various causes (political, economic, cultural, environmental, corporatist, etc.). I am convinced that there is no promising democratic regime without an energetic civil society.

(c) A progress-oriented administration

Our democratic society and our Emergence project need a more efficient, more accessible and more diligent, more competent and more accountable public administration.

The public administration of our democratic society seeking emergence must be more at the service of the general interest. It should not be an instrument of domination in the hands of a few to accomplish their private interests. To me, any position of power within a public service should be a means to implement our development options. That is why I am waging an uncompromising and relentless battle against corruption, and against diversion of public administration from general interest missions that are its *raison d'être*.

The public administration of emergence, structured by the principle of good governance, must be more an administration of progress: an administration which reflects the ethnic, religious, linguistic and cultural diversity of our society through the systematic use of our regional balance policy; an administration based on equal opportunity; an administration in line with the needs, aspirations, demands and requirements of its users, without discrimination; an administration that promotes a dynamic private sector; an administration whose various public services are the crucible of the development of management; an administration that makes maximum use of information and communication technologies to improve its productivity and user satisfaction; an administration whose action is underpinned by the culture of evaluation and the requirement of efficient public spending.

State administration stands to gain by becoming simpler and more efficient thanks to a systematic streamlining of procedures, a dematerialization of procedures and a reduction of file and case processing times; periodic investigations will help to identify the gaps to be filled and the shortcomings to be remedied. Similarly, consideration should increasingly be given to the establishment of a national ombudsman or several regional ombudsmen at public services, as is already the case for the North-West and South-West regions, in accordance with their special status.

To be more competent and more accountable, the public administration will have to improve the quality and quantity its human resources. To this end, there is a need for continuous strengthening of the duty consciousness of

employees by means of genuinely fair and prompt rewards and sanctions, for rethinking initial training and promoting widespread ongoing training of administrative staff, for systematically combating inertia and transforming the public administration into an innovative and alert organization.

However, it is clear that this vast reform of the central institutions of the State alone will not suffice.

(d) Local democracy

Local democracy is crucial in any effort to consolidate democracy. There is no true democracy without genuine decentralization. The action carried out has helped and is helping to strengthen municipalities and regions as levels of decentralization. In fact, this is a politico-institutional revolution. From a hyper-centralized unitary State at the outset, we have gradually and methodically moved towards a decentralized unitary State. Our decentralized unitary State is one in which the regions and municipalities, as regional and local authorities, are “freely administered by councils elected under conditions laid down by law”, according to our Constitution.

I strongly believe that the ongoing implementation of the principle of free administration in regions and municipalities is a booster of participation in local public life, a factor that entrenches our democracy and an asset for economic growth. Regions and municipalities increasingly exercise significant power, moving in the direction of strengthening their empowerment and accountability.

Communal and regional decentralization, which I am implementing and which I intend to deepen, is the twin sister of democratization. To quote Tocqueville, "... municipal institutions constitute the strength of free nations. Town meetings are to liberty what primary schools are to science; they bring it within the people's reach, they teach men how to use and how to enjoy it. A nation may establish a free government, but without municipal institutions it cannot have the spirit of liberty". It goes without saying that such praise of the municipality also concerns the region. These local government institutions are expressions of my commitment to democracy. They are influenced, on the one hand, by the values of participation, justice, equity, solidarity, equality or inclusiveness and, on the other hand, by the principles of local governance, subsidiarity, diversity, local resource mobilization and complementarity between the central government and regional and local authorities. The objective is a form of strengthening and empowerment of local authority within the State and as part of the dynamic of extension of the frameworks for the exercise of the right to participation in public life. It will certainly be necessary in the future, in particular, to open the legislative project to enhance the exercise of local freedoms.

Decentralization, which I promote and consolidate, is carried out within the context of the indivisible Republic and the unitary State, a system freely chosen by our people as a form of government. The unitary form of the State has not been an obstacle to communal and regional decentralization, and less so to granting to the North-West and South-West regions a special status recognizing their linguistic and historical specificities: our democratic unitary

State is of a remarkable institutional flexibility that allows the indivisible Republic to be a framework for the flourishing of diversity and unity. We need to consolidate and improve it so that the communities, groups and individuals who pledge allegiance thereto, can always flourish therein equally and equitably. In a world where the unitary State is the most widespread form of State and where the trend is towards the unity of the decision-making centre, I am convinced that we must preserve and perfect our decentralized unitary State: it is the guarantor of political security, a factor of sustainable economic growth, a vehicle for common identification and a corrector of territorial imbalances. Our decentralized unitary State is dynamic.

(e) Socio-professional democracy

The democratization of socio-professional communities will certainly give a dash of originality to Cameroon's political system, by stretching democracy from the areas of politics or public administration, to which we generally tend to confine it, to all other sectors of activity countrywide. It must continue to develop according to conditions laid down by general legislative principles and supplemented by arrangements between the relevant social partners, within public and private companies. The same will apply to government services, thanks, especially, to the revival of the various dedicated entities.

This wind of socio-professional democracy will permeate the various associations such as employers' associations and workers' unions, organizations which constitute the most sensitive aspects of the social fabric of our country. It should

be recalled that in the same way that they have contributed to the democratization of our country, they must be players in the consolidation of our democracy, permanently acculturating their members to the values of human rights, freedom, justice and participation.

I am particularly attached to the independence of social partners and their legitimacy. This is a condition for rich social dialogue. Our democracy is taking root and will take root even more in all public and private educational institutions where, while safeguarding the authority required for good educational methods, it will introduce young people to active citizenship. I wish to recall that democracy, as I am implementing it, is the political system of inclusion of all, men, women, young people, the not so young, vulnerable categories, people with disabilities, etc.

Overall, only the word “democracy” can describe the political system that we have built and that we are consolidating. Robert Dahl argues that “a large-scale democracy requires the following political institutions: elected officials; free, fair, and frequent elections; freedom of expression; alternative sources of information; associational autonomy; and inclusive citizenship”. This definition of democracy by criteria is verifiable in Cameroon. It is a source of satisfaction and motivation for the consolidation of our democracy. Our democracy must irrigate our entire society, including families which, as primary settings for children’s learning about authority and freedom, must play more of their role in socializing or acculturating their members to democracy, gender equality, children’s rights, respect for the law, civic education, etc. Our democracy must increasingly

be the system of expression and protection of the citizenship of everyone, without exclusion.

Multifaceted, national and local, territorial and socio-professional, Cameroon's democracy cannot, however, be fully achieved without the indispensable support of free information whose multiplicity and variety of sources remain the guarantee of the emergence of an informed public opinion: to this end, the print media, like the audiovisual media, as well as publishing and all forms of information and communication technologies, have been granted a status essential to their full development. This is a great transformation in which I ask all my compatriots to continue to participate, to strengthen control of our destiny.

Chapter III

TOWARDS A CAMEROONIAN ECONOMY AT THE SERVICE OF EACH AND EVERY ONE'S ASPIRATIONS

Communal Liberalism is characterized by freedom of enterprise and a concern for national solidarity which behoves a strong and legitimate State to impress upon all economic and social partners through an appropriate approach.

In this regard, it is important to outline a number of guiding principles for economic action:

- democratic planning at all levels;
- infrastructure development;
- priority to agriculture;
- assistance to small- and medium-size enterprises;
- development of industry;
- mastery of science and technology;
- greater efficiency of our services;
- creation of decent jobs;
- national economic independence.

1. Planning at all levels

Our country's emergence is possible only through and in the rigorous development and implementation of a plan.

I remain convinced that strategic and operational planning of national, regional and communal development is necessary, to implement proactive economic policies that will allow a structural transformation of our economy.

Planning is a manifestation of our knowledge of current and future challenges, the exercise of our responsibility to develop appropriate responses, the expression of our resolve to control our destiny by setting our goals and determining the means to achieve them. Such is the idea behind the National Development Strategy 2020-2030, which seeks to achieve Cameroon's emergence through the structural transformation of its economy and inclusive development.

Implementing the various phases of this strategy, with regular updating and evaluation, will enable us notably to develop industries and services, boost agricultural productivity and production, develop productive infrastructure, consolidate regional integration and trade facilitation, revitalize the private sector, transform the financial system, protect the environment, develop human capital and well-being, promote employment, etc. It is about planning access to Emergence. However, I reiterate my resolve to ensure that our development planning takes place at all levels, national, regional and municipal.

Participatory planning requires as a prerequisite precise knowledge of human and material resources and consideration of the social needs to be met, taking into account the real possibilities of our country and the priorities identified with the Cameroonian populations in their diverse origins and conditions. Such planning recognizes the importance of the real social and political needs. Therefore, democratic planning of the national, regional and communal economy presupposes trusting collaboration and total people participation in expressing needs.

Whether for youth capacity building in entrepreneurship (Youth Three-Year Plan) or for the acceleration of economic growth, my approach has always been through planning. It is important to know where we are heading and how we are getting there. Admittedly, the outcomes do not always meet all expectations. However, we have opted for meeting needs.

It is because I am committed to the virtues of planning that, in order to rebuild and develop the regions affected by terrorist violence, the Presidential Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the North-West and South-West Regions and the Special Programme for the Reconstruction and Development of the Far-North Region were drawn up. In both cases, the objective sought is peace through reconstruction and development. I am convinced that implementing these two plans will have a positive impact at the regional and national levels. My response to the inhumane barbarism of terrorism has been the reconstruction and development of destroyed localities.

Planning alone does not suffice. The lessons learned from our experience show that discipline, selflessness and determination must be more constantly the order of the day: the responsibility of stakeholders is considerable.

2. Priority to agriculture

Agriculture, a top priority in a relationship of interdependence with other sectors, still has pride of place in our development strategy, because we are aware that the food and nutritional security of our populations is a strategic issue and also a fundamental right. The objectives pursued

are food self-sufficiency or food sovereignty, to ensure optimal management of the needs of our populations for safe, sufficient and regular food, to build a better bulwark against what some refer to as “the weapon of hunger”, to avoid dependence on everyday consumer products and products of external origin. I am convinced that food insecurity negatively impacts the responsibility of States to protect their people.

Food sovereignty, which does not mean self-sufficiency in our international environment of interdependence, must enable us not only to supply our markets with staple and widely used consumer products, but to consolidate our position as an agricultural produce exporter to Central Africa, the rest of Africa and other continents.

There are several reasons for prioritizing agriculture, foremost among which, in our opinion, constitute the opportunities for independence that agriculture offers to the national economy. Independence of the national economy, which will be discussed below, presupposes the creation of local savings. Which sector, better than that of agriculture, allows a healthy and authentic capital accumulation? I am not thinking only of export crops like coffee and cocoa, which have enriched some urban dwellers and other intermediaries more than the farmer-producers themselves. I am also thinking of food crops usually referred to as “traditional farming” and which, admittedly, have not received sufficient support. Some produce, such as rice and maize, are currently a huge burden on our trade balance, as the quantities imported are considerable, given the food needs of our people. That is why I adopted the approach to

intensify the cultivation of rice, maize, wheat and others in Cameroon.

Second-generation agriculture, already ongoing through intensive techniques and mechanization, should gradually become widespread to allow production on a larger scale. My approach aims to consolidate our food sovereignty and to make our country the bread basket of Central Africa: climate diversity allows a great variety of crops; the potential of arable land is enormous, about 7.2 million hectares, including 1.8 million actually cultivated, or only 26%.

I am also thinking of livestock and fisheries activities, which must contribute not only to strengthening our food self-sufficiency, but also to enriching our country, by significantly reducing our imports and increasing our capacity to conquer foreign markets. Sea fishing, river fishing and fish farming play a significant role in our country as protein sources for the diet of our population. We cannot but acknowledge that we are yet to explore all the potential of our fisheries resources. Efforts should be made in this direction to prevent us importing large quantities of fish, notably mackerel. Beyond this short-term goal, the challenge is to boost our “blue economy”, to make it one of the pillars of sustained and sustainable growth. The optimal development of our blue economy requires a sustainable exploitation of marine resources as well as ongoing action to strengthen maritime security and safety in the Gulf of Guinea.

How can these basic objectives be achieved?

The rural world must be organized into collective solidarity settings that can enjoy true management autonomy. From this perspective, the increasing collective solidarity forums can only contribute towards further developing agricultural activities in general and, hence, curbing rural-urban migration. For this to be effectively achieved, the vigorous policy of opening up the hinterland must continue to be implemented through: the opening and improvement of roads, schools, health services, posts and telecommunications, banks, water and electricity supply; access to information and communication technologies; the opening of relatively well-stocked shops or the construction of periodic markets; and the establishment of cultural activity centres. Connecting production basins to consumption centres is thus better and better guaranteed. When village inhabitants will no longer have to undertake veritable expeditions through dangerous tracks to go and look for manufactured goods or outlets for their produce in the city, much will have been contributed to curb rural-urban migration in favour of working the land: the village will be further strengthened as a good place to be, hence the farming-rural development tandem.

I urge farmers to engage in large-scale farms, organized into veritable businesses. The idea is to make further progress towards modernizing traditional farming, livestock farming and fisheries, in order to increase production and productivity on small holdings, and encourage the emergence of “second-generation” production units, i.e. environment-friendly medium-size and large businesses.

The establishment of second-generation agriculture is possible through the intensification of private investments and our proactive policy of support for agriculture, and international cooperation actions, through the support of technical and financial partners to loans from funding agencies that will have to pay special attention to farmers who grow food crops and contribute significantly to the achievement of food self-sufficiency in our country. A logical consequence of this option is that the acquisition of farm machinery, seedlings, fertilizers and other items used in production, harvesting and marketing must be made easier for farmers.

The concern for greater profitability leads us to promote the establishment, in general, of frameworks for collective action, pooling of resources and sharing of responsibilities, in particular cooperatives, which are essential in the rural world, or to improve their management. It is thus important that the scientific techniques applicable in our regions be popularized among adults and young people. To achieve this, it will be necessary to increase the ongoing training of farmers by adequately equipped agricultural extension workers. Such training will be carried out by radio and television broadcasts in national and official languages, in public and private media. Lastly, the creation of agricultural high schools must be systematized, just as the training of agricultural engineers must be increased.

3. Infrastructure development

Infrastructure development is one of the ways whereby we can improve the attractiveness and competitiveness

of our economy: we must overcome time and space constraints. Besides opening up production basins, it is imperative to modernize the road, port, rail and airport network. To this end, the efforts already made will have to be continued and intensified. My ambition is to achieve a strategic level of connectivity of our country, between cities and within cities, between rural areas and within rural areas, between the countryside and cities. This will improve the movement of people and goods between our regions. However, over and above internal connectivity, infrastructure development must aim to expand our market, by factoring the sub-regional, regional and even continental dimension, as is currently the case, for instance, between Cameroon and Nigeria, Cameroon and Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea, as well as Cameroon and Congo. Many opportunities are still lost due to lack of transnational infrastructure. My resolute option is for increased national, regional and continental connectivity. I am convinced that quality transport infrastructure is a factor of integration at all levels.

Infrastructure development also concerns the quality and sustainability of very high-speed fibre optic electronic communication networks as well as the availability of fibre optics nationwide.

I am also thinking of the energy sector, in which we have invested substantially in recent times, through the construction of hydroelectric dams and gas power plants. These energy infrastructures aim to improve the living conditions of our populations, as well as the optimal use of the production capacities of companies, through increased

supply. Here too, we need to ensure that, as national needs have been met by the action to boost our energy supply quantity and quality, we can generate an exportable surplus that would partly cover neighbouring countries. Regional integration can also be achieved through energy.

