

RÉPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROUN

Paix – Travail- Patrie

MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION

REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON

Peace- Work- Fatherland

MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

CAMPAIGN ORCHESTRATED BY SOME FOREIGN MEDIA ON HOMOSEXUALITY IN CAMEROON

PRESS BRIEFING

**INTRODUCTORY STATEMENT OF HIS EXCELLENCY ISSA
TCHIROMA BAKARY
MINISTER OF COMMUNICATION**

Yaoundé January 23, 2014

**The Secretary General of the Ministry of
Communication,**

The Inspector General,

Technical Advisers,

Distinguished Inspectors,

Distinguished Directors and Head of Division,

Dear Collaborators,

Fellow Journalists,

Dear Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are once again compelled to meet here this afternoon to throw more light on a topical issue relating to false allegations levied against Cameroon, which is making news these last days.

Before getting into the core of the matter, permit me to first wish you all a warm welcome in the conference hall of my ministry, which has become the usual venue of our meetings.

I thank you to have, as usual, promptly responded to the invitation I sent you just twenty-four hours ago. Your reaction

is a translation of the permanent interest you showcase in serving the public with reliable information.

Let me seize the opportunity offered by this first meeting of the year to wish you all a Happy New Year 2014.

Distinguished journalists, Ladies and Gentlemen,

For the past two weeks, our country has become the target of some foreign media and lobbies, which seem to have made the advocacy for and promotion of homosexuality, their permanent business asset.

Once again, Cameroon is accused at the international level to be homophobic due to its stance on the issue of homosexuality in our country, as was already the case in July 2013 after the death of Mr. LEMBEMBE OHENA Eric Hubert, presented to be a graphic designer-journalist and activist for the defense of the rights of homosexuals.

From the stand point of our critics, this position, which is said to be “homophobic”, is characterized by the criminalization of homosexuality by our laws and the social perception of these practices in Cameroon.

Still according to our critics, this social perception is carefully orchestrated and encouraged by public authorities who continue to keep silent despite the repeated appeals from those they present as the international community.

By so denying homosexuals the right to fully and freely enjoy their sexuality, in as much as they willfully consent to this sexual orientation, Cameroon is alleged to be one of the worst dictatorial countries where no Human Right is respected.

As you may probably be all aware, special video reports, systematically broadcast recently by some international media, persistently relay this view of things as perceived from abroad and which is also internally relayed by some members of the civil society. Fortunately, these members of the civil society constitute a minority and do not seem to be real advocates of homosexuality, but people trying to take advantage of the situation to draw some benefits.

As it appears, such maneuvers are overtly a kind of media lynching which aim at trampling on the fundamental values of

our society and questioning our country's commitment to the universal cause embodied in the respect of human rights.

This media lynching, which occurs intermittently, but seemingly at a planned pace, has recently resurfaced following the death, on January 10, 2014, of Mister Roger Jean-Claude MBÉDÉ, who was prosecuted for homosexuality.

Faced with these facts, which are far away from the truth, and which jeopardize our national sovereignty and contribute to tarnishing the image of our country abroad, the Government decided to clearly, precisely and unambiguously reaffirm the position of our country with regard to the issue of homosexuality.

Firsty, homosexuality constitutes an offence punished by Article 347 (bis) of the Cameroon Penal Code, which states and I quote : "Whoever has sexual relations with a person of the same sex shall be punished with imprisonment from six months to five years and fine of from 20,000 to 200,000 francs", end of quote.

These provisions of our positive law portray the socio-cultural predispositions of our population who reject such practices.

In fact, it has been proven worldwide that laws always derive from common will and common sense. To remain legitimate, the law must necessarily fall within a context; or because it is accepted, it provides itself guarantees for its own implementation.

Moreover, just like law, doctrine and jurisprudence, custom constitutes one of the irrefutable sources of law.

From the many socio-cultural predispositions which sustain the socialization process of individuals and their *raison-d'être* within communities, there is spirituality of which religion is an inspiration and expression framework.

In our country, where almost 90 % of the population belong to one of the major religious groups, namely Christianity and Islam, none of these religious groups acknowledges homosexuality. To the contrary, their respective histories echo some repulsive and sometimes violent reactions against these practices.

