

Statement by the President-Elect Maurice KAMTO of April 3rd, 2020 on the failure of Mr Paul BIYA, de facto President of the Republic of Cameroon

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My dear compatriots,

The world is at war against a particularly dangerous pandemic which is not sparing our country. We are not talking about war by fashion. We are indeed plunged into a health war which kills and will probably kill more than a conventional armed conflict with the usual weapons. But this is an even more terrible war with unknown targets and victims. While we're still mourning the passing of an icon like Manu DIBANGO, there are many anonymous Cameroonians who are affected and who die from it. Who can guarantee that he or she will be alive after this pandemic? Each Cameroonian who dies from this viral attack is a deep wound for the Nation. So, I feel the duty to draw the attention of, to propose, to call the abandoned Cameroonian people to organise themselves for their SURVIVAL. No matter the criticisms and the insults. What is priceless in my eyes is the life of every Cameroonian, from the biggest to the smallest of them, and our common future as a Nation.

Those who want to exploit the health distress of Cameroonians for political ends are those who:

- Hide behind a ghost Head of State to take measures below the severity of the pandemic and the legitimate expectations of Cameroonians;
- Open the country to the prospect of a health disaster with many victims in order to hope for a "sacred union" which would divert the attention from the Ngarbuh massacres; impose a political silence that would allow them to quietly tinker with a mutual agreement succession for which they are flooding social networks with fake news in order to distract or test the reaction of public opinion;
- Expose Cameroon to an unprecedented economic crisis without comparison with other African countries of similar level affected by the pandemic, but whose Heads of State have taken energetic measures commensurate with the situation. The Cameroonian government probably hopes that a worsening of the situation would get the international community and its creditors feel sorry and would therefore allow the said government to beg for another debt cancellation, while the misappropriation of economic policies following the cancellation of our public debt in 2006 brought many supporters of this initiative to regret its application in Cameroon.

They are not those who:

- call on the *de facto* President of the country to assume his functions as commander-in-chief in the context of a serious health crisis with unforeseeable consequences for national security;
- demand that health and social measures be taken to stop the spread of the virus (the progression of which would be particularly rapid) and not only to slow its course;

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- request that substantial economic, financial and social measures be taken to limit the impact of this dreaded pandemic on economic actors, especially households and businesses, as is done in most severely affected countries;
- call, in the face of the failure of the current Head of State, for a self-organisation of the Cameroonian populations in unflinching solidarity, to triumph in this war which they must now wage themselves.

No hysteria, individual or collective, will divert us from our resolute will to assist Cameroonians in this context of distress.

My dear compatriots,

On Friday March 27th, 2020, I, in all responsibility, called on the *de facto* President of the Republic to personally and directly take in hand the conduct of the war against COVID-19 as required by the Constitution in force in our country.

In all responsibility, drawing the attention of the Cameroonian people and the international community in the face of the incomprehensible silence of Mr BIYA, I urged him within seven (07) days, from the publication of my statement, to address Cameroonians himself, to tell them what his response is against COVID-19 and above all, to mobilise his compatriots in this war against the invisible enemy, by announcing inter alia the means of financing the confinement which is essential as well as the support for households and businesses in order to avoid an economic and social collapse of the country .

The seven days have expired. Mr BIYA did not express himself, nor did he make himself visible. Whatever the reasons, he made his FAILURE evident as the Head of State of Cameroon.

No one is forced to assume duties, especially not those of President of the Republic. But, when one decides to assume them, as a result of a democratic choice or even by an institutional or other coup, the consenting or subjected people have legitimate expectations vis-à-vis the ruler and the right to question his conduct of public affairs. We must get used to it. These are republican demands, except for those who believe they are in a monarchy; which Cameroon is not.

Together we can see the FAILURE of Mr Paul BIYA as President of the Republic, at a time when the Cameroonian people are in dire need of a commander-in-chief. No army can win a war with the sole effigies of a commander-in-chief that the troop neither sees nor hears.

Failing, therefore, for Mr Paul BIYA to assume the presidential functions which he has granted himself since the last presidential election, I call on the Cameroonian people to draw all the consequences from this serious failure; the most immediate is his inability to personally lead the country in the fight against the grave danger of the Coronavirus, which we are witnessing a meteoric progression and its first economic and social consequences.

