

**HEAD OF STATE'S 2022 END OF YEAR
AND 2023 NEW YEAR MESSAGE
TO THE NATION**

Yaounde, 31 December 2022

Fellow Cameroonians,
My Dear Compatriots,

As the year 2022 draws to a close, I believe it is appropriate to review the ground we have covered as a Nation, before looking to the New Year with confidence and determination.

You must have noted that in 2022, our country, like so many others, continued to face exogenous shocks.

Just as the global economy was beginning to recover from the distortions triggered by the Covid-19 pandemic, an armed conflict broke out between Russia and Ukraine in Eastern Europe.

The war between these two great countries has caused far-reaching disruptions in global market supply chains of consumer products, such as grain, crude oil and gas.

The ensuing global trade system dysfunctions also led to shortages in some manufactured goods and other staple products, as well as widespread price hikes.

I am prompted by the dire consequences of the war on the economies of countries, particularly developing countries, and the suffering inflicted on innocent civilian populations, to reaffirm the importance of peace and dialogue in conflict resolution.

My Dear Compatriots,

Despite this challenging context, our economy was able to adapt to the international environment, once

again demonstrating resilience, with an approximately 3.8% uptick in the growth rate as against 3.6% in 2021.

Inflation remained reasonable, well below the global average. Access to inputs was secured, thus helping to maintain production activities and to mitigate food insecurity risks. All of this was made possible thanks to the stringent measures implemented by the Government.

Thus, besides increased tax and customs facilities granted under the post-COVID-19 recovery plan, substantial subsidies were accorded businesses in sensitive sectors, to sustain our economy's viability and competitiveness.

The fight against speculative behaviours and fraudulent exports of staple products was intensified. Encouraging strides were also made to ramp up local production, curb our dependence on imports and promote "Made in Cameroon" products.

The Government will continue to pay special attention to the coordinated implementation of the Import-Substitution Policy, and to leveraging opportunities afforded by the African Continental Free Trade Area.

Similarly, our social inclusion policy will be continued through better sharing of the fruits of growth. To this end, social safety net programmes targeting underprivileged social segments will be extended to a greater number of beneficiaries in all ten Regions.

In order to diversify State revenue sources, I authorized the implementation of three large-scale

projects aimed at developing our mining potential, structuring our economy and creating jobs.

I would like to dwell on this for a moment.

Although our subsoil is endowed with mineral resources, the non-oil mining sector accounts for merely 1% of gross domestic product. Developing solid mineral mining will provide us with substitutes for our dwindling hydrocarbon stocks, and additional financial resources which can be used to finance our investments.

Accordingly, the year 2023 will be marked by the commencement of the exploitation of the Kribi-Lobe iron ore. The project includes the construction of an iron enrichment plant, an approximately 20-kilometre long pipeline, and a 60-megawatt power plant.

We will also start exploiting the Mbalam-Nabeba iron deposit. The expected benefits for our country are immense, including a 540-kilometre long railway line between Nabeba in Congo and the Kribi Port where a mineral terminal will be constructed.

The third project concerns the exploitation of the Bipindi-Grand Zambé iron ore, with the development of an iron and steel complex for the local processing of iron, the construction of a pipeline and several basic facilities for the benefit of the population.

A decisive step has already been taken in implementing these different projects, with the signing of the relevant mining agreements and granting of operating permits to successful bidders.

My Dear Compatriots,

During the year now ending, our country suffered major supply disruptions concerning energy resources and drinking water.

Ensuring a steady supply of petroleum products and cooking gas to the domestic market warranted increasing the volume of public subsidies, through substantial budgetary efforts. In 2022, for instance, the Treasury subsidized fuel and cooking gas to the tune of nearly 700 billion and 75 billion CFA francs respectively.

Considering the intensity of the exogenous shocks and their impact on our economy, I instructed the Government to consider all options to stabilize prices at their current level, and to maintain the purchasing power of consumers.

However, it is becoming increasingly clear that Cameroon, like many other countries in Africa and elsewhere, will not be able to indefinitely avert a petroleum products price adjustment if we must preserve our fiscal balances and successfully continue implementing our development policy.

Despite these constraints arising from the international economic situation, real progress was achieved with regard to the provision of electricity. In concrete terms, the East Region was connected to the South interconnected grid. The Nyabizan-Yaounde power transmission line was also commissioned, currently enabling the entire production of the Memve'ele hydropower dam to be injected into the electrical grid.

The situation in this vital sector will improve considerably in 2023, with the commissioning of Phase I

of the Nachtigal Hydropower Dam and the commencement of work to connect the South and North interconnected grids.

Efforts to scale up energy supply quality and quantity will be intensified through the construction of new energy infrastructure and solar energy development, particularly in the northern part of our country.

Access to safe drinking water for our population is one of my main concerns. The completion of the Project to Supply Drinking Water to the City of Yaounde and its environs from River Sanaga will provide a lasting solution to the city's water supply shortages.

I have also instructed the Government to urgently finalize procedures for the launching, in 2023, of the mega-project to supply drinking water to the City of Douala and its environs.

Besides our large cities, production facilities were constructed in some towns, namely Bamenda, Bertoua, Ngaoundere and Ebolowa. These facilities will be constructed in other urban and rural localities in the coming year.

My Dear Compatriots,

In spite of the unfavourable situation, the Government is sustaining its efforts to assume its prime responsibility that is to improve the living conditions of the citizens. Ongoing structural reforms under the economic and financial programme concluded with the International Monetary Fund and other development partners must be continued.

I am pleased to note that no sector of activity was neglected despite the particularly challenging economic context of 2022. Without being exhaustive, let us briefly look at a few other sectors, besides those already mentioned.