Information and communication technologies deserve much focus for us to make the most out of them. The fibre optic infrastructure will have to be completed, to achieve a true national backbone, an essential element for the development of telephony services and the Internet. More generally, this infrastructure must enable the expansion of the digital economy, which is becoming increasingly assertive, and which has become the key to growth and competitiveness of companies and countries worldwide, as it contributes towards transforming the ways in which goods and services are produced, consumed and marketed. We must keep pace with this trend and transform our production methods, by introducing and increasing the digitization of our various sectors of activity. This includes e-learning in education, telemedicine in health, e-administration in the public sector, and e-commerce in sales. In relation to our goals and national interest, it is about intensively incorporating the digital economy, insofar as it results in thorough dematerialization and requires the various players to adapt to new methods of supply and demand for goods and services, the basic capital of which is the Internet and its tools.

My action is and will be to ensure that Cameroon is on the bandwagon of the digital revolution that is gradually transforming all sectors of human life, that the national

approach to artificial intelligence can enable us to benefit more from productivity gains in the economy, in the public sector and in the private sector. The challenge for artificial intelligence is commensurate with current and future challenges: artificial intelligence is a multiplier of development, growth and democratization, provided that it is used ethically. I wish to laud the initiatives taken in the field of ICTs at the Buea Silicon Mountain and to encourage the nationwide generalization of local digital ecosystems, while ensuring the strengthening of cybersecurity and “cyberethics”.

4. Support for small- and medium-size enterprises, and small- and medium-size industries

At the current stage of our development, small- and medium-size enterprises as well as small- and medium-size industries have asserted their contribution to harmonious development and progressive industrialization. They play a particularly important role, as they represent a major source of job creation, income distribution and increased export earnings: in 2023, SMEs and SMIs account for over 90% of the economic fabric. We are aware that they continue to face difficulties for their full expansion. This is why we give them special support in the promotion of companies, particularly as they enable more Cameroonians to enter the business world, without always relying on foreign capital. It is truly satisfying for me to see the growing intensification of a class of medium and small national entrepreneurs who rely on their own strengths, who create wealth in Cameroon, who actively participate in asserting the reality of national

private investment and who attest that Cameroon is a land of opportunities.

Small- and medium-size enterprises will have to keep proving their vitality through greater contribution to gross domestic product. In this quest for efficiency, they will continue to enjoy State support, through the territorial distribution of business incubators, legislation and regulations that provide more incentives for private investment, but also through the continued establishment of multiple institutions capable of promoting their sustainability and their proper integration into the dynamics of the global economy. In this process, public/private sector dialogue will need to be strengthened. It will also have to go beyond the timely resolution of failings in the business environment, to increasingly address the structural issues that constitute a basis for improving competitiveness and investment, to include the issue of building the capacity of SME and SMI owners faced with the requirements of the modern economy and management in an increasingly complex world (in order to reduce their particularly high mortality rate). We need to be able to accelerate, scale up, create value chains, and create veritable “national champions” as well as “regional champions” in sectors where we have real comparative advantages.

Our dynamic SMEs are a source of hope for country's progress. SMEs are proof of the power of self-financing and effective mobilization of national savings. They teach us that we can and must rely on our own strengths to create wealth.

5. Development of industry

Africa is the least industrialized continent in the world and we must work with determination to overcome this international division of labour inherited from colonization. Industrial sovereignty is a constituent dimension of national independence and emergence. That is why, today as in the past, I remain convinced that Cameroon's industrialization is crucial to achieving sustained and inclusive growth and high growth rates, ensuring the structural diversification of our economy and reducing our vulnerability to external shocks.

Cameroon's industrialization which I intend to continue implementing in order to achieve our emergence is structured around three strategic sectors, namely: agribusiness, energy and digital technology. Our approach is based on the following five structuring industrial pillars: the forest/wood sector; mining/metallurgy/steel industry; hydrocarbons/refining; chemical/petrochemical/pharmaceutical; and textile/dress-making/leather sector. Thus, the qualitative transformation from a primary economy to a productive system, driven by manufacturing processing industries, is progressively a reality in Cameroon. Our light and heavy industry development policy proved to be effective during the COVID-19 crisis and the ensuing economic crisis. It enabled our economic resilience and forms the basis of our measured optimism.

My industrial policy incorporates the significant contribution of advanced digital production technologies of the fourth industrial revolution. Since these technologies

water down the once rigid demarcation between physical production systems and digital production systems, like others, I am convinced that the future of our industrialization depends in part on the adoption of this new technological paradigm. Such is our option for advanced digital production technologies that accelerate innovation and increase the value-added content of production in manufacturing industries. Our goal is to increase the efficiency and productivity of industrial production processes to meet the needs of the people.

The industrial policy that I am resolutely implementing is marked with the seal of ethics. This implies, first, placing the human being as the Alpha and Omega, secondly, adding a “soul” and more conscience in the use of artificial intelligence and, lastly, strict respect for the environment. The much-vaunted fourth industrial revolution must not be one-dimensional, or structured solely around productivity at all costs or even at the price of human sacrifice. The ethics of the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a prerequisite for its lasting success.

6. Mastery of science and technology

The success of our agriculture, the establishment of an agri-food industry, the construction of major infrastructure, the development of a heavy industry and the efficiency of all our services depend on one basic fact, the mastery of science and technology. As long as our economy does not have adequate mastery of science and technology, its development will be affected. Therefore, it should be reiterated that the popularization of technology applied to our environment

remains the guarantor of our development, hence the need for mass education in applied science and technology. Such quality education must begin with the child in school, through the continuous training of adults in their spheres of activity, lead to highly specialized scientific schools, to culminate in research institutes or vocational training institutions capable of establishing the credibility of our creative genius. The rollout of vaccines, medicines or turnkey factories to our country through international cooperation does not mean either technology transfer or mastery. This is a temporary phase through which several young nations have passed; the duration of this phase must be abridged. We are increasingly mastering technology thanks to our quality engineers and international scientific and technical cooperation. Our energy must be deployed to contribute to the medium- and long-term realization of the programme to transform our country into a “nation of engineers”. National human resources inside and outside the country must be mobilized around this goal. Similarly, we must significantly increase our public and private investments in research and development with a view to the emergence of the multiple innovations that our country needs in all areas.

7. Greater efficiency in our services

For our economy to meet the challenge of emergence, our services have to be efficient. Many of them are plagued by deplorable laissez-faire laxity and uncivil behaviour. Such chaos which causes situations of insecurity, detrimental delays and unacceptable frustrations should be stopped. Private and public services should help to foster the physical, material, intellectual, moral and spiritual welfare of every

Cameroonian citizen, hence the need to continuously make them increasingly responsive. We should make our services increasingly safe and dependable in sectors such as transport, communications, banking and insurance. Therefore, we should strive to make our civil servants more cordial in receiving the public and to boost productivity in public services.

Celerity in government services is necessary for our economy to function properly. Additionally, all officials should strive for constant improvement of the quality of services in the educational, health, transport, communication, and recreational sectors and for such quality to always bear the imprint of national integration. Such is not always the case in some of our services which respond poorly to the needs of the national economy. In this regard, it is not the educational system alone that should be increasingly adapted to our development needs, but so also should banks, for instance, and the tourism sector whose increased financing of the economy (by banks) and further stimulation of a national demand for discovery of the country (through tourism), will be growth multipliers.

8. Decent job creation

While the unemployment rate is relatively low, it is worth noting that the underemployment and poor employment levels are a cause for concern, notably among young people, a situation that is developing alongside an expanding informal sector, which no doubt reflects the dynamism of our populations and their entrepreneurial spirit. However, it reveals the need to implement actions to foster the creation

of decent jobs, i.e. dignified jobs that fetch decent incomes and provide social protection. We need to be able to totally reverse underemployment, speed up poverty reduction and contain brain drain. To this end, job creation in the public sector must be continued, particularly in the education, health and security sectors, while avoiding the creation of a bloated and unproductive public service, and preserving public finance sustainability. Nevertheless, it is still the private sector, which remains the engine of economic growth, which must contribute more to increasing job supply.

The State, for its part, has the responsibility to adopt tax incentives for job creation, reduce and further simplify procedures, particularly in terms of business creation and support for promoters, in order to promote migration from the informal sector to the formal sector, and allow the upgrading of our small- and medium-size enterprises, guaranteeing their sustainability and the creation of long-term jobs. In addition to the rural sector, crafts and the service sector, such as tourism or dress-making, have a huge potential that should continue to be fully leveraged to make them more attractive sectors, as part of promoting self-employment.

In combating underemployment and poor employment, it will be necessary to match training to employment, to prevent graduates of various levels of education being mostly confined to activities that stifle their fulfilment. Training of human capital must be followed by judicious and profitable use of such capital.

9. National economic independence

By extolling the principle of national economic independence, I by no means intend to propose any form of autarchy or break in relations with our foreign economic partners. If this were so, it would be completely absurd since no economic system can envisage the possibility of functioning without the slightest exchange with the outside world. As such, independence does not mean isolation. However, no matter how interdependent the world may be, the fact remains that each State works to preserve its flexibility and self-sufficiency, that is its independence. Interdependence is therefore not incompatible with independence.

First, independence is expressed in the determination of the objectives and needs to be met as well as the resources to be used. In a world dominated by the free market system, where every producer's aim is to sell off his product, we have quickly reached a point where the bigger producers choke the smaller ones even with the intention of making them perpetual consumers. What this really means is that young economies such as ours should do all in their power to avoid being perpetually dependent on, or at the mercy of, others. However, Cameroon's economy can become independent only if it continues to autonomously define the needs of its populations, and continues to assume leadership in mobilizing resources and means to meet such needs.

Secondly, the independence of Cameroon's economy will always depend on the willingness of Cameroonians to build up national savings and channel same to our

development. We have the required capacity and skills. All we need is the will to build up national savings for endogenous development. In fact, we cannot say a country is independent as long as its citizens systematically continue to seek foreign capital to finance even the smallest development ventures. Of course, it is difficult to avoid seeking loans from international or foreign financial institutions as well as from foreign governments. However, it will be necessary to ensure that henceforth Cameroon's economy receives loans from abroad solely to supplement the national development financing effort. With clear-sightedness, we must learn from our various debt cycles. Admittedly, the scale of development needs has imposed the use of debt as a development factor. However, if not controlled, debt can relativize independence.

Direct finance will have to be used by public and private players to finance our economy. I am also thinking of public-private partnerships, which can be powerful drivers of modernization of our infrastructure and improvement of the quality of some public services.

Therefore, the quest for our national economic independence requires, above all, a vigorous policy of promoting national savings by locals as well as investing in Cameroon, the savings of the Cameroonian Diaspora. Such savings, the fruit of our own efforts, should lead to local investments and the creation of more Cameroonian businesses. This is why special support for small- and medium-size enterprises as well as the development of larger industrial plants are and remain relevant. The idea is to focus

on our own efforts for the emergence of our country before relying on any foreign input.

Foreign participation may take the form of loans or investments. However, to be at the service of Cameroon's economy, such participation must be part of our development planning. Therefore, foreign investments will have to receive a fair return thanks to the incentives and various support tools that we will occasionally have to adapt to the international situation.

While domestic savings, supplemented by international inputs, allow us to invest and produce, the concern for the independence of our economy is primarily aimed at meeting the needs of the domestic market and equilibrating our trade balance and balance of payments.

The regular supply of our markets must prevent speculation from creating artificial shortages, and appropriate mechanisms will ensure strict compliance with market regulations.

In its relations with partners, Cameroon must avoid falling into the trap of the permanent disequilibrium in trade balance that sustains the substantial outflow of foreign exchange and promotes significant external causes of inflationary pressures. The trade policy aimed at achieving a good balance in our trade with the outside world must be supported through accelerated structural diversification of our economy. In addition, foreign trade will have to consolidate its current trend towards the qualitative and quantitative diversity of partners. Concurrently, there is a need to further diversify

our production, to have a wider export base, which protects us from the adverse consequences of global product price fluctuations, as well as sudden changes in exchange rates. What is constant is that trade balance is a strategic issue and a major priority of our economic action.

While we emphasize the importance of the trade balance, we also pay special attention to the need for balance of payments equilibrium. Appropriate mechanisms will need to be established to prevent capital flight. Indeed, capital flight saps our economy of significant investment resources that we often seek abroad in the form of loans. It is as detrimental to our development as is brain drain. More needs to be done at the national and sub-regional levels to stop this vicious circle created by the extroverted economic behaviour of some of our fellow citizens. The challenge is to improve our balance of payments by intensifying implementation of the import-substitution policy, mobilizing domestic private investment and attracting foreign direct investment.

In addition to planning, priority for agriculture, infrastructure development, active support for small- and medium-size enterprises, industrial development, mastery of science and technology, enhanced efficiency of our services, creation of decent jobs and protection of national economic independence, it is worth mentioning the quality and efficiency of land use planning, which we must strengthen to improve space occupation and management, allocation or balanced distribution of infrastructure, activities and services countrywide to reduce territorial inequalities, increase support for specific areas such as areas with fragile

ecology, de-structured urban areas, areas that are highly degraded due to economic and social handicaps, etc.

It is on such solid basis that Cameroon is progressively building the emergence of its dynamic economy to be at the service of man, for all and sundry. However, it appears that we would miss this last goal if we fail to strengthen our social justice policy.

Chapter IV

THE GOVERNING IDEA: SOCIAL JUSTICE

Our main goal is to consolidate our way of life, which is based on a clear awareness that citizens have their rights and obligations as well as their determination to fully assume them, hence the imperative of constantly improving the management of the space suitable for their fulfilment. Such fulfilment is fundamental and can be achieved only in a State governed by the rule of law, in a system of equal opportunities based on social justice ethics.

In our context of a developing country, social justice is more of a moral and political requirement than a principle of equality and law. Social justice calls for collective solidarity as much as it allows a fair and equitable distribution of material, symbolic and natural wealth. It is not a matter of subjectivity, but of a real desire to eliminate inequalities and to build a justice system that is socially and humanely acceptable to all. That is why such social justice must be based on the principle of equity, which factors in the particularities and specificities of all the components of our society.

Within the colonial power, where various social categories had also been formed, a minority, allied with the colonial power and monopolizing exorbitant privileges, in turn exploited the majority of the poor population, in the same way as the urban world exploited the rural world. Thanks

to the negation of equality between nations, which fostered and still fosters the subservience of some to others, injustice was and remains enshrined in international relations.

Decolonization, which is part of our moral and political heritage, was part of the fight against injustice. Our quest for a new global political, economic and cultural order stems from the rejection of injustice in all its forms. Our action to democratize the domestic political society aims to establish and consolidate a political and social order based on freedom, equality and justice, equal opportunities and equity of opportunity for success. This is what underpins my ongoing action for greater social justice based on the recognition of equal rights between Cameroonians. It could not be otherwise in a society like ours where concern for the Other is constant and reflected by the recurring question: “How is it?” Concern for the Other is part of the humanism that I have always promoted and which will continue to be deployed in various sectors. By way of illustration, I will address the sectors of education, health, housing and gender relations, just to mention these few.

Education

Education and learning are essential requirements for Man’s transformation. Combating injustices begins with education, which should increasingly help to spread the culture of equality. Therefore, it is important that this institution be widely accessible to all segments of the population. Our efforts are aimed at greater democratization in this regard. Besides towns, rural areas must be provided with better schools so that the children of rural dwellers

receive the same education as those of urban residents. For instance, in 2022 our country had about 5 million primary schoolchildren, with a high concentration of pupils in rural areas in most Regions, except for the Centre and Littoral.

I am convinced that only a person, whether a farmer, technician or intellectual, who has a sound grounding in his field can be efficient. Likewise, only a country which has extended the education and learning opportunities to all segments of the population can, in the long run, develop independently and build a strong and prosperous nation, provided that such intellectual training goes hand in hand with solid ideological education. The ideology in question is that of Cameroon's independence and sovereignty, that of its emergence. Therefore, teaching must seek to impart to Cameroonians the required knowledge as well as making them fully aware that their country is sovereign and that they are masters of their own destiny. This is possible only if there is a spirit of creativity and invention which can be acquired only during the period of training or learning. The ultimate objective is a realistic democratization of education in a spirit of independence and creativity. To my understanding, families, schools, colleges, high schools and universities must also be places of dissemination and transmission of social justice values. Inculcating the spirit of social justice implies anticipating social justice action.

