

**Speech Tuesday 17<sup>th</sup> October 2023 during the working visit of Minister Elanga Obam George (MINDDEVEL)**

- ✓ The Minister of Decentralization and Local Development,
- ✓ The Representative of State, Governor of the North-West Region,
- ✓ Honorable Senators
- ✓ Honorable Members of the National Assembly,
- ✓ Esteemed Professor, Vice Chancellor University of Bamenda,
- ✓ The Public Independent Conciliator,
- ✓ Their lordships President of the North-West Court of Appeal, Attorney General and President of the administrative Court,
- ✓ The Generals and valiant military and security forces,
- ✓ Honorable members of the Regional Executive Council,
- ✓ Honorable Royal Highnesses, Members of the North-West Regional Assembly House of Chiefs,
- ✓ Honorable Members of the North-West Assembly House of Divisional Representatives,
- ✓ The Senior Divisional Officer MEZAM,
- ✓ Director Generals and General managers,
- ✓ Regional Delegates and Heads of regional bodies,
- ✓ The President, North-West section, Union of Cameroon Cities and Councils
- ✓ The Bamenda City Mayor,
- ✓ Distinguished Mayors of the North-West Region,
- ✓ Consultants to the Assembly,
- ✓ Representatives of Civil Society Organizations,,

- ✓ Members of the press and Communication organs,
- ✓ All protocol duly observed
- ✓ Distinguished Guests
- ✓ Ladies and Gentlemen,

Good morning,

Mr Minister, welcome at last to Bamenda, the North-West Region bastion of our political history. It is also the region of the future, the hope and promise of the new Cameroon HE President Paul BIYA promised Cameroonians in December 2019 following the landmark law instituting the general code for regional and local authorities. Mr Minister of Decentralization and local development, you have longed to visit since the installation of the Regional Executive Council in January 2021. You even programmed to launch our Regional Development plan shortly thereafter, but your very charged calendar would not permit you to visit the scenic North-West, Alps of Africa! Here we are today to witness the joint session of the Regional Assembly, the people's bicameral institution made up of the 70 member House of Divisional Representatives and the 20 member House of Chiefs, a special status distinction of the North- West and South-West Regions. So special we are, the only region with two lady commissioners baby-sitting our very delicate social sectors of health and education where you'd reckon they are making commendable strides!

How happy we are to have you together, our Representative of State and titular Ministry in session with us, a never to forget event in the annals of our region. This region, which from the ashes and pain of conflict is poised to rise to the gains of its destiny. The epic rise of the PWD social club from the despair of impending relegation to the hope and promise of the Cameroon cup finals; the ever-improving steady rise in enrolment and performance of our children in school augurs well for our region. This explains the institution and induction of the best secondary

school students into the regional academic honour roll from the 2022/2023 school year. This is a sure way to boost performance, nay excellence today so that tomorrow we will have many more professor Rose LEKEs, a daughter of the region, recipient of the coveted Virchow's price in Germany four days ago for her exploits in vaccinology and public health. May her example inspire the girl, the woman, and the vulnerable to work toward the promise of a greater destiny for humanity!

During this September 2023 session, we will revisit the mileage covered so far focusing on making our communities cleaner, safer, more secure and healthier.

There is no gainsaying that the key to the peace so sought after is education; more enrolment and improved quality especially in the professional, science and technology departments! Whereas more children are going to school this academic year, vigilance to rid schools of violence, drugs and arms is ever so pressing. Notwithstanding, the sporadic horrors and terror like the recent assassinations in Guzang, the voyage to peace is a steady no return journey. Let us rise for a minute of silence in memory of the departed victims of this asymmetric war! May the souls of the departed rest in peace as the living harvest peace and solace! We laud the increasing collaboration between the citizens and security forces that is yielding tangible results. As this growing partnership, secures our communities, an enabling environment is created for the activities within our Peace and Development Initiative. An update of community driven high intensity labour activities in our sub-divisions is on the menu of this session. The voices of the community are captured in the 5th edition of the North-Westerner magazine. The steady increase in employment, albeit temporary, re-establishment of village markets and local economies are non-negligible outcomes of the PDI. An interesting indicator of the changing tide is the number of beneficiaries (workers) who are compensated for community labour region-wide. This falls in line with government pro-poor policy for the poorest in our urban and rural communities. The

PDI brings together all stakeholders, in a bid to count and count on everyone as in "U na Mi, Mi na U, Wi bi Wi"! We thank all actors in the Peace and Development Committees, for harmony, love and compassion will surely be our portion as we share lives evermore! Being one another's keeper and building trust is the recipe for sustained peace.

Another key indicator of progress on the road to peace is school attendance. This was addressed yesterday as well as progress on the economic front with the Customs clearing house, baby steps in the development of the Regional Eco-Industrial Park, of the North-West Development and Investment Fund which also presented.

We certainly will not be presenting a balance sheet this time. Truth be told, the environment sector has been enriched with tree planting in sacred forests, to stem landslides, to stabilize marshy areas, as fire and wind breakers, all in our modest effort to fight climate change and boost the local economy. In the sphere of tourism and leisure, the rehabilitation of palaces and museums, and maintenance of sacred forests of our traditional kingdoms is dear to our traditional rulers and communities. In partnership with the UNDP of the Presidential Plan for Reconstruction and Development, we carry out joint planning and monitoring of projects to prone efficiency and avoid duplication.

Mr Minister, the Representative of State, Honourable Ladies and Gentlemen, as we wait for passage of the law on revenue collection in the region by parliament, we anchor our development paradigm on the customs and culture of the region. It is in this regard that we promote the arts and craft industry, look around and savour the sturdy, beautifully crafted bamboo chairs, furniture by our youth. The ingenuity and proverbial industry of our communities will be unleashed with transfer of powers and competences in the arts, craft, culture, small and medium size industries! We are glad and comforted with the space created in the market place by the import substitution

policy of the President of the Republic. With gentle persuasion to consume what we produce and a shift in mind set, we are certain to put the region on the rails to economic emancipation!

Mr Minister, the Representative of state, honourable ladies and gentlemen,

While it may be understandable that the region is going about its business as expected, and that the local/regional public service is expected soon, the embargo on recruiting staff compels it to rely on voluntary staff. This is a management risk as their statutory yearly turnover doesn't augur well for sustained outcomes. We are confident you can and will provide a solution to this aching human capital issue.

Once more, thank you for coming. The welcome with peace plants was more than a symbol, their male and female varieties depict union for; together we are stronger, together we are better and together we will go further. As the harbinger of good tidings, please relay to government and the father of the land, the President of the Republic, Head of State, His Excellency Paul BIYA that your brothers and sisters of the North-West are resilient in the hope of a better tomorrow under his stewardship.

Long live Decentralization and Local Development,  
Long live the North-West Region,  
Long live the peoples of a one and indivisible Cameroon.