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CAMEROON

FEBRUARY UNREST: CAUSALITIES, IMPLICATIONS AND WAY FORWARD

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1. INTRODUCTION

Dust is settling following violent protests that swept across Cameroon's main cities of Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam, Kumba, Bamenda, Buea, Njombe-Penja, Obala and other localities in the usually renowned political hotspots of the country February 23-27, 2008. The riots led mostly by disaffected youths of the 'Biya generation' came in the heels of a transporters' union strike against the soaring pump price of fuel. Human Rights groups now say more than 100 people were killed while the Communications Minister says 17 people were killed. The cost of the destruction is evaluated in millions of dollars.

President Paul Biya (who has been the country's Prime Minister since 1975 and President beginning 1982) was taken aback. In a televised address to the nation on February 26, 2008, he called for calm and warned that government would use all means at its disposal to ensure the rule of law and restoration of public order. Biya who appears detached from realities in the country blamed opposition parties for the unrest, referring to them as "demons", accusing them of manipulating youths, and of using the street riots to topple him. The presidential statement infuriated youths who went on an outright rampage,

CAMEROON: KEY INDICATORS, FACTS AND MAP

Surface area: 475,000 sq km
Population: 18.3 million (2006 estimates)
GDP per capita: \$1110 US (2007)
GDP per capita purchasing power parity (ppp): \$2266 US
Government Type: Republic, multi-party centralized semi-Presidential system. Parliament dominated by ruling party (more 2/3 majority).
Geopolitical Situation: Located at the heart of Africa, bordered to west by Nigeria, north by Chad, east by Central African Republic, south by Congo Republic, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea, and to the south west by the Gulf of Guinea (Atlantic sea).



Historical: Independence in 1960 after nationalist war ruthlessly suppressed by the French; reunification with West Cameroon in 1961 as federal Republic; United Republic in 1972 and Republic in 1984. Return to multi-party was violent.

Economy: Plummeted from Middle Income in mid-80s to dismal Poor and Heavily Indebted Country. Currency in use is CFA Franc once tagged to the defunct French Franc. Main exports cocoa, coffee, tea, timber, petroleum. Inflation (%change YOY) was 2.0 in 2007. Principal export destinations in 2006: Spain, Italy and France; principal import sources: Nigeria, France and China.

Official Languages: English and French

Adult Literacy rate: 71 % average (Male rate of 77%)

Corruption Index: According to Transparency International, perception of official corruption is very high with Cameroon featuring among most corrupt in last five years.

Sources: Compiled from diverse sources, including: Economic data from World Bank, UNESCO, UNAIDS/WHO Epidemiological Fact Sheets and Australian Market Information & Analysis Section, DFAT.

burning and looting public and private property. The opposition on its part denied manipulating youths and instead blamed government insiders suspected to be on the corruption black list for exploiting the situation to distract and derail ongoing anti-graft investigations.

This briefing highlights reasons why events in Cameroon must of necessity interest the international community¹; explores and attempts an analysis of accelerators on which the riots got triggered; implications and vicissitudes of present crisis. After envisaging possible scenarios, options for response are provided for decision makers.

2. CAMEROON, A STRATEGIC ENTITY IN THE GULF OF GUINEA

In analyzing the February 2008 uprising in social unrest in Cameroon, and proffering options for response in the framework of conflict prevention, it is important to understand the strategic importance of Cameroon in the Gulf of Guinea and the context in which the rioting occurred.

International media reporting of Cameroon's unprecedented violent street protests and social unrest was limited. This is probably due to three factors: (a) the violence occurred at a time Israel was pounding Hamas positions in the Gaza; and (b) Cameroon has never been on the radar of the world, apart from the football pictures that portray the budding talents of its migrant youths.

Cameroon, by virtue of its population and relative economic strength is seen as the natural leaders in the Central African Economic Community known by its French acronym CEMAC. Douala port serves as gateway to the landlocked Chad and Central African Republic. Her yet to be exploited deep sea port of Limbe and largely untapped solid mineral resources, the vast forest resources second only to Democratic Republic of Congo in Africa and the huge tourist potentials, all make Cameroon a nation with great economic potential².

Food, Oil and Strategic Oceanic Interests

In terms of resources, Cameroon has been labeled as the veritable bread basket of the sub-region even if little has been done to exploit this privileged attribute. Although food

¹ An unstable Cameroon would negatively affect peace in the sub-region and even aggravate the volatile security situation in the Niger Delta. Recent killings in Bakassi and the trading of blame shows a clear linkage between security in Cameroon and the Nigeria Delta of Nigeria. It is also true that petroleum oil deposits may also serve as incentive for possible destabilization by international criminal and armed groups, and even multilateral oil companies. The role of ELF and the overthrow of the democratically elected government of Pascal Lissouba in Congo Brazzaville is a vivid example.

² One of the endowment that history bestowed onto Cameroon is its bilingualism-English and French-as official languages. Although this has turned out to be mixed blessing due to serious marginalization of the minority by the majority, the central location of Cameroon on the African continent, conference facilities and translation resources with one of best schools of translation in the continent, are assets that cannot be overemphasized.

from Cameroon is exported to Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad and Nigeria on a weekly basis, the trade has not been regulated and structured.