Health

Universal access to health and healthcare is a pillar of the social justice policy. I think that unequal (social or territorial) access to health is great injustice. Therefore, it is necessary

to strive for ever more effective, efficient and equitable health coverage. Health facilities should be accessible to the most disadvantaged and economically weakest strata. In this regard, the action carried out seeks not only the multiplication of community health centres and referral hospitals, but also a more appropriate administration of care and intensified training of doctors, nurses, midwives, nursing aids, in short, players from the entire care chain. Here, as elsewhere, the public and private sectors converge in the field of health security.

Our economic, social and cultural development objectives will not be achieved easily if the health of the agents of such development is exposed to all sorts of hazards. On the contrary, Cameroonians should be in excellent health in order to devote themselves effectively to the various tasks of nation-building. It is our duty to ensure that the children, women and men of this country are healthy, can benefit from greater social protection, have access to adequate facilities allowing them to practice sports activities required for their physical development as well as the national and international development of the talent, physical or athletic skills of those of us who are interested in competitive sport.

Spiritual and moral health is as important as physical health. This is why I continue to emphasize the principle of moralization in both the private and public lives of Cameroonians.

Housing

The struggle to restore social justice implies multifaceted action. Besides education and health, one of the spheres of

social justice is housing. My vision for Cameroon is that of a country where everyone has a right to decent housing, or benefits from conditions conducive to the improvement of his habitat. The question concerned is housing in inclusive environments that provide equal opportunities for all residents in terms of education, health, transport, services and jobs.

In reality, it would be demagogic and utopian to promise to provide every Cameroonian with free housing or with a home of his choice. However, access to ownership must be extended to all social classes, just as the pace of construction of low-cost houses must be accelerated in all regions. The objective is to democratize housing through the public and private sectors under a policy dedicated, on the one hand, to strengthening the legal land tenure and land title security and, on the other hand, to the realization of the right to suitable and affordable housing.

Gender relations

There can be no social justice without true equality between men and women, without the empowerment of women and the girl child. I see injustices against women as blatant violations of our Constitution, as obstacles to the consolidation of our democratic society. We have worked and continue to work in various spheres to strengthen women's empowerment by promoting their access to education, facilitating their presence in all sectors of public life, creating conditions for their economic independence, encouraging their participation in public life, combating early marriage of young girls, improving reproductive health, etc. In this

regard, we must continue working to further mainstream the importance of women's housework in urban as in rural areas. Admittedly, despite our tangible progress that makes our country an example of emancipation of women and the girl child, there are lingering obstacles, notably cultural, to gender equality. However, it should be recalled that customs, in particular, and culture, in general, cannot be invoked to postpone, much less neutralize application of the constitutional principle of gender equality. Customs are acceptable only if they do not contravene the law or public order. We cannot, or better still, we should not use certain customs or beliefs, let alone prejudices, to undermine the fundamental rights of the human person. I believe that traditional authorities have a significant role to play: they are not only custodians of tradition, but are also intermediaries of the State and must, as such, further disseminate among the populations, the Constitution, laws and regulations of the Republic. Traditional authorities are custodians of tradition within the Republic. As such, they must contribute more towards aligning traditions with the constitutional principle of gender equality.

Cameroon's emergence approach, under my helmsmanship, aims to promote a more inclusive political, economic, social and cultural system, to accelerate the achievement of true gender equality as well as the multisector empowerment of women.

To the various sectors of activity cited to illustrate the concrete implementation of social justice, should be added the fight against corruption. Call it "petty" or "grand", corruption, insofar as it is based on selfishness, better still,

on the illicit quest for personal gain, is a form of social injustice that I constantly combat, as it is about preserving social order and public morality, public funds and the general interest. Social justice requires systematizing the fight against corruption.

Equitable distribution of the proceeds of growth

Our goal is to achieve total fulfilment of every citizen, wherever they live and work, without discrimination.

To achieve this goal, the State should strive to eliminate all sorts of disparities (which contradict the principle of equality), and instil the spirit of equal distribution of the proceeds of growth which is the outcome of collective effort. Since the building of our country is essentially a collective task, an enormous task to which each citizen brings an input according to his means and abilities, intensifying the fair pay policy seems appropriate to me.

Fair pay prevents the build-up of frustrations, complexes and, ultimately, resignation. It is for this reason that our action has always been and will be directed more, not only to a substantial increase in the lowest wages, but also and above all to rewarding the productivity effort of each person, in proportion to their input, by a fair, decent, regular and convenient salary. Besides the requirement for fair pay in the public and private sectors, there is the requirement for gender pay parity, in cases of equal work and equal skills. Such equality has been achieved in our country and should be strengthened through increased empowerment of women in the public and private sectors.

The laxity often observed in public services has led to State employees being referred to as incompetent, inefficient and deserving their low pay owing to their supposedly poor output. This narrative is linked to that whereby the remuneration of State employees considered low, is the cause of corruption.

I firmly maintain that despite the proven cases of obvious unproductivity of some State employees, we should avoid making sweeping generalizations that overshadow the self-sacrifice and high sense of duty displayed in our public services. Moreover, it is important to laud the patriotic spirit of State employees and those of the semi-public sector during implementation of plans to reduce the government spending and measures to reduce wages as a result of structural adjustment programmes. The inspiring sacrifices they made are akin to priestly dedication in order to accomplish general interest missions.

Moreover, if the so-called “low” salaries of average civil servants engendered corruption, how then can one explain the corrupt practices of senior civil servants, personalities with high salaries and benefits? Admittedly, the level of remuneration for work in the public service and elsewhere is a relevant issue. However, I believe implementing the fair pay policy should also take into account the capacity building of State employees, the valorization of their skills, improvement of the working environment, development of a sense of belonging to a team, strengthening of collaborative and participatory work, stimulation of self-esteem and fostering initiative. In fact, the fair pay policy

goes hand in hand with the managerial revolution of our public administration.

We cannot pretend that salaries will be equal and strictly identical in the public sector as in the private sector. The principle applied in this area is as follows: to everyone, according to the volume of their activity, their merit and the capacity of the organizations. There is definitely a difference between the public sector and the private sector, but I consider each sector of activity as a framework for expressing love of the fatherland through bringing a singular input to our development. Each sector of activity is useful to achieve emergence. I think cross-learning between public and private actors should be further developed.

The fair pay policy is underpinned by pedagogy of rigour: as far as possible, Cameroonians must get only the jobs they deserve. Consolidating merit or competence helps to put an end to nepotism and clientelism whereby recruitment and promotion are based less on merit or competence than on personal relationships. The fair pay policy valorizes human resources or, better still, skills. To this end, it should be stressed that there is no incompatibility between the regional balance policy and the merit enhancement policy: each region of Cameroon is a recruitment ground for competent and deserving people, as our national approach to human capital training is successful, even if it needs to be strengthened. There is no possible social justice without regional balance.

Our public administration must be increasingly an ideal framework for promoting excellence, attracting quality

human resources in line with our needs, our development imperatives and the ever-increasing complexity of our society and the world. This requires greater rigour in the management of people and property as a means of consolidating economic expansion, in the effective implementation of the social justice principle.

However, social justice requires more than personal merit; it is also characterized by an equitable regional distribution of the revenue from our collective efforts to progress. Unjustified inequalities are not only unfair to individuals, they are also unfair to the regions which contribute to the building of Cameroon according to their natural potential and their human resources. It is a collective task and it is, therefore, just that their fair share of the resulting prosperity should be given to them. Selfishness would lead to an unacceptable exploitation of some regions by others. Some regions are obviously not as endowed as others as a result of the hazards of nature or accidents of history or unequal development. However, the national territory is the common heritage of all Cameroonians, without regional discrimination. Similarly, the riches of the soil and subsoil belong to all Cameroonians who exercise their permanent sovereignty over them. Their judicious exploitation must increasingly allow consolidation of the policy of equitable development of regions. In fact, to my understanding, the assertion of the permanent sovereignty of the people over their wealth and natural resources only makes sense in terms of reflecting the interest of each and every region, in short, the promotion of balanced and equitable national development.

One of the most deplorable phenomena is the imbalance between urban city and rural areas, with the former concentrating the bulk of resources. It is clearly a social injustice that urgently needs to be remedied through an intensified rural development policy and the correction of territorial imbalances as well as the revitalization of village communities.

The actions recommended in this regard should enable us to achieve five main objectives, namely: continue to promote comprehensive rural development through projects where the multiple aspects of rural life are taken into consideration; ensure infrastructural development of rural areas in all spheres; further boost agro-pastoral production and productivity; and improve the living conditions of rural dwellers; and combat rural-urban migration.

Some of these objectives overlap or are complementary. The radical social transformation to which I have always invited Cameroonians is a long haul requiring sustained effort, method and patience.

Consolidating equality, equity and solidarity is crucial for the social justice society we are striving to build. Our democracy can deepen further only if it is also an economic and social democracy characterized by social justice, the protection and promotion of collective and individual economic and social rights.

Each society, depending on its history, culture and governance technologies, has its trajectory of change. For my part, I posit that a patiently and methodically channelled will

of the citizens, if judiciously combined with reforms made in line with the peoples' aspirations, may suffice to bring about the widescale social change initiated, without the need to call for "blood" and "tears". As of now, Cameroon has covered some ground in sustainable growth for shared development. Cameroon must preserve and reap what it has acquired by dint of the hard work of so many sons and daughters, devoted to the national cause. The objective is to continue the qualitative change based on the people's inventive genius for the emergence of our country, a country in which citizens will have definitively recovered all their rights to enjoy them and create the conditions conducive to accelerated growth for better social justice. Ultimately, such is the Cameroon we are building for present and future generations. Therefore, I call for the consolidation of a veritable national coalition for social justice, led by the public and private sectors, civil society players, the business community, men, women and young people, for the establishment of a society of equal rights wherein everyone has the opportunity, without discrimination, to enjoy economic and social progress. Ours is a social democracy; our rule of law is a social rule of law in which judges must increasingly play their role to protect equality.

However, we acknowledge that action for social justice would remain futile if not accompanied by action for environmental protection.

Chapter V

AN ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE SOCIETY

All our efforts to develop, and to seek sustained growth for shared development would be in vain if not underpinned by a policy of environmental justice. The society we are building and consolidating is an environmental justice society. I am referring to a society for the promotion and protection of the right to a healthy environment for sustainable development. I am strongly convinced that environment-unfriendly development is nothing but the ruin of the energies deployed and the resources mobilized. I consider that any development policy is only viable and effective if pursued with due regard for the environment.

Environmental protection has emerged as a major concern for all of humanity. It is not just a passing fad; it is a welcome wake-up call to the importance of preserving our planet and all living things.

The environment which is made up of all the natural and man-made elements that surround living beings – air, water, soil, natural resources, plants and animals, cultural heritage, and landscapes – determines the life and survival of the human race. Coexistence concerns not only members of society, but also the environment: coexistence entails preserving and protecting the environment.

Anthropology and history tell us that humans have been protecting and managing the environment for a very long time. The ancient tales and myths of the “Pygmy” hunter-gatherers of the Congo Basin’s great rainforests, for example, reveal that nature has been both the womb of human life and its nourishing breast for thousands of years. It is sacred and all its components should be respected. These are the general considerations guiding our country’s commitment to the environment, our keen awareness of environmental challenges and the environmental policy that I intend to continue to promote and implement.

1. Raising awareness on environmental issues

Cameroon has consistently supported international environmental efforts.

On the African continent, the country is an active member of the Lake Chad Basin Commission, whose main objective is to manage the lake. Lake Chad and its water resources preserve ecosystems, promote regional integration, and foster peace, security and development in the Lake Chad region. The country also participates in collective efforts within the Central African Forest Commission to preserve and sustainably manage forest ecosystems in Central Africa, including Congo Basin forests. In the same vein, we uphold our commitments under the Revised African Convention on the Conservation of Nature and Natural Resources which was adopted on 11 July 2003 in Maputo, Mozambique, by the Heads of State and Government during the second African Union Summit.

At the global level, I have consistently advocated for environmental protection and the need to establish an international society for environmental justice at various international meetings. I believe that the global nature of climate change requires global solutions. It is therefore necessary to ensure that:

- the commitments made by developed countries to reduce greenhouse gas emissions should be clearly defined and quantified;
- the transfer of technology to mitigate the effects of climate change in developing countries should be considered;
- and any control mechanism should take into account the different levels of responsibility for air pollution.

It is well known that Africa, which contributes very little to greenhouse gas emissions, suffers greatly from the effects of pollution. Overall, I believe that it is only fair to give developing countries, especially those in the Congo Basin, special consideration in financing and technology transfer arrangements. They are making great sacrifices to preserve and regenerate the world's second largest forest reserve after the Amazon, both of which are the lungs of the planet thanks to their capacity to store carbon and produce oxygen.

In my global advocacy, I have identified two priorities for action in Africa: preserving the forests of the Congo Basin and protecting Lake Chad. These points will be examined later.

At the national level, by Decree No. 92/069 of 9 April 1992 to organize the government, I established the Ministry of Environment and Forestry (MINEF), the first ministry

specifically responsible for environmental issues whose missions then were to:

- formulate the national environmental policy;
- coordinate implementation and follow up the outcomes;
- monitor and coordinate activities of regional and international environmental cooperation bodies; propose measures to ensure the judicious management of natural resources;
- promote public information and participation in the management, protection and preservation of the environment;
- ensure compliance with applicable national and international environmental regulations;
- develop environmental protection master plans, in collaboration with the relevant ministries;
- negotiate international environmental agreements and conventions; and monitor relevant financing files in collaboration with the Ministry of Planning and Regional Development.

Regarding forest management, the ministry is responsible for:

- managing and protecting forests in the national domain and those belonging to public authorities;
- developing and monitoring the implementation of regeneration, reforestation, inventory and development programmes;
- monitoring forest exploitation and liaising with professional bodies in the forestry sector;
- developing and managing botanical gardens and developing and implementing wildlife and hunting policy.

Recognizing the importance of environmental protection, the Government established two separate ministries: the Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection and Sustainable Development and the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife. The aim is to strengthen the tools of public action for environmental protection.

To establish a national society of environmental justice, it is necessary to enshrine environmental protection in the Constitution, ratify most of the international conventions related to environmental protection, preserve and ensure the judicious management of biodiversity and forests, establish a basis for participatory environmental management, combat climate change and desertification, and manage waste, risks, and disasters. The symbol of national environmental justice par excellence is the Constitution of 18 January 1996 which enshrines the human right to a healthy environment. It makes environmental protection the responsibility of all citizens and establishes a national environmental public order. The Framework Law No. 96/12 of 5 August 1996 on Environmental Management, which serves as the guiding framework for all interventions related to environmental issues and all sector policies related to biodiversity protection, is also worth mentioning as well as various laws such as the Law to lay down regulations governing water resources, the Law to lay down safety regulations governing modern biotechnology in Cameroon, the Law to lay down guidelines for territorial planning and sustainable development, the Law on the Mining Code, and the laws governing water resources, air and public works. Here as elsewhere the regulatory framework is evolving in response

to new environmental issues arising from our increasing environmental awareness.

The National Environmental Management Plan and the Forest and Environment Sector Programme are environmental management strategic planning tools whose implementation has helped to gradually mainstream environmental protection into development policies. This is why all our development planning instruments (Cameroon Vision 2035, the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper and the National Development Strategy for the period 2020-2030) have incorporated the need to protect the environment into Cameroon's emergence strategy ; such integration can be achieved by combating ecosystems loss, implementing strategies to deal with deforestation, loss of biodiversity, atmospheric and marine pollution – in short, the process of giving concrete expression to our commitment to sustainable development.