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I therefore call on Cameroonians to self-organise, as part of a popular initiative dubbed “SURVIE-CAMEROON-SURVIVAL INITIATIVE”. This initiative has three major objectives: first, to help respond to the health emergency; second, to respond to the social and economic impact of the pandemic; and, third, to prepare for the battle of rebuilding communities and the survival of our Nation. More concretely, SURVIE-CAMEROON-SURVIVAL INITIATIVE will contribute to the implementation of the following measures:

1- Health measures

You know that I cherish the health and life of Cameroonians. I would like to solemnly announce to you the measures to be scrupulously respected to protect yourself and all of us against the Coronavirus.

I REQUEST:

1. The populations of the cities of the **Centre, Littoral, West and South-West regions to CONTAIN themselves from April 6th to 21st, 2020 (15 days)**. Staying at home significantly reduces the risk of getting infected and infecting others. Dear brothers and sisters, what is the use of going out tomorrow or the day after tomorrow if that will lead to our death in 3 or 4 weeks? I ask you, in all sincerity, for yourselves, for your children, for your parents, for your wife and your husband, **to STAY AT HOME FOR TWO WEEKS! DO NOT GO OUT AS FROM NEXT MONDAY;**
2. Mass screening of the populations in the regions concerned, which targets, as a matter of priority, all people aged 50 and over;
3. The disinfection of public places, particularly markets and dwellings in popular and non-urbanised neighbourhoods;
4. Systematic wearing of the mask to be adopted by all populations in regions affected by the Coronavirus;
5. Systematic wearing of the mask for all those who have signs of infection (especially coughing) and those who are obliged to leave their homes;
6. Systematic screening of travellers between regions already affected and regions that are not. This measure will also help cut the chain of transmission of the virus. We are fortunate that the South, East, North West, Adamawa, North and Far North regions still seem to be unaffected by the epidemic. We must now prevent the virus from spreading there;

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7. To provide health workers with the daily support they need to deal with this threat. Our doctors, nurses, laboratory assistants, paramedics are the first soldiers in this health war. Many of them get infected every day in hospitals: this is not normal. Our mobilisation must therefore also take into account the needs in our health facilities.
8. To scrupulously comply with the hygiene rules. This measure concerns the inhabitants of all the regions of the country, both the populations in containment and those who are not in containment. Handwashing with soap and water, wearing a mask in public, using hydroalcoholic solution, strict clothing hygiene every time you return home are steps you can take immediately. Let's discipline ourselves. Each of us must make an effort to protect ourselves and others.
9. Of course, I know it is not easy to stay at home when you have to go get something to eat every day. I know that most Cameroonians are not salaried and live from their daily efforts. This is why I think that we must ourselves create the conditions for solidarity with one another in this time of health war against Covid-19. **As I told you before, our main strength will be SOLIDARITY.**
10. **In this spirit, we must organise ourselves to contribute to the SURVIE-CAMEROON-SURVIVAL FUND.**

Our **Grand Mobilisation against the Coronavirus** must make it possible to provide:

- Food and water to people in containment who, to protect us all, are forced to stay home;
- The necessary protective equipment in containment and other localities. We must therefore massively acquire protective masks and hydroalcoholic solution;
- Protective coveralls, infrared thermometers, diagnostic test kits, Respirators, care equipment, medicines for health workers for the therapeutic management of cases.

We must succeed in the **Grand Mobilisation against the Coronavirus**. We have no choice. It is a life and death issue. As of now, I invite each of you to take the action that will allow your country to resist and overcome the Coronavirus pandemic.

2- Social measures

- Water and electricity distribution companies will not have to collect the payment of electricity and water receipts for three months: April, May and June;
- Payment of licenses by carriers is suspended for the same period;

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- Payment of market rights by retail sellers and bayam-salams is suspended;

3- Economic and financial measures for companies

- In order to prevent the economic and financial weight of the fight against Coronavirus from hampering the activities and resources of companies, the main providers of jobs and tax revenue for the State, it is urgent for the Government to open serious discussions with economic stakeholders, all sectors combined, with a view to deciding in a concerted manner a package of financial and fiscal measures to be deployed to support economic activity, and avoid even temporary cessation of activities and *a fortiori* bankruptcy filings.
- If substantial measures are not adopted in this direction by the end of April, businesses will be entitled to stop paying their taxes.

