

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

**On the occasion of the State Luncheon offered in Honour of H.E. MOUSSA FAKI
MAHAMAT, Chairperson of the African Union Commission**

Yaounde, 13 July 2018

Mr Chairperson of the African Union Commission,

The Cameroonian people, my wife and myself are very pleased to receive you in Yaounde on the occasion of your maiden visit to Cameroon since your election as Chairperson of the African Union Commission.

I therefore wish you and your delegation a cordial welcome and a pleasant and fruitful stay in Cameroon.

Let me avail myself of this solemn occasion to once again express on my personal behalf and that of the people of Cameroon our heartfelt congratulations on your brilliant election which entrusts you with the responsibility of managing the destiny of the African Union, our prestigious continental organization.

Through me, Cameroon is delighted to see a worthy son of a brotherly, friendly and neighbouring country rise to the important position you now occupy. Rest assured that my country, which feels honoured by your election, as well as the countries of our sub-region will support you in the discharge of your important duties at the service of our continental diplomacy.

Mr Chairperson,

Many threats loom over our continent as we welcome you.

Prominent among them are the socio-political crises and terrorist attacks that are destabilizing our societies, spreading death and causing destruction in our countries. Not only are they slowing down economic and social activities, they are also provoking an influx of refugees and displaced persons.

It is obvious that, to deal with the situation, we need, as much as possible, to pool our resources at the continental level.

That is what Cameroon has resolved to do, alongside its neighbours of the Lake Chad Basin Commission and with the support of the African Union, in order to combat the Boko Haram terrorist organization in the northern part of its territory. In this struggle, we will stand by our international commitments and our values, especially regarding respect for human rights.

Of course, our major concern remains the restoration of peace and return to normalcy in the affected areas. This will enable the populations to resume their activities and refugees and displaced persons to return to their homes.

I am aware, Mr Chairperson, of your determination to walk along the same path by implementing African Union's 2063 Agenda for an integrated, prosperous and peaceful Africa. I believe that all Member States of our organization will embrace this objective.

A special relationship has always existed between Cameroon and our continental organization. After two of its nationals occupied the position of Secretaries-General of the then OAU, my country had the honour of hosting the Summit of Heads of State and Government of our Union in 1996. It is also privileged to host a great number of the organization's bodies and institutions.

Under such conditions, it is understandable that my country makes it a pleasant duty to actively contribute to completing African Union's major projects, especially that which concerns its institutional reform.

In that regard, I would like to commend the achievements that our organization has already made.

I am referring to:

- the introduction of a continental passport;
- the creation of the African Continental Free Trade Area; and
- the institution of a 0.2% tax on imports from non-African countries for the financial empowerment of the African Union.

At a time when the rules of the international system that has been in force over the last years seem to be called into question, and the protectionist trend is being confirmed, it seems to me that Africa's interest lies in closing ranks at the continental and regional levels.

Mr Chairperson,

I would like to conclude by reiterating that your visit gives us real pleasure. Our discussions have deepened my conviction that our organization will make great strides under your stewardship.

You can count on Cameroon in the discharge of your important duties.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would now like to invite you to raise your glasses:

- in honour of the Chairperson of the African Union Commission, His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat;
- to long-lasting relations between the African Union and Cameroon.

Thank you for your attention.