According to the National Development Strategy 2020-2030, the environment and nature protection were mainstreamed in public policies during the implementation of the Growth and Employment Strategy Paper (GESP), particularly through:

- the National Plan to Combat Desertification;
- the National Strategy for Reducing Emissions from Deforestation and Forest Degradation, with a focus on sustainable management, carbon stock enhancement and conservation;
- the Nationally Determined Contribution to combat climate change;

– participation in the Great Green Wall initiatives; and the restoration of African forest landscapes.

As part of the National Development Strategy, the Government intends to strengthen measures for the sustainable management of natural resources (soil, land, flora, fauna, water), intensify measures to ensure the protection of species and ecosystems representative of biodiversity, complete the drafting and implementation of the National Land Use Plan, ensure integrated regional development, secure protected areas, strengthen measures to combat desertification, land degradation and pollution, and implement measures and programmes to adapt to and mitigate the effects of climate change and to protect ecologically fragile areas.

We are committed to the fight against climate change, desertification, waste management and environmental pollution. Our actions aim to reduce greenhouse gas concentrations in the atmosphere and ensure sustainable social and economic development. Within this framework, the Initial National Communication was prepared with the main objective of presenting the current status of greenhouse gas emissions, the present and future vulnerabilities of some environmentally sensitive areas, strategies to reduce emissions and/or mitigate the associated harmful effects. Our overall objective is to turn climate change constraints into development opportunities. Regarding adaptation, Cameroon's vision is to integrate climate change into the country's sustainable development in the five agro-ecological zones by 2035, thereby reducing vulnerability and

even turning climate change into a development solution/opportunity.

We have made significant progress in biodiversity conservation as reflected in the creation and management of 106 protected areas, including 21 national parks, 5 game reserves, 5 sanctuaries, 3 zoos, 45 hunting areas and 27 community-administered hunting areas, covering a total area of 9 728 871 hectares, or 20.46% of the country's territory. In addition, two marine protected areas have just been created in the country, including the country's first marine national park (Manyange na Elombo-Campo National Park), which covers an area of 110 300 hectares. New protected areas will be created in key biodiversity hotspots. I believe that we need to do better in conserving and preserving the treasure of biodiversity that is our country. Of course, we also protect lion ranges, elephant populations, great apes, wetlands of global importance, UNESCO World Heritage sites and national and cross-border corridors, but we need to do better.

Cameroon's vast water resources are reflected in its significant hydroelectric potential, estimated at 20 GW – the second largest hydroelectric potential in sub-Saharan Africa – with a capacity to generate up to 115 billion kWh. The country also has one of the largest biomass potentials in sub-Saharan Africa, with nearly 25 million hectares of forest covering three-quarters of the country.

Our policy of protecting the diversity of cultural expressions allows us to tap into a reservoir of cultures and traditional knowledge that is critical to biodiversity

conservation. Indigenous peoples and local communities have a wide range of spiritual and traditional knowledge systems that are vital for the conservation and use of biodiversity, food, nutrition and medicine. Sacred forests are unique areas for biodiversity conservation. Mangrove swamps and coastal forests house cultural spaces and sites that contribute to biodiversity conservation.

In terms of responsible forest management, Cameroon's forests cover almost 22.5 million hectares, or 46% of the country's territory, including 17.5 million hectares of dense exploitable forest. These forests are home to a diverse range of wildlife, medicinal plants and wild fruit trees which constitute the basis of village pharmacopoeia and, above all, a source of income for the local population. It should be noted that an indicative framework for land use in the Southern Forest Zone has been prepared and that the management and development of forests, the use of forest and wildlife resources, participatory and decentralized forest management, the fight against illegal logging and the gradual development of reforestation and forest plantations have been initiated. Public action on the environment has received significant attention at ministerial level. The Ministry of Environment, Nature Protection, and Sustainable Development, as well as the Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife, are in charge of managing environmental issues. Many sector ministries contribute to environmental and natural resource management. These include the Ministry of State Property, Surveys and Land Tenure, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of Public Works, the Ministry of Water Resources and Energy, the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological

Development, and the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development. This system can be improved in order to make the environment a cross-cutting issue so as to address various challenges.

2. Various environmental challenges

Despite significant achievements and progress in environmental protection in Cameroon, shortcomings remain. These relate in particular to the persistence of fragmented environmental management, the relative integration of environmental protection into public policies, and the ineffective implementation of environmental policies, strategies, laws and regulations.

As we all know, our country is endowed with a rich and abundant biodiversity which provides a significant flow of ecosystem services that are essential for achieving sustainable development goals in the short, medium and long term. This rich diversity is dwindling and the resulting goods and services are diminishing. Biodiversity is experiencing significant losses, partly as a result of growing and diverse human activities and climate change. Production and consumption patterns significantly affect the rate of environmental degradation.

All the six ecosystems in Cameroon have been impacted by human activities and climate change. Desertification seriously affects Cameroon's semi-arid ecosystem, leading to significant flood-related problems. The country has lost approximately 56% of its vegetation cover in the Far-North Region and 10 106.5 square kilometres of land in the North

Region has been degraded. It is also the most affected by fuelwood harvesting, with wood production estimated at 908 590 cubic metres compared to an annual demand estimated at 1 366 536 cubic metres.

In the marine and coastal ecosystem, Cameroon's mangroves have lost 10 000 hectares in 25 years with an average depletion rate of 0.16% per year between 1990 and 2015. This ecosystem in Cameroon contains most of the country's agro-industrial plantations. The dense tropical rainforest ecosystem in Cameroon experiences an annual deforestation rate of 0.28%.

In the freshwater ecosystem, the surface area of Lake Chad shrank from 26 000 square kilometres in 1960 to 1 700 square kilometres in 2000, that is a 93.5% reduction due to the combined action of high water evaporation, low rainfall, disruption of the hydraulic regime, and sanding/silting. This has a serious impact on ecosystem services (fishing, agriculture and stockbreeding) and community well-being.

In the mountain ecosystem, the forest cover of Mount Oku decreased by nearly 75% of its original value, with the farmland area almost doubling from 1978 to 2001.

Unfortunately, climate change has a significant impact on Cameroon. The situation in the Sudano-Sahelian zone is becoming more critical. Temperatures are gradually rising while rainfall is decreasing, resulting in the inexorable expansion of the desert. Over the last twenty years, the production belt for crops such as cotton and maize has

shifted several hundred kilometres southward, resulting in a significant decrease in agricultural production in various localities.

The rapid depletion of Lake Chad is also a worrying phenomenon for Cameroon and other neighbouring countries. It poses a threat to the survival of the population concerned.

Cameroon's Atlantic coast is vulnerable to the degradation of its coastal ecosystems due to sedimentation, flooding and rising salt water levels.

The conservation and environmentally sound exploitation of tropical forests in the southern part of the country raises a number of issues considering the importance of this sector to the national economy.

The development of small-scale and semi-mechanised mining activities, especially in the Adamaoua, Centre, East, North and South Regions have significant environmental impacts. These include the destruction and degradation of soil, surface and groundwater pollution, atmospheric pollution, loss of grazing land in plains and mountains, loss of farmland, loss of species used in traditional medicines, noise pollution and nuisance, traffic accidents, the destruction and disruption of aquatic and terrestrial ecosystems, and the disappearance and displacement of wildlife species. This is why environmental protection and mining site restoration should be prioritised. Mining should not be associated with environmental degradation.

To address the problem of environmental degradation and loss of life, a fresh start in environmental protection is necessary, hence the proposal to overhaul Cameroon's environmental policy.

3. Revitalizing the environmental justice policy

The aim of revitalizing Cameroon's environmental justice policy is to make our country a green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society by 2035.

A green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society is an ecologically responsible society. It reconciles the pursuit of economic growth and environmental protection in the interest of human well-being. It is a society that incorporates environmental and climate protection into all development policies. It prioritises human well-being and seeks to achieve long-term development. Green emergence is being considered as a means of achieving sustainable development by prioritising the environment and the value of natural and cultural heritage.

A green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society is a welfare economy that aims to improve people's living conditions while significantly reducing the environmental impact of human action (degradation and overexploitation of natural resources). It is characterized by:

- economic and industrial activities with low greenhouse gas emissions;
- responsible management of natural resources;
- concern for inclusive and shared development.

A green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society combats natural resource depletion, climate change, pollution and nuisances, disasters and floods, environmental hazards and risks, land and soil degradation, deforestation, uncontrolled urbanization, the use of hazardous and toxic substances, and the mismanagement of waste, pesticides and chemicals.

A green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society strives on a daily basis to adopt responsible methods of production and consumption, achieve sustainable development goals, and assist people in adapting to and resisting the hazards, shocks and traumas of modern life.

Cameroon has made the bold and legitimate decision to become an emerging country that is democratic and united in its diversity by 2035. To that end, the country seeks to achieve double-digit economic growth, reach the 25% threshold for manufacturing as a share of GDP by 2035, significantly reduce poverty to less than 10% by 2035, consolidate the democratic process, and strengthen national unity while respecting diversity.

Cameroon's economic development is inconceivable without taking the environment into account. Environmental protection is an important asset for the country's sustainable economic, social and cultural development because the state of the environment, particularly climate change, affects the performance of key sectors such as agriculture, livestock, fisheries, forestry, mining, oil production and access to water and energy.

The revitalization of the country's environmental policy is therefore expected to make Cameroon a green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging economy by 2035.

The collective building of a green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society is based on national ownership of principles and setting of targets.

3. 1. Strengthening the ownership of guiding principles at the national level

Building a green, prosperous, inclusive, and resilient emerging society necessitates adherence to a set of environmental principles. These principles are general rules that should guide the conduct and actions of the Government, public, parastatal and private institutions, development partners, decentralized local authorities, associations and community groups, educational institutions and the population with regard to development and environmental protection in Cameroon. These are, without being exhaustive, the principles outlined below, some of which are already included in the Stockholm Declaration, the World Charter for Nature, and the Rio Declaration, and which we have adopted because we believe they are constructive and fruitful. Discussions about enshrining some of them in the Constitution should also be initiated. I mention these principles which have already been solemnly declared at the international level in order to emphasize the importance I attach to their observance and implementation.

Mainstreaming environmental protection in development

The inclusion of environmental protection into development is set out in Principle 4 of the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development (1992) as follows: *“In order to achieve sustainable development, environmental protection shall constitute an integral part of the development process and cannot be considered in isolation from it”*. This implies that environmental protection must be incorporated into all development policies. No economic activity, project or programme, or policy may be designed or implemented throughout the Republic of Cameroon without taking environmental protection into account. This principle forms the basis for sustainable development. All development activities must be compatible with environmental protection in the interest of present and future generations.

The integration of environmental protection will become an important requirement in all areas and at all levels: development policies, the preparation and implementation of legal instruments, projects and programmes, economic, industrial, and social activities, concrete decisions and actions taken by the Government, public institutions, and non-governmental organizations, etc.

Obligation to protect the environmental

The Government and its institutions, public authorities, non-governmental organizations, development partners, public and private enterprises, and other entities within the national territory are responsible for protecting

and improving the environment for present and future generations. These entities are responsible for ensuring that the activities implemented under their authority or control do not harm the environment of other countries or areas outside of any national jurisdiction.

Right to a healthy environment

According to the Constitution, all people living in Cameroon have the right to a healthy environment that enables them to live in dignity and well-being. The State shall ensure the fulfilment of this right by protecting the environment from any major and irreversible degradation, by taking appropriate measures to combat insalubrity, pollution, disease and malnutrition through the responsible management of the constituent elements of the environment, and by providing healthy food and drinking water.

Individual and collective responsibility for the environment

All natural and legal persons in Cameroon must act in such a way that the consequences of their actions are compatible with environmental protection and the continuation of human life on Earth, and they must undertake to repair any damage or harm caused to the environment as a result of their actions.

Individual and collective environmental responsibility encompasses all forms of human, economic, social, and cultural activity and applies to individuals, groups, businesses and public institutions.

Cameroon has a special responsibility for the conservation and sustainable management of the Congo Basin, the world's second largest forest basin after the Amazon. It is the world's second largest carbon sink after the oceans. The carbon stored in its biomass and peatlands, which is currently estimated at 80 billion tonnes of CO₂, is essential for climate regulation and biodiversity conservation.

Cameroon, which is home to 10% of the Congo Basin forests, must collaborate with the Central African Forests Commission Member States to preserve the ecological, economic, social and cultural functions of the Congo Basin forests for the benefit of humanity and present and future generations.

We must continue to work to protect the Congo Basin forests, the planet's second lung. The same is true for Lake Chad, which is vital to human life and biodiversity and whose depletion poses a threat.

Common but differentiated responsibilities

The principle of common but differentiated responsibilities is based on the idea of the differentiation of responsibilities among States taking into account the causal link between global environmental degradation and the different production and consumption patterns of States based on their level of industrialization.

According to the Rio Declaration on Environment and Development, this principle states that “*States shall cooperate in a spirit of global partnership to conserve, protect and restore*

the health and integrity of the Earth's ecosystem. In view of the different contributions to global environmental degradation, States have common but differentiated responsibilities. The developed countries acknowledge the responsibility that they bear in the international pursuit of sustainable development in view of the pressures their societies place on the global environment and of the technologies and financial resources they command".

As countries become more interdependent, the need for joint action to protect the environment is becoming increasingly urgent, given the risks posed to humanity. Although responsibilities differ, they are shared and come with obligations to humanity.

Sovereignty of the State over its environment and natural resources

Cameroon has the sovereign right to exploit its natural resources in accordance with its environmental policy. It also has the right to ensure the exploitation of its natural resources in order to support its economic, social and cultural development efforts.

Responsible production and consumption

The Cameroonian Government and citizens commit to ensuring that the patterns of production and consumption they use or that are used on the national territory do not contribute to deforestation and environmental degradation, or reduce the capacity of forests and natural ecosystems to perform their ecological, economic, social and cultural functions.

Environmental anticipation, prevention and surveillance

The Government of Cameroon is taking measures to anticipate, prevent and address the causes of environmental degradation at source throughout the country.

The Government, non-governmental organizations, development partners, public and private enterprises, citizens, and other entities participate to varying degrees in monitoring the state and management of the environment, as well as taking measures to prevent the harmful environmental effects of the activities they implement or authorize.

The Polluter Pays Principle

In Cameroon, the polluter must bear the cost of pollution in the public interest and without distorting international trade and investment.

Polluters bear the costs of pollution prevention, reduction, and control measures, as well as restoration of polluted sites.

Information, consultation and participation

The Government ensures that citizens are aware of environmental management issues, including those involving hazardous substances and hazardous activities. Citizens have a responsibility to help protect and preserve the environment.

The Government publishes a national report on the state of information, consultation and public participation in environmental decision-making on a regular basis.

Access to information, transparency, environmental education, and environmental justice

The Government ensures that all concerned citizens participate in environmental management at the appropriate level by facilitating access to information and documents of public interest relating to environmental management, making information relating to environmental management available to the public, and raising awareness and educating people on environmental issues.

Prompt, fair, adequate and equitable compensation

The Government takes or ensures that measures are taken to provide prompt, fair, adequate and equitable compensation in cash or in kind to victims of environmental damage on its territory.

Environmental restoration

Where the degradation or deterioration of the environment due to human activities, whether intended or unintended, causes serious or irreversible damage to the environment, the Government takes or ensures that measures are taken to restore and rehabilitate the natural and cultural environment.

Cooperation and partnership

The Government of Cameroon collaborates in good faith with all countries around the world, particularly African countries, Lake Chad Basin countries, and Congo Basin countries, in order to conserve and protect the environment and prevent, reduce, limit, mitigate, or eliminate environmental damage caused by activities in all domains, while respecting countries' sovereignty and interests.

Public-private partnership

The Government of Cameroon establishes partnerships with public and private actors to develop and implement actions to protect and ensure the sustainable management of the environment so as to better integrate environmental constraints in public and private decisions through public-private partnership.

Subsidiarity

Our decentralized unitary State ensures that public decisions on environmental protection are taken close to those who have to adhere to them.

