

**TOAST BY H.E. PAUL BIYA, PRESIDENT
OF THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON,**

**At the luncheon offered in honour of Madam Irina BOKOVA,
Director-General of UNESCO**

Yaounde, 16 September 2014

Madam Director-General of UNESCO,

Permit me to tell you how delighted my wife and I are to welcome you on the occasion of your visit to Cameroon.

I need not remind you that you are very much at home in Cameroon. By some happy coincidence, you bear the same name as a well-known locality in the south-west of Cameroon. By the way, you are an illustrious dignitary of Bokova. The custodians of tradition have granted you the attributes of that status.

This once again shows how pleased we are to welcome you here today, Madam Director-General.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are aware, our relationship with UNESCO is longstanding, coming on the heels of our accession to international sovereignty over half a century ago. Our belonging to this body was driven by our desire to draw closer to all peoples of the world. As a protector and promoter of the equality of cultures, UNESCO was the most appropriate interlocutor.

We stand proud of the ground covered together. To refresh your memory, I would like to recall the leading role played by your Organization in the creation, running and functioning of the Yaounde Higher Teachers Training College (ENS) which recently commemorated its 50th anniversary.

Your support in the preservation, promotion, expression and influence of our culture is equally immeasurable. We proudly remember the brochure containing the findings of the survey conducted under your supervision on all the dances of Cameroon. We do remember your assistance in preparations for Cameroon's participation at the first-ever Festival of Negro Arts in Dakar and the first Pan-African Cultural Festival in Algiers.

Lastly, I would like to mention UNESCO's contribution towards restoring historical monuments such as the Fouban Palace and preserving our wildlife, especially the Dja Reserve which features on your Organization's list of World Natural and Cultural Heritage since 1987.

**Madam Director-General,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

With increasing ideological conflicts and trouble spots, UNESCO's role in the quest for peace, highly commendable as it is, needs to be stepped up. For, we must bear in mind that victory through the force of arms cannot alone ensure peace, that is, lasting peace.

Lasting peace cannot be imposed, it is built and lived daily by mutual acceptance and tolerance which lead to and promote dialogue. All these virtues indeed constitute the *raison d'être* of UNESCO.

The Preamble of UNESCO's constitution clearly states and I quote: "*Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed*". Unquote.

Madam Director-General,

The preservation of peace also entails the fight against inequality and poverty.

You know this very well because in 2009 you placed your first tenure under the banner of promoting a "new humanism"; humanism based on solidarity and focused on the full development of the individual and all mankind.

You gave priority to the development programmes of African countries. The geographical and operational reorganization of UNESCO's services is also credited to you. By establishing five Regional Offices in Africa, you have brought your Organization closer to the people, making them more aware of UNESCO's work.

Cameroon highly appreciates your support in your various areas of competence and we are sure that your visit will further enhance our multidimensional cooperation.

In this regard, I wish to commend the opening in Cameroon of a major UNESCO office for Central Africa. Pursuant to my instructions, the Government has taken all necessary measures to facilitate its establishment and ensure its proper functioning.

Madam Director-General,

Allow me to conclude where I should have started. I wish to heartily congratulate you on your re-election at the helm of UNESCO. I wish to commend the mastery and skill with which you devote yourself to the service of humanity.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

My wife and I now invite you to raise your glasses in honour of Madam Irina BOKOVA, Director-General of UNESCO, to the success of her mission at the service of peace and to the sustainability of Cameroon-UNESCO relations.

Thank you.