



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

GOVERNMENT'S REACTION TO THE 2015 REPORT OF TRANSPARENCY INTERNATIONAL ON CORRUPTION IN CAMEROON

PRESSE CONFERENCE

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT BY
H.E. ISSA TCHIROMA BAKARY
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

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**Distinguished Journalists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

I wish you a warm welcome here, and thank you for accepting my invitation to take part in this exchange with the media.

As you are already aware, the nongovernmental organization, *Transparency International*, published in its last report titled “People and Corruption; Africa Survey 2015”, its annual corruption barometer in which Cameroon is ranked 136th out of 174 countries, which means that it is the fortieth (40th) world most corrupt country.

Transparency International's report indicates that about 44% of the persons surveyed in Cameroon within the framework of its survey, assert that corruption has increased over the last 12 months, and that a high majority (57%) of people surveyed consider that the government is not doing a good job with regard to fighting corruption and in whatsoever the case, has no effect on practices related to corruption in our country.

At the same time and according to this survey, 1 Cameroonian on 2 is said to have paid a bribe in a given public service, to obtain a requested service. According to *Transparency International*, the practice is so common as asserted by those being interviewed to the extent of placing Cameroon as the second largest country in Africa, where the largest number of people must pay a bribe before obtaining a service in a public administration.

**Distinguished Journalists,
Ladies and Gentlemen,**

The facts contained in this report by *Transparency International* are serious and at odds with the reality in our Country. This causes the Government to take the floor to react to what it considers as a dangerous disinformation campaign, with no doubt the intention to seriously harm the image of Cameroon and inhibit the economic construction efforts in which the whole nation is engaged behind the **Head of State, H.E Paul BIYA**.

The Government is therefore reacting not only to denounce this situation, but also to re-establish the truth which *Transparency International* report voluntarily wants to tarnish and alter the perception that Cameroonians and the international community have of our country. Let me begin first by the methodology used by *Transparency International* to establish its peremptory barometer, which, when well appraised, quickly reveals that it is more than random, biased and in any case, fundamentally flawed.

With regard to this methodology, *Transparency International* itself states: it is only, and I quote, a “corruption perception index”, established based on survey interviews carried out on a sample of actors whose representativeness remains questionable.

In other words, what *Transparency International* is trying to present to the public as corruption facts is no more than a mere patchwork of subjective points of view on the nature and the scope of corruption.

It is therefore both logical and obvious that the report submitted by the NGO to constitute a barometer of corruption rely on no reliable statistics in terms of proven facts in the matter, but simply the ideas of just over a thousand people - 1182 to be exact - selected on the basis of who knows what criteria, to deliver their feelings about the situation of corruption in Cameroon.

It is worth laying great emphasis at this level: the survey conducted by Transparency International to peremptorily produce its ranking of Cameroon on corruption, concerns over a thousand of people. We still do not know the method used to come up with this sample.

We are still skeptical on the fact that Transparency International bothered itself to own the structuring indicators of the Cameroonian population at the base, and to identify those of influential leaders whose opinions could be most relevant with respect to practices related to corruption in Cameroon.

What is certain in any case is that the report does not contain any physical facts observed or identified on corruption.

Meanwhile, as I already said above, the report only contained opinions gathered from unknown sources.

However, it is commonplace that opinion is not a fact. One – I mean opinion – is a matter of subjectivity, and the other – I mean fact – claims an amount of rigor and, in any case, an unquestionable objectivity.

What is expressed by *Transparency International* through its report is therefore not a true, reliable and verifiable picture of corruption, but simply a subjective perspective which needs to be proven scientifically. Therefore, going by all these limitations and all these *a priori*, no reasonable spirit should give the least credit to the assertions contained in such a collection of opinions and approximations.

It should be clear that we are not denying the existence of corruption in our country.

Neither are we pretending that Cameroon is an exception to this global scourge that is, no matter what anybody says, a phenomenon that spares no country in the world, be they rich or poor, developed or less developed, from North or South, East or West.

Significant facts that attest to allegations and an overt will to misinform, which suggest heavy suspicion on the sincerity of the information in its report regarding anyway Cameroon, such as those questioning the will and determination of the Government to fight corruption in our country.

The Transparency International report states that a large majority of the population believes that the government of Cameroon is not making enough efforts to fight corruption.

How could it be understood that the will and determination of the Government to fight corruption can for a moment be doubted by anyone living in Cameroon, or those just listening to the news on Cameroon?

For, in contrast to these pseudo-statistics contained in the report of Transparency International, and presented by the NGO as a gospel truth, the facts itself are ungrounded, which indicate quite the opposite.

First, the concern of the highest authorities of the Republic against the phenomenon of corruption is not new.

Since his accession to the helm of the Nation on 6 November 1982, the Head of State has made the fight against corruption and misappropriation of public funds a constant orientation of his policy, as clearly emphasized in his different addresses to the Nation.

Thus, in his very first inauguration speech before parliamentarians at the National Assembly on 6 November 1982, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA set the course for this relentless fight against all managers who misappropriate public funds in the following terms and I quote:

« In these tough times we are going through, the great and long process of nation building implies... rigor in management and perseverance in effort against maneuvers of demoralization, demobilization and destabilization ».