Regional and local authorities may, in the exercise of their powers, adopt instruments, measures and actions to protect the environment and manage natural resources.

Environmental safety

The state ensures and guarantees environmental safety, as well as the integrity of the environment and natural systems throughout its territory.

These principles, which are illustrative and non-exhaustive, are intended to influence or determine the rate of acceleration of our march towards sustainable emergence, a green emergence organized by objectives and based on objectives.

3. 2. Objectives of revamping Cameroon's environmental policy

The revitalization of environmental policy, based on courage and wisdom, seeks to achieve general and specific objectives.

The general objective is to build a green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient emerging society by 2035.

The specific objectives are to:

- implement multisector environmental governance by integrating environmental protection into all the country's public policies;
- ensure the sustainable, participatory and inclusive management of land and water resources;
- combat desertification through the “Green Sahel” operation and systematic irrigation, particularly in the northern regions;
- ensure the conservation and sustainable management of forests and biodiversity;

- contribute to climate protection, the development of sustainable and affordable energy and environmental sustainability;

- prevent and manage various risks, disasters and floods; prevent and manage various types of pollution, nuisances, waste and harmful and hazardous chemical substances.

These objectives must be resolutely pursued. Failure is not an option.

The promotion of humanism is at the heart of the emerging green, prosperous, inclusive and resilient society.

Chapter VI

DEVELOPING A SENSE OF HUMANITY IN PEOPLE

The underdevelopment of our countries is often perceived partly in material terms. It is then expressed in terms of shortcomings or deficiencies: lack of proper nutrition, lack of health care, lack of education, etc. Although efforts have been made since independence to improve living conditions and the environment in our cities and rural areas, these deficiencies remain. However, it is necessary to put such deficiencies in their perspective. But can we conclude that once food, health care and education are provided, human development is guaranteed? I would have liked to believe so. Thus, underdevelopment should not be defined solely in terms of deficiencies or shortcomings. It can also take the form of an excess that should be normalized. An excess of false beliefs and negative attitudes and behaviours. In this case, there is underdevelopment because of a plethora of factors that undermine the ability of society and individuals to get things done. There is also qualitative underdevelopment. It is the orientation of some of our beliefs, or the superstitious nature of some of our attitudes, or the inconsistency of some of our behaviours that needs to be changed. This is the case, for example, when one believes that he can achieve success not through his own efforts, but through the effect of charms, or when one is ill and prefers to avoid hospitals and go in search not of specialists of traditional pharmacopoeia, but charlatans to reveal the name of the sorcerer who has bewitched him,

before consulting a real healer. It is also the case when people confuse public resources with private resources. Real underdevelopment is spiritual and cultural, though it must be acknowledged that material development can contribute to human development and, therefore, cultural development. Philosophers and sociologists have widely established that underdevelopment is manifested not only by unsatisfied material needs, but also by the inability of individuals to control their own destiny in a rational manner.

The change I have advocated and continue to advocate to my compatriots is an integral and global change. It is concerned with the human being as a whole, free of the fears, prejudices, preconceptions, anxieties, and complexes that impede his freedom and awareness of his potential and power.

1. Purpose of development

Role and importance of material development

I do not underestimate the material scope of development. The Government and the private sector should focus their efforts on reducing poverty, eliminating hunger and deprivation, and promoting sports as a means to improving people's well-being, foster a taste for effort, and encourage self-competition. Every human being aspires to have access to regular and adequate food, decent housing and, in the event of illness, to be able to receive treatment without much difficulty. The Government should be able to provide everybody with the framework and possibilities to achieve such minimum well-being. The Government bears

primary responsibility for reducing poverty and improving the people's living conditions and environment, and this requires the support of all actors involved in the quest for emergence.

While I disagree with development models that prioritize stupendousness in every project, I believe that when achievement falls below a certain level, the human person becomes a lesser being and does not sufficiently expand the scope of his possibilities. We will not build skyscrapers for the sake of it, or to capture the imagination, or for pure imitation. We will not promote productivity that is solely concerned with profit and has little regard for the genuine needs of our citizens. We will not borrow at any price for prestige projects that benefit a minority rather than the majority. We will not create industries just for the sake of creating them, or to convince ourselves that we have achieved some kind of economic breakthrough. Nor will we go to the other extreme of maintaining a quality of service that does not meet our people's needs. Somewhere between pointless gigantism and depressing mawkishness, there is an exact measure of achievement that befits the human person who knows how to safeguard his freedom and that meets the genuine needs of the people.

Above all, I must repeat something that has been said many times before: material development is not the ultimate goal of development, but rather its instrument. On this point I agree with Aristotle in the *Nicomachean Ethics* when he says, "wealth is evidently not the good we are seeking; for it is merely useful and for the sake of something else". Human beings need an optimal level of material endowment

to free themselves from the shackles of alienating need. Material wealth can help to fulfil aspirations and improve the quality of life. The risk is to turn the means into the end, the accessory into the essential. Real development is not just about infrastructure, it is also about people. We must recognize that developing health, education, traffic and housing infrastructure, as well as increasing opportunities for food and wealth creation, all contribute to creating conditions conducive to collective and individual fulfilment.

Role and importance of cultural development

For the moment, I am placing particular emphasis on cultural development. Man does not live by bread alone. He certainly needs a healthy body, but this is to shelter a healthy mind. That is how I perceive the “driving union of body and mind”. What kind of fulfilment can you offer to people who are only attracted by the prospect of material or financial gain? An unfortunate trend has emerged in our society, leading people to believe that only material goods are worth striving for; material success, while laudable, especially when it is the result of honest work, cannot in itself encapsulate human fulfilment. Not only is there no real basis for this view, but certain cases of material success are often questionable and have more to do with the practice of vice than the exercise of virtue. It is not enough to have and flaunt material wealth to consider oneself successful in life. The display of possessions shows a lack of decency. It is all the more deplorable because it often involves material wealth acquired illegally, the more or less imposing volume of which cannot conceal a blatant lack of integrity. I believe, like the philosopher, that “any programme of life based

solely on material possessions cannot expect real success”. Moreover, to live under the spell of the unbridled pursuit of the satisfaction of material needs is to live in instability and insecurity.

My fight for culture is a fight for human dignity. Any vision for society and any development action is credible only if it helps to develop the innermost human qualities of the human person, that is, what makes him a free thinking being who seeks a minimum of well-being rather than being perceived as merely seeking the maximum satisfaction of his material needs. In our societies organized into States, culture must be at the root of everything: the conception of man and the world, politics, the economy, etc. This is why it is necessary to rethink our model of society based as much on the elements that make up our collective memory as on the positive contributions provided by the “modern world”.

From this vantage point and because it moulds a person into an integral man or woman, I consider culture to be at the heart of development and an important investment in Cameroon’s present and future. It is even a prerequisite for the proper integration of our country into the globalization with a human face that we hope for, a globalization that respects cultural differences that we encourage. Some development projects initiated by international cooperation agencies fail because they do not take cultural aspects into account. All attention is focused on the pursuit of economic growth, the redressing of trade balances or the achievement of macroeconomic stability, far from the balance and the intellectual, moral, emotional and spiritual values of our people. The challenge is to base all our development policies

in education, health, communications, tourism, agriculture and the creative industries firmly on culture. Although significant progress has been made in establishing normative frameworks, making inventories and mapping material and immaterial heritage, our linguistic and ethnic diversity, and our cultural values still need to be integrated into all aspects of our development and public policies.

Therefore, efforts must be made to improve Cameroonian culture. I am aware of this. Material development itself can only be facilitated if it interacts with cultural development. We are all aware of the fierce resistance that certain inhibiting beliefs often put up against the dissemination of scientific truths and the achievement of certain infrastructural or technological changes. The aim is not to advocate the systematic destruction, let alone rejection, of customs and traditions. Respect for customs and traditions is compatible with action to open up consciences, which, due to a lack of openness, frequently remain so narrow that they reduce the dimensions of a world that is infinitely more vibrant and alive. While preserving our soul and identity, we must embrace the scientific and technological revolution that is shaping the world; a revolution in which we must be creative and original actors rather than passive consumers of products. The cultural development I advocate, understood as individual and collective emancipation from all kinds of obstacles, especially mental ones, is a factor in the emergence of our country.

By cultural development I mean, of course, education in the broad sense of the word, in the context of the promotion of security in all its forms; but I also mean all

the spiritual and religious aspirations of the citizens, and the development of collective ways of thinking and acting that promote values such as work, solidarity, going beyond one's own capabilities, honesty, etc. While I agree that material development is not an end in itself, but rather a means to an end, I wish to emphasize that the end in itself is the integral development of the human person. The State must ensure the equitable distribution of material goods and create conditions conducive to immaterial or cultural development. However, self-realisation and spiritual and cultural fulfilment are also the concern of each individual, insofar as he is free to adhere or not to this or that particular metaphysics, subject to respect for the Constitution, laws and regulations. Of course, this does not mean obliging citizens to adopt a particular religion; however, I believe that it is the duty of the State, through education, to provide every citizen an opportunity to enjoy a cultural and spiritual life that will enable him to go beyond mere material aspirations, and to promote and protect legitimate values and ideals by institutionalizing norms and sanctions: in short, the State must empower individuals to use their freedoms to improve their quality of life and become agents of significant social change. This is what I intend to do during my term of office.

The respect for individual freedom of choice includes the promotion of sport as a factor in the development of our young people and as a means of achieving human well-being: this does not concern a specific sport, but all sports in general. I reiterate that in Cameroon there are no minor or major sports. This is with the understanding that it is up to each individual to choose the physical activity that best suits them and, if necessary, to contribute to the tradition

of sporting excellence that distinguishes our young people, who have done the country proud on numerous occasions. In this context, the contribution of the private sector to the development of sports infrastructure and the expansion of leisure activities and cultural industries must be highlighted. Either development is multidimensional or it is not.

No genuine development without ethics

A careful distinction should be made between the accumulation of wealth, the taming of nature through the digging of tunnels, the construction of bridges and high-rises, etc. on the one hand and on the other hand, the real internal enrichment of the person for whom all these things are done, that is Man. The state of misery and material poverty in which some people find ourselves often leads them to believe that the only solution to their plight is material enrichment, even by illicit means. In the mad rush for material wealth, everyone claims that only the most cunning win. In other words, the most dishonest win. The watchword for anyone who wants to succeed in this context is, "There is no morality in business"! The wheeling and dealing mentality that has taken hold of some seemingly strong but actually frail minds tends to undermine any concern for honesty, consistency, and correctness. I am vehemently opposed to this cynical viewpoint. I strongly oppose this cynical perspective: material poverty should not be used to justify greed or illicit gain. The legitimate pursuit of wealth is not synonymous with lack of scruples, let alone adventure without faith or law. Poverty does not exclude the pursuit of virtue and spiritual goods. Similarly, the pursuit of material wealth does not preclude the pursuit of

spiritual wealth, and vice versa. Our approach is to integrate both types of wealth within a poverty reduction and wealth creation policy.

Together, we must continue to build a sound society, that is, a society made up of people who enjoy each other's company and not people who see one another as wolves. There is no security in a social environment where people cannot trust each other. I dream of a society in which the feeling and certainty of living in security is such that people will no longer live in the perpetual fear of being duped or swindled with impunity by others – a society in which each man and woman will have only one ambition – to rely on his or her own efforts and on honest work in order to succeed in his or her various endeavours, without prejudice to the action of the State. There is no true development for the person who revels in lies, dishonesty, breach of trust, wastefulness and a total lack of principles. This is why I believe that the concern for development should not be the sole preoccupation of the so-called underdeveloped countries, but also the so-called developed countries that are often only developed in a unidimensional manner, from a strictly economic standpoint. I intend to continue to work towards the setting up of a rigorous moral order not only within our country, Cameroon, but also, and above all, on the international scene which, more often than not, resembles a real jungle where only the fittest survive. I am still in favour of a globalization ethic.

2. Human emancipation doctrine

I am not the first person to assert that the human person should be the final goal of development. But, what type of human person are we referring to?

To the human person dominated by passions and instincts, excessively egocentric and egoistic, or rather to the human person who is master of himself and of the universe who is moved by empathy and is sometimes capable of forgetting himself so that a higher value can be asserted?

This is the question that has not been adequately addressed in the usual development discourse. I am committed to promoting Cameroonians who are more liberated, guided by reason, culturally disalienated, and convinced that creativity, audacity, and innovation are the mainsprings of progress.

Balance and moderation

The logic of antipodes is doomed to failure and leads to sterile antagonism. That is why the constant search for the golden mean, for balance and moderation, is central to my approach.

At the governmental level, the measures taken under different slogans endorsed by our people, specifically “Greater Achievements”, “Major Accomplishments”, and “Great Opportunities”, have demonstrated and continue to demonstrate that the desirable choice is not between the doctrinal stances of “less Government” and “more

Government”, but instead lies within the clear and practical stance of “better Government”. Better governance should aim to unlock the creative energies of the private sector and foster collaboration to create a receptive material environment for cultural development. It should also promote and strengthen cultural development that will lead to material progress that matches our needs.

Individually, our educational programmes and methods in Cameroon should aim to develop a well-rounded person who avoids extremes. The human person is part of the duality that exists in nature. He is both body and soul, and matter and spirit. As a result, he must work throughout his life to ensure that the two tendencies that drive him are balanced and that one does not manifest excessively to the detriment of the other. It is not always easy to strike this balance. However, the principle that should govern the determination of this balance should be well expressed. I am referring to reason which must be the guiding principle for all human beings, just as at the level of the State as the government is responsible for organizing the correct balance and right measure between the various components of society, between the various particular interests that manifest themselves within it. Development is considered to be lacking when the principle that should enforce order and discipline, harmony and balance is stifled and, instead, anarchic or extreme tendencies manifest themselves in discordant and dissonant voices.

Within Cameroonian society, the search for balance and moderation should better inform the actions of individuals, the State and society as a whole.

Creativity

How can human underdevelopment be defined in terms of the idea of creativity? This is a condition in which human beings are essentially the consumers of others' productions, unless they deceive themselves into believing that they are creating, when they are actually merely repeating, reproducing, copying, or imitating other people's creations. In contemporary underdeveloped Africa, people demean and even ridicule themselves everyday by continually imitating foreign lifestyles. The peoples of underdeveloped Africa are alienated. We, therefore, have to ensure that they no longer feel alienated, liberate and regain control of their lives in order to develop their own behavioural models. Local content development is crucial for mastering the information and communication technology revolution. This will help to counter the trend of increased dependency of our youth on social media platforms such as Facebook, Snapchat, Instagram, Tik Tok, etc., which accelerates and deepens cultural dependence. The objective is to strike a balance between imitation and repetition while preserving our identity. This can be achieved through reinterpretation based on our realities, history and culture, without underestimating our creative capacity, without forgetting our rich history that makes us proud to be African.

The aim should not be to create for the sake of creation or to reject external inputs solely on the basis of national pride. To insist on creation when the right solution already exists and only needs to be recognized and adapted to our needs is to remain alienated. Genuine creations do not need identification; they are immediately recognizable.

Special emphasis should be laid on creativity as a defining characteristic of development to address Africa's significant backwardness which is mainly attributed to lack of creativity. In light of Africa's major current and future challenges, the big question is whether the emerging Africa will be the product of its own children, or if it will be obliged to expect everything from others. Our genius should continue to master all fields, including medicine, pharmacy, housing, cities, painting, clothing, etc. To that end, we should reject past sterile imitations and pervasive influences. Fostering an educational system that prioritizes the development of creative skills is essential to enable men and women to attain a state of personal freedom. There can be no development without innovation in all fields, which justifies the investments made in innovation, research and development.

