

# **STATE VISIT TO ITALY**

(Rome, 20-22 March 2017)

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**Reception of Gold Medal at the University of Rome Tor Vergata**

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## **KEYNOTE ADDRESS BY H.E. PAUL BIYA, PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON**

Rome, 22 March 2017

**The President of the Conference of Italian University Rectors,  
The Rector of the University of Rome Tor Vergata,  
Eminent Members of the Italian Academic Community,  
Dear Guests,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

Allow me to thank you most sincerely for such a warm welcome to the prestigious University of Rome Tor Vergata. I also wish to express my profound gratitude to you for the Gold Medal the Conference of Italian University Rectors have awarded me. I am deeply touched by the very kind words you have spoken to me, my wife, and my country. I thank you from the bottom of my heart.

The high distinction you have just awarded me is a mark of honour for the Cameroonian people as a whole.

Indeed, through this action, the entire Italian academic community pays tribute to the efforts we are making in Cameroon to modernize our university system. We are doing so with serenity, while ensuring social harmony and the integration of all our endogenous national cultures.

We bear in mind the fruitful contribution of foreign cultures like that of your beautiful country. We are also concerned with promoting bilingualism (English and French), our historical heritage.

Concerning your beautiful country, Italy, I am delighted to be here, near Bologna where the Bachelor–Master–Doctorate (BMD) system was born. I recall that the Heads of State of Central Africa – including me – formally adopted the BMD system on 11 February 2005 in Libreville. We are already reaping its visible fruits.

I will mention, among others:

- the professionalization of teaching,
- the acquisition of skills, and
- the development of the experience acquired.

Although we do not under-rate the dissemination of theoretical knowledge, we wish that such knowledge should be harmoniously mainstreamed into a new dynamic, namely:

- quality assurance,
- professional expertise, and
- the employability of graduates.

In this light, Cameroonian universities can be considered as a powerful driver of economic, social and technological development. It enables students to become responsible and useful citizens for their country, and even their sub-region; competent men and women who are capable of adapting to changes in their environment.

We will consolidate this option which is based on practical knowledge and digital education. We will, in particular, increase the number of business incubators in university institutions.

The aim is to teach students in all fields to start and manage business. Several “junior enterprises” have already been set up and are functioning, to the satisfaction of all.

Students are thus getting acquainted with their socio-economic mission of contributing to the emergence of Cameroon by 2035. They are expected to become increasingly efficient in a fiercely competitive world. They will be better equipped to effectively deal with the harsh realities of globalization.

We consider it as globalization with a human face where each State occupies its rightful position.

Such positive globalization is in line with the interdependence of nations, co-development and dialogue of cultures. It contributes to the advent of a new world order based on equity, progress and universal fraternity.

Development, as we perceive it from the "communal liberalism" standpoint, should be directed towards the fulfilment of all. It takes into account the well-being of all socio-professional groups, all generations, as well as all linguistic, geographical, confessional and sociological groups.

Nobody should be left out or ignored.

It is important to work towards achieving well-being for all. The equitable distribution of the fruits of growth has become a categorical imperative. The prosperity and peaceful coexistence of free and sovereign States appear to be the new globalization challenge.

Such globalization is underpinned by the democracy of togetherness and progress, respect for human rights and upholding good governance. It flourishes in a world where science and technology are at the service of mankind. A world in which humanism cushions mercantilist excesses.

We are aware with Protagoras that man is the measure of all things. This confirms the famous maxim of the Latin poet Terence: "*homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto*", or "I am human, and I think that nothing of that which is human is alien to me."

In the light of this humanistic vision, the new university system we are promoting in Cameroon is a multiplier of balanced growth, as it is in line with the real economy.

It is a catalyst for new ideas; a crucible of ingenuity and creativity; a unifying factor for global human solidarity through science and competence.

**The President of the Conference of University Rectors,  
The Rector of the University of Rome Tor Vergata,  
Eminent Members of the Italian Academic Community,**

I am really pleased to be here, in a country where humanism has a centuries-old history.

As we are all aware, from its distant Indo-European origins, Rome is the undisputed cradle of Greco-Latin civilization. Founded in the 8<sup>th</sup> century B.C., this city is the birthplace and laid the philosophical foundations of Judeo-Christian humanism.

In Cameroon, we appreciate the intellectual wealth and density of this ancient heritage.

It is here in Rome that many artists, thinkers, jurists, architects, orators and strategists, who have been a source of inspiration for the world for centuries, emerged.

The University of Rome Tor Vergata is an epitome of knowledge. From this platform, I pay glowing tribute to these beacons of History. They shone in this city and their genius has illuminated the universe.

I also pay tribute to the medieval scholars who founded the University of Bologna in the 12<sup>th</sup> and 13<sup>th</sup> centuries. In particular, they set up a famous law school. Thanks to them, Italy rose to the forefront of nations that made a decisive contribution to the advent of universities in Europe and the world.

Lastly, I hail the dynamism of university cooperation between Italy and Cameroon. I wish that it grows from strength to strength.

Once more, I wish to express my sincere thanks for this recognition you have so kindly granted to me. The Medal you have awarded me is the strong symbol of such recognition. I wish you every success in your scientific, cultural and intellectual activities.

Long live the University of Rome Tor Vergata!

Long live the Italian academic community!

Long live Italy-Cameroon university cooperation!

Long live friendship between our two countries!

Thank you.