Furthermore, it is established that our Constitution, in other words our fundamental law, protects and promotes the family, which it considers as the “natural basis of human society.”

However, no family, *stricto sensu*, – this same family which represents the basic unit of the State – as I was saying, would ever pretend to exist or to be sustained, within the State, beyond the natural complementarity which is embodied in the affective and reproductive dialectic of humankind between a man and a woman.

The foregoing is the legal instrument, its socio-cultural foundation and the social perception of the issue of homosexuality in Cameroon.

Secondly, it is worth mentioning that, despite the penal nature of the law criminalizing homosexuality, there is no judicial persecution against this category of persons in our country.

As a matter of fact, many well-known homosexuals live and move around in all freedom in Cameroon, without been systematically prosecuted before competent courts of the Republic.

Some of our compatriots have even made the apology of this illegal practice their main business and certainly their daily bread, without even being prosecuted.

One could even notice a relative smoothness in the judicial management of this offence. In fact, there is almost no jurisprudence evidencing the sentencing of a homosexual to the maximal punishment prescribed by the law, or if so, none of the accused has ever fully served his term of prison.

The view trying to assert that homosexuals are systematically and constantly tracked down in Cameroon is therefore ungrounded, as well as all other allegations tending to make people believe that crimes or attacks perpetrated against homosexuals remain unpunished, whereas their authors benefit from a passive protection from public authorities.

Such a usual extrapolation in the treatment of this situation by foreign media could therefore only reflect a bias, conjecture and, what is more, a negative speculation.

We can even wonder on the lightness and even superficial nature of the analysis made by these media, allegedly professionals.

You are all aware of the determination with which the different reports on this issue, as long as it concerns Cameroon, fail to integrate socio-anthropological factors in the hostility of the majority of our populations against homosexuality.

This tendency of manipulating public opinion is also perceptible with regard to the pretended universal acknowledgement of the rights of homosexuals.

Some pertinent examples, derived from countries said to be sensibly emancipated on the issue, sufficiently indicate that this is not always the truth, as reported by international media and some influential opinion leaders of the western world.

These foreign media intentionally fail to indicate that, to date, only seventeen States out of the fifty making up the United States of America have made it up to the legalization of homosexual marriage. In the United Kingdom of Great Britain

and Northern Ireland, only two (02) out of four (04) countries have legalized such practice.

With regard to France, where for centuries, homosexuality was considered as the ever worst abomination to exist in human society, it lasted until the eighties to witness a legal acknowledgement of homosexuality. In effect, in this country, known to be one of the most democratic, homosexuality has always been radically dealt with. For instance, under the presidency of Général Charles de Gaulle in 1960, just to consider the most recent example, an amendment of MP Paul MIRGUET meant to treat homosexuality as a societal scourge, and fully empowered the government to earnestly fight it.

Eight (08) years later, in 1968, France adopted the classification by the World Health Organisation (WHO) admitting homosexuality as a mental disease.

In the same vein, for the adoption of the law legalizing this practice in 1982, heated debates arose in the French

Parliament, resulting in the failure of the Joint Committee set up to this effect.

Today still, this issue is not fully agreed upon within the French society, despite the adoption of the Taubira law legalizing homosexual marriage, as evidenced by the many and virulent protests which arose during the process of adopting this law.

It is therefore crystal clear that before reaching the level where they are today in the consideration of homosexuality, countries acknowledging it as a normal practice, went a long way through centuries of history.

It is worth mentioning that to date, from the figures at our disposal, seventy-eight countries continue to consider homosexuality as an offense, and in some ten countries it is considered as a crime worthy of death penalty.

This was the view expressed by the **Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA**, to the French press during his working visit to France in January 2013, when he stated that mentalities could improve. However, nobody can foretell at

this point in time, the move of such an evolution, should it come to happen.

As it is, the underlying truth is that, presently, homosexuality remains an offence in our country, considered as such and punished by the law, not leaving aside the fact that populations are strongly against it and are ready neither to accept nor tolerate it.

Foreign countries, which are our friends, should therefore understand it as such.

This is an issue of mutual respect and consideration to our socio-cultural specificity and national sovereignty.

Thank you very much for your kind attention.