The best of oneself

What significance should be given to human development claims that do not seek to achieve self-competition? Liberating oneself from small-mindedness, egoism, and a narrow perspective is crucial to improving oneself and engaging genuinely with others and the unknown. Creating conditions that nurture human fulfilment, freedom, and continuity is, in my view, the ultimate goal of development. In our context, a free human being is someone who remembers the past and is proud of his identity, but is not influenced by colonial or neo-colonial prejudices. He is no longer influenced by mimicry, the mechanical replication of past events, heteronomy, superstition, or dehumanising beliefs. Real human development is unattainable when individuals are unaware of their history, unconcerned with

the present, apprehensive of the future and intimidated by forthcoming challenges.

I believe that consolidating national and ethnic cultures is essential to ensuring that each citizen feels free, fulfilled, and open, is responsible towards others, creates wealth, and promotes collective progress.

Chapter VII

DYNAMIC INTERACTION BETWEEN ETHNIC CULTURES AND NATIONAL CULTURE

On account of its geographical location, Cameroon is a crossroads where Africa's mainstream cultures converge. This peculiarity is bolstered by our country's history and ethnic configuration. Aware of the fact that we are "Africa in Miniature" geographically, historically and culturally, I believe it behoves us, in our cultural policy, to move gradually from ethnic cultures to a national culture. Just as I have always involved traditional chiefdoms in State action and public life, I am not pitting ethnic cultures against the national culture. Just as traditional chiefdoms are part of the State, ethnic cultures are part of the national culture.

1. What culture?

The many definitions of culture found in philosophy, sociology and anthropology textbooks are sometimes divergent, sometimes complementary. In fact, there is not just one culture, but many cultures each of which is justified in its specific context. Culture is, therefore, always a situated value or a value to be situated. In my opinion, it is a set of collective values, norms and ideals by which Cameroonians recognize themselves as daughters and sons of the same fatherland, which form the basis of our identity and guide our behaviour; it cannot be reduced to folklore or occasional displays during ceremonial occasions. It is what sets us apart and what binds us together.

By culture, I mean all the original, positive and constant factors which enable Cameroon's ethnic groups to live in communities and guarantee their continued existence within the national framework which, in turn, influences them. These basic factors, herein referred to as cultural universals, are values that must be recorded and promoted in the interest of the national community so that every Cameroonian can feel at ease even in cultural activities that do not pertain to his ethnic group of origin. Our gastronomy, for example, has become one of the privileged areas of national ownership of dishes such as "Ndolé", "Ashu", "Koki", "Sanga", "Eru", "Folere", "Nam Ngon", "Foss", "Pilé" or "Ekwang", etc., which were once ethnically circumscribed. Identifying and promoting these cultural universals, therefore, upholds the cultural identity and national unity of our people, for culture consolidates unity. It has many facets, ranging from moral, academic and aesthetic culture to civic and political culture. It also implies that the composite nature of a collection of national cultures should be elevated to the status of a permanent feature.

2. Cultural policy components

The moral component of our cultural policy aims to promote the responsibility of families in transmitting to each of their members values that guarantee dignity, honesty and respectability. This moral culture, resolutely opposed to moralism, is based on collective values, living examples and real-life experiences for greater impact. It is in our families that the initiation into the established rules of conduct must begin, and thus the fight against the scourges of corruption, tribalism, favouritism, etc. The aim is to

motivate Cameroonians to uphold the values enshrined in the Constitution, laws and customs, and to emulate the role models that our country, our continent and humanity have known.

The academic component seeks to go beyond mere schooling to ensure that Cameroonians receive an effective education. The aim is to provide them with a competitive technical education that will enable them to master the skills and know-how they need to go beyond the mere awarding of certificates, which appears to predispose people to a spirit of complacency. Rather than training only degree holders, we should encourage the training of creative and enterprising minds capable of going beyond textbooks to find original solutions in the various areas of practical life. The policy of academic culture is no longer to use one's degree to get a job, but to use it to create jobs. From this point of view, it is crucial to monitor the content of school curricula so that textbooks, which are vehicles of critical human values, are in tune with our cultural environment and adaptable to the realities of the labour market. It is therefore necessary, on the one hand, to strengthen the role of national education as a vehicle for transmitting culture, collective memory and our history and, on the other hand, to further professionalize our education system and adapt it to the realities of the labour market.

The civic component aims to continue to educate Cameroonians about their most basic rights and freedoms through continuous introduction to the law and mechanisms of the Cameroonian justice system. Our democratic system requires Cameroonians to understand their rights in order

to better perform their duties and participate more fully in public life, and thus in the development of our country. Civic education has provided and continues to provide citizens with a solid understanding of the social contract that binds them to their community. This understanding is essential for collective civic responsibility.

Our national civic culture is a reality. It manifests itself in the way Cameroonians have embraced the Constitution and laws, in the way they identify with those who govern them, in the importance of the state in the collective consciousness, in the orientation of behaviour and discourse around the motto “peace-work-fatherland”, and in the rallying of all Cameroonians behind the “green-red-yellow” flag with a gold star at the centre of the red stripe.

The aesthetic component is important. It seeks to sharpen people’s appreciation of the beauty of their culture. I am convinced that the recognition of beauty is an enriching step towards the recognition of good and that the promotion of beauty contributes to well-doing. The aim is to constantly elevate ourselves to a selfless appreciation of immaterial values and beauty as demonstrated, for example, by national, collective and individual enchantment in front of the Lobé or Menchum waterfalls, the Mount Manengoumba lakes, Lake Barumbi Mbo, the Mandara Mountains, the Dja Reserve, the Bouba Ndjida Parc, the Rhumsiki Peak or the Fovu or Akok-Bekoe caves. Of course, it is nature at the outset, but it is nature that has become culture through its ownership and appreciation as something beautiful by Cameroonians. The same process applies to the works of our visual artists and our traditional and urban dances.

I have always paid particular attention to the development of sector-specific cultures, which play a crucial role in consolidating community life and accelerating the march towards Emergence. Let me mention just a few.

– Democratic culture is critical to the consolidation of our political experience. Here, my approach has been and continues to be to establish democracy as the only way of doing politics and thinking about politics, to accustom our compatriots to political debate, to frequent, free and transparent elections, to acceptance of the results of the ballot box, to respect for institutions and law, etc. There are individual and collective pockets of resistance. However, we have made significant progress in changing our attitudes and practices to reflect the values of freedom, equality and participation, and the principles of the rule of law. Our democratic culture is gradually taking hold in our collective and individual behaviour, in the way we participate in public life, in the way we organize our relations with others, etc.

– The culture of respect for public funds that I am implementing is based on education, prevention and enforcement. To this end, measures have been taken to ensure that the rules protecting public funds and the general interest are binding. These include strengthening the capacity of our courts, establishing the Special Criminal Court and severely punishing perpetrators, co-perpetrators and accomplices in the misappropriation of public resources. Efforts to combat corruption help to promote and protect respect for public resources as a universal norm. Public integrity can be strengthened by complying with the rules of conduct against corruption established by law.

– The culture of emergence is one that we must continue to build and promote to ensure that the goal of development is more widely shared among our people. I consider emergence as a standard that should guide our behaviour and discourse, and structure our values and ideals. The values of “work”, “love of country” and the ideal of “collective progress” are at the heart of the culture of emergence. Moreover, in my view, emergence is more than just a stage of development marked by the status of a semi-industrialized State; it is above all a culture, that is, a set of ways of thinking, believing, feeling, acting and doing that distinguishes a country from others in terms of taking control of its destiny, progressing and optimally satisfying the needs of its people.

– The culture of peace is the culture that makes democracy and emergence possible. Peace is a value and an ideal promoted by all our ethnic cultures; we have made it an important feature of our national culture. The internalization of peace by individuals and groups and its protection by institutions (the Judiciary, the Police, the Gendarmerie and the Army) explain the peaceful environment in which Cameroon is pursuing its development and democratization process, despite a number of attempts to destabilize it. These are easily defeated because the vast majority of our people have always sought peace and supported the defence and security forces in punishing acts that violate the socio-political order with which they identify. The prevalence of a peace culture in both thought and behaviour dooms Boko Haram’s violent extremism and secessionist terrorism to failure and justifies our approach based on dialogue and clemency. This culture of peace also permeates Cameroon’s international action. Hence, my strong preference for the

peaceful settlement of disputes between States, as illustrated by Cameroon's recourse to the International Court of Justice to find a judicial solution to the maritime and land border dispute between Cameroon and Nigeria. This has been done. I am firmly convinced that it is the culture of peace that will enable our States to develop and Africa to progress.

Everything is rooted in culture, in the establishment of norms, values and ideals to guide behaviour and distinguish between what is acceptable and unacceptable, legal and illegal.

3. Peaceful coexistence between ethnic groups and the fatherland

It is my firm conviction that the national culture does not exist in opposition to ethnic cultures, that the national culture does not exist independently of ethnic cultures, and that ethnic cultures have meaning only in relation to the State and the Nation to which all Cameroonians pledge allegiance. Our aim is to strengthen the peaceful coexistence of ethnic groups and the fatherland, or more precisely, the compatibility between the sense of belonging to an ethnic group and the primacy of patriotism. If it is to become a habit, this mobilization to support the Cameroonian fatherland, the "cradle of our fathers", should continue to be the subject of bold reflection on inter-ethnic relations.

First and foremost, there are our endogenous cultures, the intellectual and spiritual, material and immaterial productions of our ancestors and contemporaries, derived

from ancient cosmogonies and myths, inspirations and creations, values, visions and authentic achievements, transmitted through our national languages, inspired by the creative genius of our villages, cantons, groups and communities. This creative genius has bequeathed and continues to bequeath to us works, sounds, rhythms, colours, fabrics and monuments that are now part of the national cultural heritage and a source of pride for all Cameroonians. This is the case of *Makossa*, *Njang*, *Assiko*, *Mangambeu*, *Bikutsi*, *Ndop*, *Toghu*, *Obom*, etc., which, although they come from so-called specific cultural spaces, are now vectors of national identification. The same goes for the beautiful sounds of the *Algaita*, the famous wind instrument of the Sudan-Sahel region. Here, as elsewhere, there has been mixing, blending and borrowing. In musical terms, how can we fail to mention the genius of our artists who have always managed to enrich our own sounds with rhythms from elsewhere?

Our approach has two dimensions:

- preserve the cultural wealth of each ethnic group insofar as it extols openness, mutual love, hospitality and respect for others – in short, the values, ideals, and standards with which members of that ethnic group identify themselves at the same time as members of other ethnic groups;
- strengthen a synthetic cultural identity, a cultural personality that is increasingly eclectic. Is it possible to have an eclectic personality? Yes, provided the spirit of synthesis is not confused with cultural dissolution. This is because cultural eclecticism, the spirit of synthesis that beckons to Cameroonians, is precisely the rejection of dispersion and disparity in favour of the emergence of the one among the

many: this is what the genius of urban music demonstrates through the “Mbolé” rhythm. The idea is to bind together the sheaf of our ethnic origins and make it the nucleus of our national culture. All Cameroonians will recognize themselves in such a sheaf, and contrary to popular belief, we will not succumb to superficiality: the sheaf of national culture thus bound will cultivate in us a spirit of tolerance, not complacency and a spirit of compromise, not compromising Cameroon is a multi-ethnic country. Our cultural identity is both diverse and common.

The preamble of our Constitution extols the Cameroonian people’s pride in their linguistic and cultural diversity, while proclaiming that they constitute one and the same Nation, bound by the same destiny. It also asserts their “firm determination to build the Cameroonian Fatherland on the basis of the ideals of fraternity, justice and progress”. These people are committed to building a unified country, while preserving cultural diversity, historical, linguistic, religious and other specificities.

To that end, Cameroonians today should cultivate a stronger sense of belonging to a single homeland, a single nation and a single people. They should consolidate the sense of being inextricably linked to the same destiny. This presupposes a common heritage, the essence of the “soul” of which Renan spoke. It calls for a “daily plebiscite” based on noble ideals such as peace, harmony, patriotism, solidarity, fraternity and conviviality. These ideals are rooted in a culture of peace that should be accepted by all. These ideals should be further extolled and promoted through various

media and in various circumstances, in both the public and private spheres.

Thus, to build a national culture, it is necessary to create cultural complicity where each ethnic group contributes their best cultural attributes and receives the best attributes from other ethnic groups. The national culture is a culture of living together based on “give” and “take”.

This complicity is only possible if everyone is free to create and offer their creation, in other words, if everyone believes that they have something to offer others. This desire to share what we have stems from a belief in equality and dignity. It is therefore necessary to continue to restore the dignity of Cameroonians and Cameroonian ethnic groups, so that they can, in a spirit of discernment, choose what seems to them to be representative or an effective expression of their genius and offer it freely to the nation as a whole, and so that all Cameroonians can “shop” in the cultural storehouse available to each ethnic group.

By extolling democracy, political culture fosters creativity and aesthetic culture. It will enable Cameroonians to understand that if they want, through consistent effort, they can find within themselves the capacity to impact the lives of their fellow countrymen. It will enable Cameroonians to understand that if they want to, and with consistent effort, they can find within themselves the capacity to make a difference in the lives of their fellow countrymen. One of the desired outcomes of continued political democratization is the consolidation of a spirit of equality, tolerance and humility.

4. Which languages for our culture?

Cameroonian linguists have identified two hundred and thirty-six languages, of which about one hundred can be standardized. Some people have tried to use this diversity to divide Cameroonians. I rather regard our linguistic diversity as a cultural privilege. Given this linguistic diversity, we have chosen to operate at two levels – the ethnic and national levels.

Cameroon is divided into ten regions with a plethora of ethnic groups and large “cultural areas”. These “cultural areas”, which are home to hundreds of national languages, tongues and dialects, exist independently of our two official languages, French and English, which have equal status. There is no homogenous “cultural area” due to the plurality of each area, the movement of people resulting in diverse cultural influences and the openness of each part of the national territory to various cultural expressions.

Ethnically, we should encourage the development of all national languages by systematically making use of information and communication technologies to preserve, transmit and innovate. It is therefore important for each language to express the culture it conveys. The cultural treasures produced in this manner will be transferred to the national level to the great benefit of the community. It is therefore necessary to allow all our linguistic flowers to bloom and contribute to the creation of a national cultural bouquet. To better integrate into the national community, every Cameroonian should first integrate into their ethnic community through their mother tongue.

Exploring the depths of one's ethnic personality is critical for understanding the benefits provided by the ethnic group. These advantages should be made available to the entire nation through the use of national and official languages. The plurality of national and official languages is in harmony with the linguistic community. The approach that I have always taken and that I continue to promote is that the various national and official languages should convey one and the same language, a language that is common to all Cameroonians beyond linguistic diversity: it is the language of the one and indivisible Republic, the language of unity in diversity, the language of coexistence while respecting cultural, ethnic, religious, linguistic and other specificities. The community of language that we form is also expressed through our common adherence, beyond our ethnic diversity, to the meanings, values and ideals conveyed, for example, by the sharing of kola nuts, palm or raffia wine, or bearing or handing the peace plant. Examples like these are legion.

The strength of Cameroon is derived from the unity that stems from the diversity and complementarity of its ethnic groups. The country can truly be itself only through such unity and complementarity. Our country is stable because it is united. The strength of our shared national memory outweighs the schismatic tendencies that have been condemned by the national community.

This brings us to the second level of our cultural action which seeks to accelerate national integration through cultural integration using national and official languages. Integration respects differences and is not synonymous with

uniformity. It is based on the ethical principles of equality, openness, encounter and fraternity. It is part of the same dynamic continuum comprising unity and diversity.

The dual integration referred to above has two advantages.

Vertically, that is at the ethnic level, dual integration encourages each Cameroonian to immerse himself in the culture of his ethnic group and to analyze it so as to bring out its quintessence. Each Cameroonian would, if he so desires, identify himself with a specific culture, not only by birth, but through a thorough understanding of the cultural traits of his ethnic group of origin or adoption.

