

CAMEROON NATIONAL DAY CELEBRATION 2023

(Riyadh, Cultural Palace, Sunday 21st May 2023,)

Declaration of the H.E. IYA TIDJANI, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Republic of Cameroon in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

His Highness Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz bin Ayyaf, Mayor of Riyadh

His Excellency, the Dean of Diplomatic Corps,

Excellencies Ambassadors, Heads of Diplomatic Missions and International Organisations,

Distinguish Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great pleasure and honor that the Embassy of Cameroon, my wife and I welcome you to the Cultural Palace as Cameroon celebrates its 51st National Day, which holds every May 20th. You will no doubt understand that this slight shift in the celebration here in Riyadh is due to the coincidence of this event with Saturday, which is a weekend in Saudi Arabia.

*First of all, I would like from the bottom of my heart to thank **His Highness Prince Faisal bin Abdulaziz bin Ayyaf** for kindly gracing this ceremony with his esteemed presence despite his busy schedule. This undoubtedly testifies to the excellent relations of cooperation that exist between the Republic of Cameroon and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.*

*Indeed, since 1966, the year when Diplomatic Relations between the two countries were established, these relations have continued to deepen and cooperation has diversified for the mutual benefit of the two peoples. Thanks to the will, repeatedly reaffirmed, of **His Excellency Paul BIYA**, Head of State of Cameroon and of His Majesty **King SALMAN Bin Abdulaziz Al Saud**, Servant of the Two Holy Mosques and of the Crown Prince, Prime Minister, His Royal Highness **MOHAMED BIN SALMAN**, a new dawn was reached with the signing **on November 21, 2021**, in Yaoundé of the General Cooperation Agreement between the Republic of Cameroon and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. This important text will undoubtedly considerably boost the excellent historical relations that exist between our two countries, particularly in the areas of investment, trade, mining, agriculture, tourism, sports and the fight against terrorism. This agreement therefore opens great prospects for cooperation between Cameroon and Saudi Arabia, especially as it reinforces the Air*

Agreement signed between our two countries on March 7, 2017, thus paving the way for the acceleration and expansion of trade and tourism between Cameroon and the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

I take this opportunity to reiterate to Saudi businessmen, Saudi companies in the public and private sectors that the Embassy is entirely at their disposal to facilitate contacts with their counterparts in Cameroon and to provide them with useful information on the business environment in Cameroon or on tourist attractions of this cosmopolitan country, located in the heart of Africa and rightly called "Africa in miniature".

All the geographical and cultural characteristics of the various African countries are found in Cameroon: the thick green forest, the numerous rivers, the waterfalls and lakes, the black and white sand beaches, the savannah and Sahelian landscapes and a chain mountain range stretching from the Atlantic Ocean to Lake Chad. Cameroon has more than 250 ethnic groups with different languages, living together peacefully, in diversity and solidarity.

Economically, Cameroon represents, as you know, 40% of the economy of the Central African sub-region, with an incentive investment code, designed to provide basic guarantees to investors such as free repatriation of capital/profit and access to land ownership. Our soil and subsoil are all very rich in wood, diamonds, bauxite, nickel, gold and other minerals. In addition, we have a booming tourism sector. It is a country that must be visited, as a tourist or as an investor.

**Your Highness;
Excellencies;
Ladies and gentlemen ;**

*Since 2014, Cameroon has been facing, like other African countries in the Sahelo-Saharan zone, terrorist attacks perpetrated by the BOKO HARAM Group, particularly in the Far North region of the country. However, thanks to the enlightened leadership of the HEAD OF STATE, **His Excellency PAUL BIYA**, and the combined strategy of the defense forces of the countries of the sub-region and thanks to the support of international partners, the fire power of this terrorist group has been considerably reduced. Weakened, BOKO HARAM is however not completely destroyed. From now on, it is limited to carrying out sporadic attacks in rural areas. But, each time, our valiant security forces have successfully repelled them and even neutralized the attackers.*

On another front, the North-West and South-West regions of Cameroon also used to be attacked by secessionist groups who, under false pretexts of

trade union complaints, killed innocent civilians, burned schools and hospitals and destroyed the property. Our **HEAD OF STATE enjoined** the Government to organize a Major National Dialogue in September-October 2019 to bring lasting solutions to this situation. Since then, the majority of fighters have laid down their arms. The defense and security forces have, however, remained deployed in these areas to protect the people and their property, and ensure the maintenance of order and security.

The Government also launched a "disarmament, demobilization and reintegration" (DDR), program for both ex-combatants of BOKO HARAM and those of secessionist groups, to promote their return to civilian life, through programs and projects aimed at facilitating their socio-economic reintegration. I take this opportunity to express our gratitude to all our partners who have supported the Government in this process. I would also like to thank countries which, like the United States of America, have decided to bring to justice those who live on their territories and fund the secessionist groups.

Your Highness;
Excellencies;
Ladies and gentlemen;

Saudi Arabia is a faithful friend and a major player in International Relations, as is sufficiently confirmed by the eminent role that this country is playing in the world economy, the solidarity and cohesion of the Ummah, the fight against terrorism, the promotion of peace and stability in the Middle East and beyond. We share similar points of view on major international issues and consult each other regularly. It is in this context that **His Excellency MBELLA MBELLA**, Minister of External Relations of Cameroon received **His Highness, Prince FAISAL BIN FARHAN BIN ABDULLAH**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia during the friendship and working visit to Cameroon in October 2020.

I would like to express the Cameroonian Government's gratitude to the Saudi authorities for the multifaceted support they are providing to my country, through the Saudi Development Fund and the Saudi medical caravan which, since the year 2000, has been sent every year to the Cameroon to bring medical care to the population. Moreover, a joint medical team from **the AI BALSAM Organization** and the **King SALMAN Center for Aid and Humanitarian Action** is currently in Cameroon, within this framework.

Your Highness;
Excellencies;

Ladies and gentlemen;

*Before concluding my remarks, I would like to reiterate our thanks to the highest Saudi authorities, in particular **His Majesty King SALMAN BIN ABDOULAZIZ AL SAUD**, Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques and Crown Prince **MOHAMMED BIN SALMAN**, Prime Minister, for all the commendable actions that they have initiated in favor of the Hajj both in terms of organization and infrastructure.*

I would also like to thank the authorities of the Saudi Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the officials of the Diplomatic Quarter who kindly offered the beautiful facilities of the Palace of Culture to us for the celebration of this ceremony.

thank you colleagues Ambassadors, Heads of Missions and Representatives of International Organisations. Thank you all for joining us today to celebrate the Cameroon national Day

Long live Cameroon-Saudi Arabia Cooperation;

Long live international cooperation;

Thank you for your kind attention.

shukran lakum

Thank you very much