In the public works sector, 860 kilometres of road and 460 linear metres of engineering structures were constructed or rehabilitated. These include:

- The commissioning of the bridge over the Cross River between Cameroon and Nigeria, as well as the completion of the asphaltting of the road section between Sangmelima and Brazzaville, thus opening up our country to the markets of neighbouring States;
- The asphaltting of the Lena-Tibati-Ngatt road section on National Highway No. 15, with the advantage of increasing land links between the country's northern and southern regions;
- The construction of the Kribi-Lolabé motorway and the Grand Zambi-Kribi road, which will boost the competitiveness of the Kribi Port Authority;
- The construction of the Bertoua-Batouri road, which will be extended to Yokadouma and beyond.

The Construction of many road facilities has also helped to open up agricultural production basins. These efforts will be continued in 2023 with the construction of about 700 kilometres of road, including the asphaltting of the Ebolowa-Akom II-Kribi stretch.

I have instructed the Government to do all it can to ensure the resumption of construction work on the Mora-Dabanga-Kousseri, Babadjou-Bamenda and Kumba-Ekondo Titi road sections.

Special attention will be paid to rehabilitating urban road networks and improving traffic flow between our major towns. The launching of construction work on the urban section of the Yaounde-Nsimalen motorway and the acceleration of work on the Douala-Yaounde motorway will feature among the Government's priorities.

The rehabilitation and modernization of the Tiko, Bertoua and Kribi airports will also be prioritized to ensure that all regions of our country are served by air transport.

Fellow Cameroonians,

The year 2022 was also marked by floods which once again afflicted the inhabitants of the Far-North Region, particularly those of Logone et Chari and Mayo-Danay Divisions. This recurrent phenomenon, which is due to climate disruption, calls for strong measures to prevent the ensuing disasters.

Besides providing humanitarian assistance to victims, I instructed the Government to implement a plan for the reconstruction of the Far-North Region. This plan includes the construction of a number of water-impounding and socio-economic facilities.

Regarding health care delivery, it is undeniable that it improved significantly in 2022.

The Regional Hospital Centre and the Garoua General Hospital were inaugurated and commissioned. Our country is now capable of providing quality health care in highly specialized fields such as cardiac surgery and renal transplantation thanks to the upgrading of the

infrastructure and technical equipment of many health facilities.

I have enjoined the Government to sustain ongoing efforts in this sector by implementing an extensive plan to upgrade technical equipment and to build the capacity of hospital staff nationwide.

My Dear Compatriots,

I now wish to dwell on the security situation. Overall, the situation has been brought under control countrywide despite the resurgence of urban crime and lingering sporadic attacks by certain terrorist groups in some regions.

Thanks to the Army-Nation link, collaboration between our defence forces and the population has contributed to reducing significantly the terrorist threat in the Far-North, North-West and South-West Regions. With the return to calm, remarkable progress has been achieved in implementing the Plan for the Reconstruction and Development of the said Regions.

Once more, I want to commend our defence and security forces for sparing no effort in protecting lives and property, particularly in areas prone to terrorism.

I also thank our partners for their multifaceted support, and particularly the United States of America for its decisive action in prosecuting those who help to finance terrorist activities in Cameroon from abroad. I urge other friendly countries to follow suit so that the resumption of development activities can be accelerated in the said Regions.

On the political front, decentralization is being implemented methodically. Powers are gradually being devolved from the State to regional and local authorities, while ensuring that the structural balances that constitute the backbone of our Nation's social pact are not undermined.

Personally, I am convinced that Regions, urban councils and councils can and must play a key role in reviving our economy, resolving the thorny issue of youth unemployment and revitalizing local democracy.

The senatorial elections to be held in 2023 will afford an opportunity to consolidate our decentralization option through a newly elected Upper House of our Parliament that represents regional and local authorities.

Fellow Cameroonians,

My Dear Compatriots,

Before I conclude, I would like to draw your attention to two scourges that are becoming rife in our society, namely corruption and incivility.

Last year, in similar circumstances, I talked about the need to strengthen governance in the management of public affairs and to control government spending. Rest assured that this concern is constant and unwavering. I also want to reiterate that those who are illicitly amassing wealth by plundering the State, at whatever level, will be brought to book.

I urge all Cameroonians, regardless of their social standing, to resolutely embark on this crusade that I

have led over the years. Everyone, at his or her level, should act with integrity and safeguard our commonweal.

It is only through working collectively, decisively and resolutely that we will be able to overcome the corruption persisting in our society.

You have certainly noticed, like me, growing incivility, violence and disregard for basic social norms or established order in our towns and in the countryside. Such behaviour cannot be tolerated in a State of law. Those who take delight in disrupting social order, whether young or old, will answer for such conduct before the competent courts.

I am therefore appealing to all, especially parents and educators, to take up the responsibility of fully restoring basic moral values and respect for public order.

Once more, I wish to make an appeal to those using social media for criminal and malicious purposes. Through their actions, particularly disinformation, defamation, and spreading hate speech, they cause distress to numerous families and often ruin lives. Clearly, they jeopardize social cohesion.

Fellow Cameroonians,
My Dear Compatriots,

As you are aware, it is by observing personal discipline in our daily behaviours that we will be able to build the modern Cameroon to which we all aspire.

A prosperous Cameroon united in its diversity, a Cameroon where every actor has his or her own place. In this regard, I wish to acknowledge the crucial role played

by the private sector in the implementation of our development policy.

For my part, I will continue to do everything possible to ensure our country's progress. I know I can count on each and every one of you to achieve that.

Happy and Prosperous New Year 2023

Long live the Republic!
Long live Cameroon!

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