



MINISTÈRE DE LA COMMUNICATION
MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATION

UPDATE ON THE COLLAPSE OF THE ROADWAY ON THE YAOUNDÉ-DOUALA HIGHWAY AND THE ESÉKA RAILWAY ACCIDENT OF OCTOBER 21, 2016

PRESS CONFERENCE

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

Yaoundé, October 25, 2016

Distinguished Journalists,

Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

As you are already aware, Cameroon has, over the past few days, witnessed two unfortunate events which affected the smooth running of activities in our country and left several families bereaved.

The first event occurred in the night between October 20 and 21, 2016, on the National Road No.3, commonly known as “The Yaoundé-Douala Highway”.

This involved the collapse of the roadway following the sweeping away of a metallic nozzle buried across the road at Kilometer 68, in the locality of Manyä, at Matomb in the Nyong-and-Kelle Division, while this zone was witnessing heavy rainfalls which increased the flow of the river that the affected nozzle was protecting.

This collapse of the roadway directly caused the total interruption of traffic on the Yaoundé-Douala highway.

Fortunately, no loss in human lives or casualties were recorded.

The second event occurred early in the afternoon on Friday, October 21, when Train No. 152 commonly known as “Intercity”

was involved in a ghastly accident while crossing Eséka, the chief town of the Nyong-and-Kellé Division, causing the uncoupling of several wagons which eventually left the railway and fell on the sides.

Unfortunately, this accident claimed the lives of 76 persons and left 599 others wounded.

As far as the collapse of the roadway on the Yaoundé-Douala Highway is concerned, the emergency action to be taken was to restore traffic in the best security conditions and within the shortest timeframe.

The solution chosen was to set up a simple, effective and appropriate structure over the river.

It was therefore decided by the relevant services of the Ministry of Public Works, under the leadership of the Minister, to build a temporary structure at the road breaking point.

This system, put in place by experts of the Ministry of Public Works, with the support of the National Civil Engineering Laboratory, consisted in removing the damaged nozzle and placing a resistant housing made of a 40 feet-container open on both ends

and long enough to secure the 7 meter-width necessary for two-way traffic, possibly with a safety reserve to serve as roadside.

Due to the structural insufficiency of the container's rigidity, the technicians decided to isolate and protect it against dynamic and cyclical charges through a mixed layer of metal bars and steel beams resting on sufficiently compacted backfills.

The top end of this structure has been eventually covered by some conveniently compacted crushed material to allow the easy passage of vehicles and pedestrians.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen, these are some of the technical elements which allow to appreciate the viability of the emergency solution put in place by the technical services of the Ministry of Public Works, who mobilized all available materials, equipment and human resources both at the level of devolved structures around the area of disaster, and at the level of the National Park of Civil Engineering Equipment-Matgenie.

In addition to this emergency solution, a reinforced concrete hydraulic structure shall in the days ahead be built in lieu of the temporary structure that has just been set up. This will be a simple

or double culvert depending on the extent of the major waterbed and on the water flow through the final structure.

For this purpose, a by-pass road shall be built for a temporary secured lane which will be used by vehicles and pedestrians during the construction phase of the final structure. The itinerary of this 15-kilometer by-pass road has already been identified.

Meanwhile, it is important to commend the quick reaction of the Government and the efficiency of its action to restore traffic on the Yaoundé-Douala Highway following the incident of the night between Thursday and Friday.

Everyone will notice that, contrary to the gravity of the damages which one would have imagined, this return to normal was done under extremely short notice, that is to say, within 24 hours after the collapse of the road.

With regard to the tragedy following the train accident which occurred in Eséka, the mobilization of the government was so immediate.

On special instructions of **His Excellency, the President of the Republic**, the Prime Minister, Head of Government, immediately

after the accident occurred, convened a crisis meeting which ended up with the setting up of a crisis unit.