The cultural quintessence thus defined is what each and every one of us presents at the national or horizontal level, which is that of the entire community. There is thus a dual action of internalization for self-discovery and openness for contact with others. The cultural policy thus advocates that individuals should be firmly grounded in their ethnic culture and also thrive through interaction within a national culture. It is important that all Cameroonians understand the significance of multiculturalism as a key element of Cameroonian identity. Multiculturalism is the melting pot in which the elements necessary for peaceful coexistence blend together. Every Cameroonian should be able to participate in the celebration of our heritage and share in our forefathers' legacy. This will help to strengthen social cohesion and national integration. As a result, it will be easier to overcome the risks of community withdrawal. Similarly, ethnic, religious, and linguistic differences will be transformed into bridges.

The symbol that embodies this culture is that of a rose. The symbol asserts the desire for dialogue and complementarity which forms the basis of coexistence. Time will play a sifting and stabilising role in this process of cultural edification. Allowing time to run its course will not suffice; action must be consistent. The desire for dialogue and complementarity in Cameroon should be deepened so as to be successfully translated into reality in international cultural co-operation. In this regard, I am convinced that the world, now more than ever, requires a new cultural order. The new world cultural order that I support is based on intercultural dialogue as well as the promotion and protection of cultural diversity. Globalization that ignores cultural differences and promotes uniformity can lead to conflict and tension, and jeopardize international peace and security. We should protect and promote cultural diversity without exacerbating cultural differences or creating an environment that fosters identitarian isolationism, xenophobia or fanaticism of any kind. The diversity of cultural expressions is not incompatible with universal values of peace, tolerance and hospitality. No culture has the exclusive right to express universal values. We must prevent Africans from becoming passive consumers of other people's cultures and being induced to deny their own. The deterioration of the terms of cultural exchange, both here and elsewhere, is bad. That is why I continue to advocate for a new global cultural order. That is my approach on the international scene which is based on our national experience.

Cultural resources and facilities

For any culture to be viable, it needs adequate resources and venues for its expression and dissemination. These special venues should serve as a framework for the expression and deployment of national cultural awareness. They should serve as entities for the promotion of cultural activities, guiding people in their artistic choices and cultural expressions. The goal is to ensure the successful dissemination of ethnic and national cultural productions.

To strengthen this image, we must encourage the development of genuine cultural industries and make use of information and communication technologies. It is also important to strengthen this sense of pride in being in one's own country or being oneself and having something to teach others. For us, this is one of the driving forces behind our cultural policy whose main objective is to restore the dignity and pride of the entire Cameroonian people by promoting its rich, vibrant and dynamic culture. Many Cameroonian artists, living in Cameroon or abroad and working in various fields (literature, painting, music, film, fashion, etc.), are turning this desire into reality.

We are all aware that culture is the leaven of politics, and that if we want our country to prosper, we need to further integrate our culture into the definition of our objectives of emergence. In addition, we must constantly question whether current economic and socio-cultural policies are in line with our environmental needs.

It is under such circumstances that Cameroon's culture will continue to drive economic development, and nurture growth that is based on the values of love, sharing and national solidarity. Hence, over the years, I have prescribed and gradually crafted a structural, organizational, financial, institutional, political and promotional framework for our arts and cultures, with the primary goal of harmonizing, coordinating and facilitating the implementation of the vast programme of enhancing, preserving and promoting our rich heritage and making it an essential factor for economic development, peace and social cohesion.

This option is warranted by current and future trends, as culture has become an issue of several high stakes. Cameroonian art and, therefore, its creators, are not only vectors of recognition but also agents for making inroads into the privileged spaces represented by the ancient and contemporary art market characterized by competition and rivalry. All these initiatives are expected to improve the conditions of our artists and craftsmen, lift them out of the dilemma in which they find themselves, such that they may devote themselves to producing works of art without wondering whether it is necessary to make unique works inspired by their traditional heritage, or join the bandwagon of "modernity" with its contemporary schools or movements for their works to be presented and sold on professional and specialized stages. This explains the creation of various art galleries called "arts houses", the multiplication of frequent festivals which today represent great moments of artistic sociability and promotion that we will continue to encourage. In this area, it is necessary to encourage the contribution of the private sector, as it is

the case already through the “Cameroon International Film Festival” in Buea or the “Écrans Noirs” festival in Yaounde.

Obviously, a cultural policy supported by the public and private sectors is the foundation of the political culture we absolutely need in order to consolidate our democratic society. This in itself is a lofty goal and all great human endeavours are works of faith, like the Sistine Chapel ceiling: beautiful, grandiose, exhilarating, yet still to be completed.

Chapter VIII

COMMUNAL LIBERALISM

Taking steps to build a mutually supportive and responsible humanity, consolidate a democratic society, develop an economy at the service of the population, secure the advent of a national culture in dynamic interaction with ethnic cultures, meet the demand for social justice and the development of humanity in man, has always guided and underpinned my commitment to serve our beautiful and beloved country.

But this action would have remained futile without the constant support of the Cameroonian people, of all Cameroonians. National unity has always been, and is, the lever of this action which must be collective and inclusive. It takes all hands to transform a society. This abiding concern for concerted and generous action to be carried out while respecting the originality and dignity of each individual is one of the dimensions of Communal Liberalism, a dynamic concept that remains to be elucidated and which encapsulates my vision of Cameroon.

Communal Liberalism, which I am glad to once again present to the Cameroonian people and which I have adapted to contemporary times, is a dynamic and pragmatic vision of the human being in relation to our society grappling with the present and future challenges of our people in their desire to preserve their very soul, and driven by their

legitimate aspiration to progress, to master their history. In a world marked by the dialectics of globalization and localization, unification and fragmentation, universalism and relativism, this renewed vision combines the self and the others, the individual and the group, the particular and the universal. It is the authentic product of our society, our culture, our memory of the past, our current experience and our projection into the future.

I remain true to my option for a system that brings out the ingenuity of each citizen by giving them the opportunity to carry out and create economic activities thanks to the encouraging support of the State. Ours is a State that acts strategically and provides guidance in an essentially proactive manner; a State that ensures social cohesion, contributes directly or indirectly to the growth of various economic sectors and strengthens national sovereignty. It is a State whose main duty is to remind everyone of the duty of solidarity with others. I am not referring to the kind of solidarity that encourages laziness among people whose main concern is to take advantage of the work of others by reaping where they did not sow. On the contrary, I am talking about promoting ethical values that remind everyone that one can benefit from the labour of other people only if one contributes substantially to the welfare of other citizens.

My personal reservation towards certain ideologies stems from the fear that in Cameroon the *train of emergence* is likely to be obstructed even before it reaches cruising speed, at a time when people must learn to be disciplined and to work hard. Indeed, most of these ideologies give the impression that societies are always composed of men who

are perfect at all levels, that is, men with no faults such as laziness, selfishness, haughtiness and so on.

Where certain ideologies generally proceed by dogmatism, *Communal Liberalism* is about rational pragmatism, guided by the quest for concrete solutions to problems, underpinned by values and principles.

I remain convinced that in our country, the duty to educate our population, which rests with the State as well as various social groups, civil society organizations and political parties, is essential to secure strong support for the emergence project, without prejudice to individual freedoms. The presence of the State in the field of education for Emergence or development does not mean that the State will work singlehandedly. On the contrary, it is up to the State to ensure that the virtues of free enterprise continue to grow among our citizens, who may suffer from a deterioration of many human faculties due to excessive indoctrination.

What, therefore, is *Communal Liberalism* which I am proposing as a vision of society?

It is widely known that there are as many forms of liberalism as there are liberals. I will thus restate my understanding of liberalism, and better still, the purpose of liberalism. Indeed, the history of mankind reminds us of the close links which have always existed between liberalism and democracy. We see liberalism in every attempt by people to regain their freedom restricted by the feudal system. Liberalism is thus a political and social philosophy focusing mainly on Man,

and more so, the individuality of Man, without prejudice to his interaction with groups or communities of which he may be a member.

From the political standpoint, this philosophy is concerned with the depersonalization of political power as opposed to the feudal system which is based on more or less legal personal relations which lead to confusion between the political authority and the individual's inalienable rights. Liberalism advocates the restoration of autonomy to the individual so as to protect him from any capricious and arbitrary authority. This involves, as G.H. Sabine put it, the human being as an individual, with his specific interests, his sense of enterprise, his desire to aspire to happiness and progress and, above all, with his mind which seems to be the necessary condition for the effective use of all his other faculties.

Thus, liberalism is not just a movement for economic emancipation to which the pioneer liberals almost reduced it. It is, as it should be, the quest for liberty in the various areas of the social, economic, intellectual, political and religious life of Man. This compelling desire for liberty does not mean the promotion of *laissez-faire*. While liberalism advocates the granting of various liberties to Man, it also expects Man to appeal constantly to his reason and morally to his conscience. This is because reason and conscience are the only true qualities of a Man who is convinced that he can enjoy his liberty only if he respects certain limits and is capable of countering any temptation of *laissez-faire* and anarchy. Reason and conscience are, therefore, beacons that remind us of the respect for law and order.

Liberalism implies that Man is not subject to any personal, and therefore, arbitrary power. For one to fully enjoy his liberties, one must submit to the rule of law, which is the symbol par excellence of impersonal power. Voltaire put it so well: “Liberty *consists in being* able to do *anything* that does not harm others”.

I would, therefore, like to insist on the duty of reason and conscience incumbent on all Cameroonians.

Reason and conscience, which totally embody our desire for moral rectitude, are the basis of our project to build a liberal and democratic society. This society is no longer defined in terms of constraints or coercion, but rather in terms of moral obligations and requirements felt by each individual and by each individual conscience.

Reason and conscience are, therefore, the determining factors of our drive for liberal organization, the other dimension being the sense of duty, whether it concerns dignity, participation or sharing.

The Communal Liberalism I am proposing is based on these major principles, which were not unknown to Cameroonians, but which might simply have been ignored in the struggle for survival. Another fundamental precept of liberalism is the belief in the perfectibility of human nature. The Communal Liberalism I am proposing reconciles the individual and the group or community, the citizen and the State, groups and the State. Here, the fulfilment of individuals is not incompatible with that of groups or communities. While individuals give meaning to groups, social groups,

in turn, are platforms for individuals to flourish and define their own identity. However, individuals are not prisoners of their communities. As perceived in Communal Liberalism, the Cameroonian society is not only a multi-ethnic society, but also a society of free and responsible individuals. In fact, it is a society of individuals and communities or groups in permanent interaction, within the framework of the democratic regulation of the State.

In general, our Communal Liberalism is more specifically characterized by five cardinal principles, namely:

- the freedom of undertaking;
- the regulatory role of a democratic State;
- the duty of solidarity;
- the principle of interaction between freedom and solidarity;
- the duty to match actions with our realities.

1. Freedom of undertaking

Free enterprise, as long as it does not lead to the exploitation of one person by another, should be encouraged. Freedom of undertaking is geared towards stimulating creativity in Cameroonians. For me, this does not mean overlooking the concrete or metaphysical that challenges each individual, each human being, individually and collectively. I am not proclaiming by abstraction that “man is free”! The principle of freedom that I set out here requires that every Cameroonian be free to act, as he sees fit depending on his abilities, his creativity, his capacity and situation. It is with this in mind that the economic sector has been liberalized

and national champions have emerged in various fields, alongside various prosperous entrepreneurs.

I am convinced that emulation and competition are key factors for the development of the highest faculties of man. Consequently, eliminating them in any production set-up where only the collective will matters may kill individual initiative and ambitions and finally lead to mediocrity. In every work organization, it is important to avoid killing the ambition in any individual. Actually, it would be illusive to think of successfully substituting individual ambition with a sense of responsibility for the community. A lack of ambition leads to failure, no matter the level of awareness attained by the individuals concerned. However, the individual ambition we are talking about here is not synonymous with selfishness, let alone narrow-minded individualism. What we are promoting is the ambition to do one's utmost to create wealth for the benefit of the community, while deriving individual gain.

The freedom of undertaking has been and remains a factor of growth in our country. The domestic private sector has always contributed significantly to our Gross Domestic Product and will contribute even more with our actions geared towards the structural transformation of the economy. But there is no question of giving way to an unbridled liberalism that generates merciless competition between economic actors. The freedom of undertaking that we advocate here is conceived in an ethical context that the State is responsible for enforcing. In its strategic moves, the State, in addition to effectively performing its "sovereign" functions of defence, justice and security, must also play the

role of regulator and protector of economic freedoms. While seeking to improve their governance and performance, the State must also continue to set up large-scale undertakings in sectors of critical importance for consolidating Cameroon's sovereignty. All lessons must be drawn from past failures in this area.

2. The regulatory role of a strategic State

Within the framework of Communal Liberalism, the State is expected to play a decisive role together with the private sector, communities and individuals. Indeed, through the promotion and protection of freedom of undertaking, we must not let enterprise thrive in an atmosphere of chaos reminiscent of the jungle. Such a development will unfortunately cause some undertakings to swallow up others and become so big that in the long run they will pose as states within the State, by making private interests prevail over the general interest and, thus, undermining the advent of the society of the common good we are striving for. However, everything must be done to secure the exponential affirmation of the freedom of undertaking in accordance with the rules of economic and social rule of law. Free enterprise is a source of prosperity for the nation. Free enterprise is in line with the strategic State advocated in Communal Liberalism.

The State, as per Communal Liberalism, is an entity that assumes the responsibility to protect the population from multifaceted internal or external threats, a State which develops (in partnership with other actors) effective public policies facilitating access to education, health, energy,

information and communication technologies, ensures the formation and use of human capital in quality and quantity, ensures the emancipation and development of the domestic private sector, plans development in a concerted manner, and ensures political, economic, military, legal, food and environmental security. It is a State at the service of everyone, with a view to achieving human security.

3. The duty of solidarity

If the modern Cameroonian society, the dawn and development of which we are heralding, were not nurtured on its numerous and enriching traditional values, it would be a giant with feet of clay. One of these fundamental values is the community spirit, presented here as the duty of solidarity.

Community spirit is observed every day in our towns and villages through certain techniques of saving, such as *njangi houses* or local micro-savings schemes, which often operate on the basis of community solidarity (age group, ethnic community, professional community, etc.). The psychological basis of the aforementioned phenomena remains the desire to be together and to share the joys and sorrows occurring within the group. The traditional milieu is, therefore, the crucible for the necessary inculcation of the duty of solidarity.

Indeed, it is in the Cameroonian tradition that “YUM” is practised. This is a kind of guild grouping people desirous of working together under a rotatory system jointly agreed

upon, for collective prosperity on the basis of individual advancement.

It is still this tradition which teaches that collective fishing does not mean collectivizing the catch, but rather giving some of it to the fisherman who had a bad day so that all families can eat with decency.

Finally, it is in the Cameroonian tradition that we learn right from infancy through proverbs that one hand cannot effectively tie a bundle or that knowledge is a collection.

And who has not heard of m'bangsuma, the Cameroonian practice whereby two or more people – adults, women, children – are moved by the feeling of solidarity to pledge never to eat anything without sharing it with the others? Mention may also be made of the traditional practice of solidarity in which residents of a neighbourhood or neighbours come together to cultivate or weed the farm of one of their members held down by illness or any other reason. The community thus comes together to assist one person.

It would obviously be tedious to detail the numerous examples of the community spirit among our different peoples. The few mentioned above are simply to inform those who did not know it that the duty of solidarity I am exhorting my fellow compatriots to perform, and which is widespread, is not imported from a different land, but rather one of our fundamental and permanent realities which, unfortunately, the relentless pursuit of easy or even illicit gain and profit is tending to destroy.

It is, therefore, proper that the duty of solidarity should be known and performed in the Cameroonian tradition. However, the fact that we did not have to import the practice does not mean it was our preserve, given that relatively similar practices based on the need for sharing and mutual assistance have been observed in several other societies. In general, in fact, various traditional societies in Cameroon practice the obligation of reciprocity.