Since then, he has kept reasserting his firm commitment to taking repressive action against acts of corruption and embezzlement of public funds. In his end of year address to the nation on 31st December 2005, the Head of State, in a peremptory tone, firmly denounced and condemned this social ill, in the following words :

« The embezzlement of public funds is detrimental to the national community. Let me very solemnly say it today, that it must stop », end of quote.

In the same vein, in his communication during the Ministerial Council of 12 September 2007, the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul BIYA, reiterated his determination to fight this ill. Let me quote him again:

« The embezzlement of public funds, no matter which form it may take, is a crime against the People that are being deprived of their resources. This must therefore be severely sanctioned », end of quote.

This determination, which, as we have just seen, is not an improvisation in the political governance of the President of the Republic, has resulted in the creation of several institutions invested, each as it is concerned, with accurate missions and equipped with the means to systematically track down those who embezzle public funds.

It is in this light that the actions of the Supreme State Audit are vital as it officiates as the policeman or the secular arm of the State, to monitor the proper management of public funds.

In the same vein and as far as the specific domains of money laundering and corruption are concerned, the National Financial Investigation Agency (ANIF) and the National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC) were set up in May 2005 and March 2006 respectively.

In the area of public contracts, a department was created to ensure transparency in the public contract award process to work closely with the Public Contract Regulatory Board.

In judicial matters, a Special Criminal Court (SCC) was set up by virtue of Law n°2001/028 of 14 December 2011.

In the month of May 2013, a specialized Corps of Judicial Police Officers of the Special Criminal Court was created to conduct investigations related to affairs under the competence of the Special Criminal Court.

Moreover, the modalities for the paying back of the *corpus delicti* are established by Decree No. 2013/228 of 04 September 2013 and paved the way to end lawsuit in case of embezzlement of public funds.

To date, there are at the level of Special Criminal Court, 129 investigation files forwarded to the Specialized Corps of judicial police officers of the Special Criminal Court; 115 cases examined out of 123 indictments; 146 sentences of imprisonment with fines and court costs, without distinction of political label, socio-professional status or hierarchical position in the State apparatus; 40 non-established cases pronounced; 78 acquittals; 41 decisions of non-suits, with over three billion CFA francs refunded under the corpus delicti; and almost 30 billion of Swiss francs in damages pronounced in compensation for damages suffered by the State.

Regarding the Supreme State Audit, the Budgetary and Financial Disciplinary Board inflicted since 2011, about 110 sanctions for dishonesty in the management of State funds, with debits for an accrued amount of 44 billion 313 million 657 thousand 019 francs CFA, as well as special fines amounting to 150 million CFA francs, and even several disqualifications.

As for the Ministry of Public Contracts, the systematic application of the principles of equal treatment of bidders and the free access to bid for public contracts, has worked to achieve between 2013 and 2015, a substantial budget savings of about 300 billion CFA francs.

The decline of mutual agreements procedures in public contracts has brought the proposal of this derogating modality from 30% to 10% over the same period.

Furthermore, the implementation of a strategy to monitor the execution of public contracts, has allowed to achieve budget savings in the execution of public contracts to the tune of nearly 40 billion CFA francs over the last three years.

Moreover, many sanctions were taken against the perpetrators of bad practices in the public contract sector.

In this respect, 21 companies and 121 individuals were punished up to radiation and permanent exclusion from the public contract process.

Regarding the specific case of the police, disciplinary sanctions for acts of corruption established against several officials of this body over the last five years were pronounced, including 52 dismissals, 40 degradation in grades, 15 degradations in incremental positions,

41 delays in advancements, 33 layoffs without consideration, 26 blames recorded in their files, 07 queries and 04 radiation from the promotion list.

It is also noted that 105 police officers were suspended from duty before being summoned by the National Security Disciplinary Commission against Corruption.

We should also note the calls denouncing acts of corruption that are launched by various administrations with free calls, such as police numbers; 1500; and the following numbers; 288 20 06 06/673 20 57 25/699 37 07 48/663 49 28 21 for the Ministry of Public Contracts in particular.

With respect to the Anti-Corruption Commission, its action has allowed to date to recover 50 billion CFA francs of funds distracted for several reasons from State coffers.

Dear Journalists,

Dear Guests,

The presentation I have just made are the results achieved by the Government in the fight against corruption which cannot be exhaustive.

Its aim is only to showcase the ever increasing commitment and effectiveness of governments efforts against the scourge of corruption in our country.

It also helps to expose the counter truth which some actors like Transparency International are trying to pass through in this case, who

are unfortunately aided by some compatriots from civil society, as well as some national media.

I would like to assure everyone that the Government remains open to collaborate with partners of good will and good faith, willing to accompany the Government in its fight against corruption in this country.

We are convinced that such synergies would be a more effective contribution to the just cause of protecting the public good, by avoiding misinformation and willful alteration of truth in which Transparency International has once more submitted the Cameroonian public opinion.

The Government remains confident on the responsibility of our peoples, that of the various national actors and the international community for their commitment to stand by our country in achieving its goal of emergence by 2035.

Thank you for your kind attention