



# CAMEROON



**SIXTY-FIFTH SESSION OF THE UNITED  
NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**  
(September 2010)

**General Debate**

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

**New York, 23rd September 2010**  
**Check at the delivery**

**Mr President,  
Excellencies,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I would like first of all to extend my hearty congratulations to the President of this Sixty-Fifth Session of the United Nations General Assembly on his unanimous election. On account of his rich experience in international affairs, we believe that he will succeed in his task.

I am pleased to pay homage to his predecessor, Dr. Ali Abdussalem Triki, for his commitment and skill in discharging his delicate functions during the previous session. I avail myself of this opportunity to convey to him my special thanks.

I would also like to pay tribute to the Secretary-General, Mr Ban Ki-Moon, and his aides for their untiring efforts at the service of peace and development throughout the world, particularly in the least developed countries.

**Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

As the first decade of the 21<sup>st</sup> century draws to a close, it is certainly not useless to review the ground covered since we proclaimed some ten years ago in this very hall, our common resolve to reduce poverty

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by half worldwide in 2015. We all recall the enthusiasm raised by this solemn commitment.

Today, one is forced to note that we are quite far off the track.

More than one billion people are still living in extreme poverty. The development gap between the North and South continues to widen instead of narrowing. International assistance is stagnating and remains below the level of commitments made by developed countries to devote 0.7% of their GNP to it. The results in the eight priority areas of the Millennium Development Goals are disappointing, and even unsatisfactory, whereas the deadline of 2015 is just around the corner.

What has therefore gone wrong?

The economic crisis caused by the recent upheavals in financial markets is certainly to blame. The slowdown in activities worldwide and recession in some cases monopolized the attention of the countries of the North. They gave priority to the revival of their economies and the resolution of their social problems. However, even though we understand that, it does not explain everything.

In effect, the awareness, at the turn of the last century, of the disastrous consequences of the

deepening poverty in the Third World seems to have waned significantly. Yet, this situation has not only failed to improve, but it continues to deteriorate.

I have, on several occasions, from this rostrum and under other circumstances, drawn the attention of the international community to the problem posed by the increase in poverty worldwide. I pointed out that, for ethical reasons, it obliges all to express solidarity with the most underprivileged. I further indicated that this was, of course, in everyone's interest, for the ever-widening gap between the rich and the poor would only exacerbate tensions and jeopardize international peace and security.

You will, I am sure, understand me for dwelling a bit on the case of Africa. It is undeniably the continent most affected by extreme poverty, which is generally accompanied by food shortages, epidemics, population movements and insecurity. Is it any wonder that such profound misery sometimes reaches explosive proportions, as was the case two years ago during what was dubbed "food riots"?

The international community cannot remain indifferent to this threat that could undermine our efforts to advance democracy and ensure our development.

Let me make myself clear. The aim is not to engage in recrimination for the sake of any ideology, to impute motives on this or that country or group of countries, or to sermonize. I am the first to acknowledge that the United Nations and its agencies have provided assistance and guidance to our continent since independence; that most countries of the North have, through their cooperation, financial assistance and debt cancellation, lent and continue to lend vital support to Africa; that emerging countries have taken over. Of course, we are grateful to all of them.

However, obviously, that is not enough. I am not trying to apportion blame for this state of affairs. I merely want to say that the solutions applied were perhaps not the best. I wish to add that from the African perspective, we have been burdened with too many obstacles over time: slavery, colonization, economic dependence, internal and external conflicts and, of course, that we lacked rigour and the steadiness of mind.

For reasons of mutual interest earlier mentioned, I think we should review the issue thoroughly, without ulterior ideological or prejudiced political or economic motives. No matter what is said, Africa has changed significantly over the last fifty years, and seems to be ready for a broad-based ideological

debate, provided that it is conducted in a true spirit of partnership. It is through this approach that we can realize the famous "Marshall Plan" for Africa, which is often mentioned but is yet to see the light of day.

This concern induced Cameroon to organize an International Conference - Africa 21 - in Yaounde during the celebration of fifty years of its independence. The conference made an objective assessment of the fifty years of independence of African countries as well as of future opportunities for our continent. It was attended by several Heads of State and Government, former Prime Ministers, distinguished representatives of international organizations, world famous experts and major corporate executives as well as Nobel Peace Prize winners.

The final declaration of the Conference which will be made available to you by members of my delegation, can serve as a genuine "guide" for the rehabilitation of Africa, regarding both its economic recovery and its participation in international life. That is what it is all about: ensuring that our continent does not remain forever aid-dependent and that it plays its rightful role in global affairs.

Permit me in this assembly to dwell on the second point. How can we today explain why Africa is the only continent without a Permanent Member on the Security Council? How can we explain that it is unable to make its voice heard when its problems are examined in global economic and financial bodies whereas the decisions taken will be imposed on it? At a time when emerging countries are rightly clamouring for a seat on the Security Council commensurate with their economic and political weight, Africa as a whole should not be forgotten.

Mr President,  
Ladies and Gentlemen,

For a long time, our continent has been treated, I dare say, as an object of international relations. Yet, it is directly concerned by most of the major problems confronting humanity today, be it migratory flows, global warming, economic and financial regulation, terrorism, etc. In short, it is sometimes the victim of phenomena for which it is not responsible. From this standpoint also, there is a need to make progress where major negotiations appear to be bogged down.

Africans seek more understanding and sympathy in the true sense of the term. Indeed, the delayed development they suffer cannot be reduced to the

Millennium Development Goals. Admittedly, they want to come out of poverty, to eat their fill, but above all, to be free from fear and want, to be freer, and to embrace the future without anxiety. In short, they want to live in a society that guarantees them these minimum conditions of existence and wellbeing.

Most African countries have embarked on this path. For its part, Cameroon has, over the last decades, set up representative institutions, established the rule of law and promoted respect for human rights. On the economic and social front, significant progress has been made in the areas of public finance, education and health. Should this trend continue, our country can, in the medium term, attain the status of an emerging country.

That to me seems to be the mindset of most African countries. Certainly, the international community has a role to play in supporting them in their effort to join the mainstream of global society. To that end, it needs to show proof of more understanding, solidarity and, of course, fraternity.

Thank you for your kind attention.-