

**55<sup>TH</sup> EDITION OF THE YOUTH DAY**

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**HEAD OF STATE'S MESSAGE TO  
THE YOUTH**

Yaounde, 10 February 2021

My dear young compatriots,

The Youth Day celebration this year is taking place shortly after the successful organization of the 6<sup>th</sup> edition of the Total African Nations Championship (CHAN) Cameroon 2020, which our country had the privilege of hosting from 16 January to 7 February 2021.

It was an excellent opportunity to commune with all young African sports men and women and to showcase the vitality of the Cameroonian people.

On that occasion, Cameroon, which is renowned for its legendary hospitality, was up to the task, thanks notably to the massive mobilization of its dynamic, talented and enthusiastic youth.

By hosting the Total CHAN 2020, our country was able to offer other young people from Africa and the world a wonderful sports and cultural festival, as well as a pleasant moment of entertainment, within a rather challenging health context.

As we can see, compliance with the preventive measures prescribed by the Government and with other measures requested by the organizers of the tournament, helped to ensure the smooth organization in Cameroon, a country of fraternity and peace, of the first international competition in a world that is grappling with the coronavirus.

Given the success of this sporting event, I feel like saying that 2021 is beginning on a positive note for our youth. And I hope that this breath of fresh air will rekindle lasting hope in every one of you.

Another event, the Africa Cup of Nations, Total AFCON Cameroon 2021, will take place in 2022. I have no doubt that it will be another opportunity for you to express your dynamism, talent and enthusiasm.

In spite of the difficult economic situation, our country is well prepared for both events. We have built ultra-modern facilities, some of which were used for the first time during CHAN that has just ended. We have to learn to preserve them.

On account of their multiple achievements, Cameroon's young sports men and women deserve the sacrifices made for these major investments. This should be a genuine motive of pride for all of us and an encouragement to win more victories.

I want to call on Cameroonian football governing bodies to pull themselves together and restore order to their organization. It is only in so doing that we can create the best conditions for the sustained development of our football.

My dear young compatriots,

As I have often told you, you should never lose hope in your country. You should have faith in the future of a winning Cameroon where everyone is willing to work for the general interest. You should remain at the forefront to fight the vital battles of your time.

This does not mean that I am overlooking the difficulties you are facing. However, remember, two years ago, under the same circumstances, I told you, along the same lines, that each generation has a historic mission to accomplish for the future of the Nation.

It is obvious that your mission today is the preservation of the peace, unity and prosperity of our country, beyond the inescapable constraints due to the changes taking place in the world.

Peace is a prerequisite for progress. As you are aware, it has been threatened for a few years now in our country by armed gangs that are spreading terror on the western border of the Far-North, and in some areas in the North-West and South-West. Our eastern border is also facing insecurity.

Fortunately, courageous and patriotic Cameroonian youths are effectively playing their role as the driving force in the defence of the Fatherland on these different fronts.

Our young soldiers are actively engaged with determination, professionalism and a high sense of sacrifice in restoring peace to our country.

Similarly, within the framework of the Army-Nation tandem, young people are the most active in vigilante committees which are providing valuable support to the Defence and Security Forces.

These dedicated and committed youths are the pride of our country. They are a model of abnegation, patriotic awareness, service for the common interest and preservation of national sovereignty and unity.

May their example inspire you in various other aspects of national life.

Concerning national unity, some of you have unfortunately chosen to rally behind the demons of hatred and division. Driven by barbaric fanaticism, often whipped up and nurtured from foreign countries, or by a perverse use of social media, they try to undermine the foundations of the Nation.

They are “anti-role models”. I urge you to stay away from them. They are not contributing to building a prosperous Cameroon that is united in its diversity, an exemplary Cameroon that we all fervently long for.

My dear young compatriots,

Our country has just completed the establishment of its democratic institutions, as provided for by the Constitution. Many young people are part of the various parliamentary, municipal and regional bodies. This is the way the generational transition in the management of public affairs is prepared.

Time for politicking is therefore over. It is now time to resolutely get back to work.

Regional and local authorities constitute a source of opportunities that I urge you to seize.

The Government, for its part, will continue its efforts to develop the entire country. The effective participation of young people in the Nation’s socio-economic life will continue to be at the centre of its action. In that connection, it will ensure that they are increasingly involved in decision-making concerning them.

The broad outlines of our country’s progress towards emergence by 2035 have been redefined in our National

Development Strategy adopted recently. It is necessary to fully acquaint yourselves with it so as to identify all the opportunities it offers.

Prior to that, however, I had already ordered the development of several youth support programmes. These initiatives are being implemented in various production sectors.

I once more call on the Government to work towards ensuring the successful implementation of these programmes. The solution of the thorny problem of youth employment in our country depends to a large extent on their implementation.

The programmes include:

- the "Special Youth" Three-year Plan which, in 2020, financed about 5 500 projects for a total amount of nearly 15 billion CFA francs, thus enabling the settlement of a little more than 16 000 young people in 66 second-generation pioneer villages.
- the Decent Employment Promotion Programme which aims to create 500 000 jobs during the 2021 financial year.

My dear young compatriots,

Nation building is the responsibility of all of us. It requires a spirit of harmony and tolerance among citizens. I therefore urge you to cultivate this spirit at all times, and to champion peace in order not to squander the opportunities that your country is offering you.

As the majority sociological component, mobilize for the future of your country, Cameroon, a stable, united and prosperous Cameroon. It is your priceless heritage.

Be pragmatic and persevering. Do not yield to pessimism and discouragement. Shun adventurous paths and those that seek easy gain.

If you embark on the conquest of the world, come back to build your country. Promote Cameroon like your compatriots, namely:

- the physicist, Arsène Stéphane TEMA BIWOLE, at *General Atomics*;
- the mathematician and computer scientist, Thystère Djob MVONDO, who has just brilliantly defended his doctorate thesis at the age of 22;
- the writer, Djaili AMADOU AMAL, who, as you know, won the *Prix Goncourt des Lycéens 2020*; and
- many others that I cannot name here.

My dear young compatriots,

It is in so doing that you will effectively contribute to building a strong, united, democratic, decentralized and emerging Cameroon by 2035. I know you can do it. I count on you.

Happy Youth Day to each of you!

Long live Cameroonian youth!

Long live Cameroon!