4- Organisational set-up

Survie-Cameroon-Survival Initiative (SCSI) is a gigantic popular organisation of Cameroonians from Cameroon and the Diaspora, which transcends all differences, be they political, ethnic, religious, philosophical, etc. It therefore does not belong to any political party or group. It includes two main levels of organisation and a Fund: The Sponsorship Committee, the Management Committee and the Cameroon Survival Fund.

- The **Sponsorship Committee** is made up of Cameroonian and foreign personalities of all stripes, who by their notoriety, their expertise or their social commitment can give great national and international visibility to this Citizen Initiative, and encourage the support of States, national and foreign personalities, companies and organisations from the non-governmental sector in the survival struggle engaged by the Cameroonian people against COVID-19.
- The **Management Committee** gives strategic impetus and oversees the execution of the fund's operational activities. It ensures the collection of funds and the management of the Initiative through the effective implementation of health, social and other measures adopted within the framework of the SCSI.

It is made up of:

- . The Health Sub-Committee
- . The Social Sub-Committee

- The **Fonds Survie-Cameroon-Survival Fund**

In the interest of politicians to pull the rug out from under us, the Government has seized our idea of mobilising the solidarity of Cameroonians to help finance the national

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response to the Coronavirus. Acting in haste, it created a National Solidarity Fund with an endowment of one billion FCFA. This is mockery vis-à-vis the Cameroonian people, compared to the real needs of the country in this health war, and to the efforts of African countries of comparable level such as Senegal and Côte d'Ivoire, moreover less affected than Cameroon by COVID-19. It is also an indicator of the Cameroonian State's financial bankruptcy.

Having made this observation, I call you, dear compatriots of Cameroon and the Diaspora, to an unprecedented collective effort to contribute to the FONDS SURVIE-CAMEROON-SURVIVAL FUND that I am launching today as part of ***Survie-Cameroon-Survival Initiative***.

The composition of the bodies of *Survie-Cameroon-Survival Initiative (SCSI)* will be the subject of a separate communication.

The website is as follows: www.cameroonsurvival.org

The effective implementation of certain measures to be undertaken within the framework of this Initiative requires the collaboration of public authorities, for example the entry of sanitary equipment and pharmaceutical products. We count on it.

However, I have not overlooked the fact that for lack of having thought and launched this Citizens' Initiative and faced with the vacuum created by the absence of Mr Paul BIYA, the regime could be tempted to do everything to ensure the failure of this initiative. I would like already to call the Cameroonian people and the international public opinion to witness this risk which would be nothing less than criminal behaviour, calling for a consequent reaction on the part of Cameroonians.

We can together ascertain, from the failure of Mr Paul BIYA in this moment of serious crisis where, as Head of State in office, his presence is more than ever required to personally lead the war against COVID-19, a possible incapacity of the President of the Republic under the conditions provided for by the Constitution. I cannot exclude that Mr BIYA is attempting a political manoeuvre he is customary of: spreading the rumour of his own death to try to test the reaction of Cameroonians and then return to display his physical form and to taunt his compatriots; except that it would be a very serious casualness with regard to the imperative of his presence in the dramatic situation in which the country finds itself. But if, within 7 days of the publication of this declaration, the *de facto* President of Cameroon had not given physical proof that it is he who is in charge of the State,

- we would be forced to initiate adequate legal procedures to obtain confirmation, by the competent bodies, of the presidential vacancy and its constitutional consequences;
- I reserve the right to call for more drastic measures.

My dear compatriots,

Our survival as a Nation and as a people is at stake. The unprecedented situation in which we find ourselves calls for an awakening commensurate with the challenges. The Cameroonian

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people have no choice but to take control of their destiny in order to give a chance to their survival which is at stake. I therefore invite you all, once again to discipline, to strictly comply with the preventive measures laid down and to the unreserved involvement of all in the accomplishment of our collective mission:

Let's work to take control of our destiny.

Done at Yaoundé on April 3rd, 2020

The President-Elect



Professor Maurice KAMTO

Amplifications :

- Secretary General / UN
- President / AU
- President of the Commission / AU
- European Parliament
- USA
- France
- Great Britain
- China
- Russia
- Germany
- Canada
- Israel
- UN Commission / Human Rights

Copies

- Presidency of the Republic

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- National Human Rights Commission
- National / international NGOs in charge of Human Rights