The duty of solidarity does not mean sitting idly and passively with no contribution whatsoever, while enjoying the product of the efforts of others. The principle of reciprocity brings with it the notion of credit, whereby what is received today has, sooner or later, to be given out in one way or another. This duty of reciprocity is so binding in the Cameroonian tradition that a basket containing a gift is not returned by the recipient until he has a gift to put in it and reciprocate: a gift calls for a counter-gift. It is a binding rule in our traditional social dealings which should be a source of inspiration for us in all areas and at all levels.

This obligation draws its strength and, of course, its beauty from the fact that, like all moral obligations, it is not explicitly laid down but strongly inferred. Each person, therefore, listens to his conscience to avoid being reproached for failing, in one way or the other, to respect the principle of reciprocity.

The duty of solidarity cannot, therefore, have parasitism as its corollary, but rather a sustained effort to work which will be beneficial to the individual and thereby to the community as a whole. It is, therefore, a two-fold solidarity:

solidarity in effort and solidarity in the sharing of the fruits of this effort. Hence, the obligation entails that everyone participates in the prosperity of all so that the principle of reciprocity may lead to the positive distribution of the wealth produced and facilitate social mobility. The moral give and take economy that grows out of the widespread practice (at the micro level) must be further developed in Cameroon (at the macro level) as part of efforts to streamline debt (private and public, domestic and external); promote responsible governance of both public and private companies. Here, the political, managerial, intellectual, economic, cultural and other traditional elite have an important role to play. Admittedly, interpersonal relations do not have the same constraints as the management of companies or a State and do not follow the same logic; but, the fact remains that the generalization in our cultures of give and take or of respect for the principle of reciprocity ushers in a culture of responsibility, awareness of obligations and the much needed preservation of the State's credibility.

4. The principle of interaction between freedom and solidarity

Communal Liberalism is based on interaction or, better still, complementarity between freedom and solidarity: if freedom without solidarity is void of purpose, solidarity without freedom has no substance. In fact, freedom and solidarity are the founding twosome of Communal Liberalism. Asserting the freedom of the individual goes hand in glove with asserting his responsibility towards the other, his neighbour, his family, his group, the community, the State: the freedom of the individual is his self-determination;

his responsibility is solidarity: solidarity thrives on the soil of freedom.

Our traditional societies have always simultaneously practised the logic of emancipation of the individual, which allows him, for example, to accumulate property or excel as a farmer, breeder or fisherman, and of expressing active solidarity with others (neighbours, members of his age group, strangers, members of his society, etc.). Freedom and solidarity are part and parcel of the dynamic continuum that makes up Communal Liberalism. Moreover, solidarity is a form of individual freedom.

If the political regime we are consolidating were to be limited to promoting and protecting the freedom of individuals, our work would be partial. It is important that upholding individual freedoms should take place within a setting characterized by solidarity in all its forms: national solidarity, African solidarity, international solidarity, intergenerational solidarity, intragenerational solidarity, ecological solidarity, universal solidarity, etc. Just as I support the need to blend freedom and solidarity, I am also advocating for the bond between the citizens and the State to be strengthened. Democracy is not the “every man for himself” regime. Based on our cultures, I see the Cameroonian democracy as an opportunity to enhance the solidarity of all for one, one for all and all for all. As far as our economy is concerned, it is resolutely a communal market economy.

5. The duty to draw from our realities

Communal Liberalism is an insight into emergence that factors in local realities. I believe that one can only transform what one knows. One of the biggest mistakes we make in formulating development strategies is either to encourage the import of ideas without any reinterpretation, or ignore the specificity of national situations, or make hasty and lame generalizations. We are not claiming that there is nothing to learn from the development trajectories of China, India, Japan, Singapore, the United States, the United Kingdom, France, Germany and many other countries: all the world is a school. However, we can only learn well from others if we know ourselves. Hence, one categorical imperative is to know Cameroon, in the unity of the nation and in the diversity of its regions, divisions, subdivisions and councils, in what binds it together and in what can break it, in what it values and what it abhors.

It is Cameroon as it is today that we want to transform into the Cameroon we want it to be, that is, an emerging Cameroon. Emergence should be read here as a strategic threshold where the real needs of the population will be satisfied in all areas so that they can be able to take their destiny into their own hands. Matching our actions with our realities necessarily implies combining the values of balance, levelheadedness, compromise and fairness with those of progress. Just as it is held that we cannot command nature except by obeying her, we can also not change a society except by knowing it. Today, more than ever before, we must put in every effort to know more about the Cameroonian society, in its fears and hopes, in its joys

and pains, in its shocks and enthusiasms, in its reluctance and exhortations. I can claim to know the Cameroonian society well enough, even if I am still learning about it. That is why I am convinced that Communal Liberalism will usher Cameroon into emergence with the help of each and everyone.

Conclusion

THIRTY OBJECTIVES FOR CAMEROON

By way of conclusion to what has been said above, I would like to present thirty concrete proposals which, in my opinion, are the fundamental objectives to be attained collectively as we consolidate the implementation of *Communal Liberalism*.

National unity

(1) Since national unity is the bedrock of our coexistence, we must continue to work to intensify the intermingling of our population, by increasing the movement of Cameroonians within Cameroon, developing mobility infrastructures, ensuring the integration of the national space through communication channels and electronic communication networks.

(2) We must: (a) strengthen our system of inclusive and participatory governance of diversity through the policy of regional balance (for our State to always be a reflection of cultural pluralism); (b) prioritize the general interest in the development and implementation of public policies (for every Cameroonian to feel as a part of the achievements of the State); (c) factor in geographical, historical and cultural particularities and ensure territorial equity.

(3) The fight against clanism, tribalism, regionalism, in short taking action against anything that is likely to divide

Cameroonians and undermine territorial integrity, should always be a national cause.

Democracy

(4) We must persevere in our efforts to build a democratic society where (a) every citizen enjoys fundamental freedoms, participates in setting the Nation's objectives, and freely chooses those to represent him or her, in accordance with the Constitution, (b) the multiparty system is increasingly seen as an asset and a catalyst in the constant process of building the Cameroonian pluralistic democracy, as a factor in overcoming ethno-cultural divisions.

(5) We must protect and promote the rule of law as a pillar of our democracy based on the supremacy of the law.

(6) We must encourage the consolidation of the culture of citizenship, the democratic culture, so that democracy can be more of a collective and individual reality, an institutional and social reality.

(7) The public service must be an administration of progress, for delivering general interest goals and respecting the rights of users.

(8) We must further: (a) draw the consequences that derive from the right of each citizen and the national community to security, in all its ramifications; (b) consolidate and deepen the decentralization process thanks to which regional and local authorities are increasingly becoming levers of democracy and progress, in particular by assigning

a greater role to the population and developing a sense of participation in them.

Economy

(9) Cameroonians must preserve the prerogative of initiative and action in running the country's economy by determining priorities, expressing the real needs of the nation and mastering the process to achieve emergence as part of the dynamics of structural diversification and private sector promotion.

(10) The march towards Cameroon's emergence must be such that: (a) a new social order can be developed, through a fairer distribution of the fruits of growth based on work and solidarity, (b) redistribution mechanisms are put in place for the fulfilment of the greatest number; (c) inequalities can be reduced and the general standard of living of the populations raised; and (d) there can be an exponential and simultaneous growth of the primary, secondary and tertiary sectors.

(11) Consolidating the national economy, our digital economy and our knowledge economy will have to rely more on the dynamism of Cameroonians, the development of local savings as well as that of the diaspora, the formation of human capital, the mastery of the credit system and the generalized use of information and communication technologies.

(12) Agriculture must be consolidated as the mainstay of the national economy. To that end, we must resolutely:

(a) have as strategic priorities the eradication of hunger, the establishment of an efficient and resilient agricultural system as well as the consolidation of food security at the national and regional levels; (b) develop second generation agriculture while preserving subsistence agriculture; (c) accelerate the programme to open up rural areas and production zones; (d) increase the share of the State budget allocated for agriculture and encourage domestic private sector investments in agriculture; (e) promote a balance between cash crops and food crops; (f) intensify seed production; (g) facilitate access to loans, inputs and markets; (h) boost youth and women's interest in agriculture; (i) encourage public-private partnerships in order to take advantage of synergies between large agricultural enterprises and small firms run by young people or women; (j) continue developing policies and programmes that promote the transformation of the rural sector and the development of commercial activities in the agricultural value chain; (k) continue with methodical regional planning to meet the exigencies of large-scale production.

(13) We must improve livestock productivity through the use of the results of science and technology, intensive animal health monitoring, promotion of animal industries, establishment of value chains as well as innovative financing and investment methods.

(14) Develop the fisheries sector by enhancing the fishing potential, building the capacities of organizations of fishing communities and fish farming industries as part of a clear and distinct choice for the blue economy, a powerful growth driver for Cameroon.

(15) Intensify the controlled and effective use of information and communication technologies with a view to the advent of an authentic and dynamic knowledge society and a true digital economy, based on ethics.

(16) Further strengthen energy production to cover the needs of households and industries at the national and sub-regional levels, within a strategy that also includes renewable energies.

(17) Articulate the emergence strategy around environmental and biodiversity protection, safeguarding ecosystems and combating climate change.

(18) Mainstream gender issues and women's empowerment in all sectoral and general public policies.

Social welfare and culture

(19) Ensure universal access to quality education at all levels, vocational training, apprenticeship, science and technology in order to build human capital commensurate with our current and future challenges, with the popularization of information and communication technologies.

(20) Achieve universal access to health services by consolidating community health promotion and intensifying the construction of high quality and specialized reference hospitals in all our regions, while building an effective universal social security system and scaling up our endemics and epidemics response capacity.

(21) Facilitate access to housing as part of a policy to make our cities safer, more sustainable and resilient.

(22) Strengthen the policy of intensifying the participation of the Cameroonian diaspora in national development, and implementing the policy of balanced development of our regions, towns and villages.

(23) Develop a thriving tourism sector by increasing the availability of hotel infrastructures, further stimulating domestic desire to discover the country, producing a comprehensive inventory of national tourist sites and developing them as well as increasing the number of places of leisure.

(24) Revitalize the conservation and transmission of our history through oral and written records; identify, restore and protect historical sites and monuments throughout the country; produce the general inventory of and enhance the tangible and intangible cultural heritage.

(25) Provide more support for creativity and cultural industries and for the enhancement of culture, collective and individual cultural productions within and outside our national borders, through a variety of means and an increase in public and private investments.

(26) Scale up efforts to promote sport at different levels, as part of youth development and improvement of the well-being of society, as a factor of national integration, peace and friendship between peoples.

(27) Systematize the fight against social exclusion, create enabling conditions for the participation of all in the common task of development, and take action to protect vulnerable groups.

African and international relations

(28) Consolidate Cameroon's independence within the overall framework of a policy of non-interference in the internal affairs of States, peaceful coexistence, solidarity, and peaceful settlement of disputes.

(29) Step up Cameroon's contribution to African unity at continental, regional and sub-regional levels.

(30) Adhere to the Constitutive Act of the African Union, the United Nations Charter and the founding principles of Non-alignment as well as all international commitments entered into, and ensure our contribution to multilateralism and international cooperation.

Appeal for the emergence of Cameroon

My dear compatriots,

All that has been said concerns all of you without exception, Cameroonians in towns and villages, Cameroonians within and outside the country.

I have never thought that there are two categories of Cameroonians: the good and the bad. I have never thought that the political pluralism inherent in democracy is synonymous with the division of the nation. Cameroon is our common heritage. That is why I have always been open to all Cameroonians without discrimination, irrespective of political opinion, age, gender, religion or ethnicity. We are building Cameroon TOGETHER. And TOGETHER will we achieve Emergence!

I want to remind you again: the history of Cameroon did not begin in 1960, with Independence, neither in 1961, with Reunification, nor in 1972 with Unification. And how was our independence acquired? It was neither “given” nor “granted” to Cameroonians. The independence of our country was hard-won by many worthy children from this land. Their works have been recognized and officially rehabilitated. The independence of our country was snatched from the colonial powers through fierce battles, led at the time by combatants. Their common denominator was love of Fatherland. It is up to our historians to give an objective and unbiased account of what the decolonization process of our country was like.

It is up to our councils to honour the memory of those who fought for our independence and reunification. How was our reunification achieved? Our reunification resulted from our common will, the determination of Cameroonians to transcend the colonial legacy (made of artificial divisions) to build a united nation. Our reunification was democratically sought and achieved, same with our unification in 1972. What the General Will has put together, we will never allow minorities of unscrupulous activists and criminals to put asunder. What Love of Fatherland and the General Will have done, secessionist propaganda and terror will not undo, neither today nor tomorrow. We, all of us, are the uncompromising guardians of the popular and sovereign choice for the unity of our country; national unity that protects ethnic, linguistic, regional and religious diversity.

Many of the artisans of Cameroon's independence, reunification and unification are now gone forever, but remain a source of inspiration for present and future generations. Many other Cameroonians, from all our regions, have taken up the task of defending and advancing the national cause, showing a particular interest in the life and destiny of our fatherland. By our deeds and words, let us always strive to be worthy of past generations and an inspiration for future generations. There is no doubt in my mind that the present generations have already adopted Emergence as their historic mission and will continue to work tirelessly to bequeath to future generations a Cameroon that is more united, democratic, stable, just and prosperous. Undoubtedly, future generations will protect and develop the Cameroon that will be passed on to them.

Each of us must fully play our respective intragenerational and intergenerational roles.

I am making this patriotic appeal to all Cameroonians, at home and abroad, without exception, to remain united and work with our institutions in order to consolidate our independence and our unity, as well as fast track our march towards Emergence.

I am therefore calling on all the vital forces of Cameroon to join hands to consolidate our democratic political society, achieve the structural transformation of our economy, ensure environmental protection and develop a flourishing cultural sector. I call on women to increase their participation in promoting inclusive and sustainable development. I particularly urge the youths to increasingly assume their historic responsibilities by rising to the challenge of audacity and innovation, imagination and commitment. I am appealing to Cameroonians in the diaspora to increasingly put their talents, abilities and experiences at the service of our Emergence.

I am convinced that building an emerging Cameroon requires not only the active participation of all the sons and daughters of our country, wherever they are, at home and abroad, but also the consolidation of the organization of community life based on constant discussion, exchange of ideas and collective deliberation, in an atmosphere of tolerance, moderation, respect for institutions and laws, hard work and love of the fatherland.

From the extremely rich experience I have garnered in serving the State and from my attachment to republican ideals, going by the lessons learned from our successes and setbacks, from our strengths and shortcomings, I am convinced that the solution lies in putting all hands-on deck to build a Cameroon that transcends all singularities and cleavages, a Cameroon that is united and indivisible, pluralistic and decentralized, a Cameroon cherished by everyone. Our salvation lies in the Emergence of Cameroon, which, as our National Anthem puts it, is our “Dear Fatherland,” our “Land of Promise”, “Land of Glory,” “Our life and joy!” That is the Cameroon which gives meaning to our actions. It is what prompts us to act and remain placidly hopeful for a brighter future, fruit of our collective and individual efforts.

My wish, my fervent wish, is for our country, Cameroon, to readily remain steadfast on the path of Emergence, on the trajectory of strengthening its national unity and democracy, with *Communal Liberalism* as its compass.

My dear compatriots,

Difficulties and challenges, obstacles and constraints cannot derail us from the goal that is dear to us, Cameroon’s Emergence. We have invaluable human, cultural, political, institutional and natural resources. It is possible for our valiant and determined nation to achieve the best.

I will now conclude my appeal by inviting you to meditate ceaselessly on these lyrics of our National Anthem which we sing on a regular basis and hand down from generation

to generation: “Dear Fatherland, Land of Promise ... Thine be honour, thine devotion, And deep endearment, for evermore”. These words, the compass of our citizenship, are the ingredients of my commitment, yesterday, today and tomorrow, for the emergence of our country. I know you are all driven by the same force. Our destiny is in our own hands. And TOGETHER, we will make it a Great Destiny.

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