A delegation led by the Minister of Transport and made up of the Minister of Public Health, the Minister delegate to the Minister of Territorial Administration and Decentralization and the Secretary of State for Defence in charge of the National Gendarmerie, visited the site of the tragedy in order to assess the situation at hand and take emergency measures in terms of provision of care to victims and moral support to afflicted families.

The Minister Delegate at the Presidency in charge of Defence has deployed considerable means in terms of personnel, material and various equipment on the scene of the accident, and has taken appropriate measures to ensure order with the setting up of a fail-safe in order to ease the work of rescuers, preserve the traces and indices for internal investigation purposes, prevent the stealing and looting of property, ensure order on the site and regulate traffic to avoid further accidents.

The Minister of Defence also provided airway transport for High Ranking Officials dispatched for the coordination of operations on

the field, for medical staff with their service equipment, and for firefighters.

The 21st Regiment of Military Engineering was also put at work with all its heavy duty operational equipment, especially cranes and rescue shears.

Units of the Douala, Édéa and Yaoundé military hospitals were put on duty with their means of transport, to ease the evacuation of the wounded capable of travelling on vehicles.

The staff of the Department of Military Health and of the Division of Operational Health actively took part in rescue operations, in order to ensure the safety of the wounded.

With regard to the public health sector, which ensured the coordination of the operational action of the health coverage after the accident, the case management of patients started at the Éséka District Hospital before being extended to three other health units, especially those of Mère Theresa, Miséricorde, and the Urban Health Centre, under the remote monitoring of the Regional Delegate of Public Health for the Centre.

At about 3 p.m. on Friday, a multidisciplinary team of 25 health personnel (medical doctors, emergency staff and nurses) with a

medicalized ambulance and drugs from the Édéa Annex Regional Hospital and the Pouma District Hospital arrived on the spot to reinforce the case management through the sorting out of the wounded and the beginning of emergency surgery operations.

At 4.30 p.m, a more sustained support came from Douala with fire fighters and *Cameroon Assistance*, a private unit contracted by CAMRAIL.

At about 5.30 p.m. on this same Friday, a team of health personnel made up of surgeons, intensive care doctors and anesthetists, as well as drugs and traumatology medical equipment were made available on the scene of accident.

The organization of evacuations was carried out throughout the night to Douala through ambulances, buses and personal cars, as well as to Yaoundé in a train specially made available by CAMRAIL.

As far as casualties are concerned, it is worth noting that **599** wounded persons were recorded on the day of the accident, and were dispatched to different health units as follows: 473 in the Édéa District Hospital; 22 in Mère Teresa Health Unit; 25 in Miséricorde Health Unit; 79 in the Urban Health Centre.

To date, **368** injured persons continued to receive treatment in the Douala, Édéa and Yaoundé Health Centres, whereas **231** persons with minor injuries have immediately gone back to their homes after receiving treatment in Éséka on the day of the accident.

Units to welcome families and provide psychological care were set up at the level of each hospital.

With regard to the withdrawal of corpses, a related protocol was established by the Minister of Public Health, pursuant to which claimants and beneficiaries should bring along originals and photocopies of their identification documents as well as any other official document capable of testifying the family relationship with the deceased (marriage or birth certificate or any other document).

As far as unidentified corpses are concerned, they are submitted to an identification procedure in the presence of at least 3 members of the requesting family.

For each corpse, the doctor in charge of the mortuary service shall issue a certificate indicating the nature of death to the family.

The operational emergency centre based at the Department of Fight against Diseases is available to provide information on this situation. The toll-free number is **1510**.

As you are all aware, the **Head of State** has prescribed that the treatment given to the wounded should be totally cost free and decreed a National Day of Mourning on October 24, 2016.

This national mourning day as you could notice, took place in an atmosphere of peace, fervency and spiritual communion throughout the national territory.

The **President of the Republic** reiterates his most heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families as well as his compassion and wishes of a speedy recovery to the various wounded.

That was, **Distinguished Journalists**, the substance of the update which I wanted to give to you on the two sorrowful events that our country witnessed within just 24 hours.

Thank you for your kind attention.