Cameroon is not a major producer of petroleum. The current production stands at about 100,000 bpd, with oil accounting for about 30 percent of government revenue. Beginning with the Ahidjo (former president) era in the 1970s to a greater part of Biya's presidency, information on oil production was kept secret and only the President and his closest aides knew how much it fetched and how revenue from it was spent. According to a published report³, oil production was a well-kept secret that both the product (crude) and files were kept off-shore and secret deals entered with French companies. The exploitation of potential off shore gas deposits have not commenced. The Bakassi peninsula is yet to be exploited.

The oil boom years of the 1980s saw oil accounting for about two-thirds of the government revenue but this was also a period that waste and corruption took its toll on oil revenue. Questioned about figures on what Cameroon made, a former director of the state owned National Hydrocarbons Corporation proudly responded that information on oil was a domain that only he and the President (Biya) are privy to know. The fallouts of the Kuwait and Iraq oil booms did not make much positive difference in Cameroon. If any thing, the fuel price continued to surge thereby pushing prices in the transportation sector higher, with consequent hike in food and basic necessity prices.

3. PRE-VIOLENCE SITUATION: STRUCTURAL AND DYNAMIC FACTORS

A brief analysis of the situation in Cameroon prior to the violence is essential to the understanding of the crisis. Our focus is those structural and dynamic issues that have the greatest propensity to cause socio-economic and political tension. These issues are not exhaustive, neither are they ranked in any order of importance.

Interpretations of democracy?

Cameroon's democracy has been variously described. While the ruling party, the Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) describe the nation's democracy as advanced, critics see more a less a drift to a one party democracy. There is a lack of political debate both in the ruling party and opposition. Since the re-birth of multi-party politics (when?) and despite the tensions, Paul Biya and leading opposition figures have never met face to face. Past attempts at national dialogue failed to produce expected results partly due to this posture and complex.

With the existence of 207 registered political parties⁴, the political landscape is nonetheless dominated by the CPDM (acronym?) party with a majority at the National Assembly. Extra-ordinary Assembly sessions are often geared at pushing through a particular agenda. Thus, the President's candidacy hardly emerged from regular congresses as is the practice in other emerging democracies in Africa.

Electoral fraud and apathy

³ Gary Ian and Karl Terry Lynn, *Bottom of the Barrel: Africa's Oil Boom and the Poor*, (Baltimore, Maryland: Catholic Relief Service, 2003) citing World Bank's Cameroon Country Assistance Strategy of January 24, 2001.

⁴ Ministry of Territorial Administration registers as at April 2007.

The ruling Cameroon People's Democratic Movement (CPDM) party elites with the help of local administrators (divisional officers) and security services (gendarmes and police) have reportedly been involved in electoral malpractices.⁵ The direct result of this has been the voter apathy and complete loss of hope in electoral process that produces same results even when voters completely reject leaders⁶. Out of expected 10 million⁷ plus voters, only about 4 million registered⁸ and less than 2 million voted in last legislative elections of 2007, including ghost voters. A large part of Cameroon's youths are exempted and attempts to reduce the voter age from 21 to 18 years have met with stiff resistance from the authorities.

Paralysed governance and corruption

The governance structure itself has been suffering from institutional paralysis due to suspicion and internal fights. The Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice, Amadou Ali acting under instructions from the President had taken the anti-corruption war to another level. Some sixty names including key cabinet ministers are under investigations of financial malfeasance under the code name *opérations épervier* by a private firm-STRAGECO-led by a renowned economist intelligence expert, Francis Dooch Collins. The investigatory team has been mandated to investigate any financial embezzlement of state funds with help of international financial institutions in Europe, Asia, America, Middle East and Africa in a letter signed on September 16, 2007.⁹ This particular investigation has created a state of fear and tension within the government even as pundits accuse the administration of lacking the political will and courage to face the demon of corruption within government ranks.

A significant political peculiarity in Cameroon is the fact that since the re-birth of multi-party politics and despite the tensions, Paul Biya and the leading opposition figure have never met face to face. Past attempts at national dialogue failed to produce expected results partly due to this posture and complex.

A weakening social fabric

Historically, Cameroonians generally cohabit peacefully although there have been inter-tribal squabbles over land and farmer-grazer conflicts fueled by the decreasing pasture and farm land and inconsistent policies of the administration. However, the strong social fabric has been weakened by the absence of meaningful national dialogue. Antecedents of strikes in Cameroon are revealing. When for instance the plenipotentiary went on

⁵ Selective voter registration, manipulation of electoral registers, deliberate scattering of voter names to ensure low participation of potential 'enemy' voters, vote rigging, vote buying, cheating during tallying and so-called centralization.

⁶ A peculiarity in Cameroon is governance by "motions of support", institutionalized thanks to party elites who sit in Yaoundé and claim to speak on behalf of constituencies. It is not unusual for a thirty minutes newscast over the government owned television outfit-CRTV-to be devoted to reading of so-called motions of support to the head of state.

⁷ Ghana, a country of almost same population like Cameroon does better. A census was conducted in 2000 and results used as basis of electoral list that is regularly and transparently updated. Cameroon's 2005 census results are still awaited.

⁸ US Ambassador on a country tour almost turned politician by appealing to Cameroonians to register and exercise their democratic right.

⁹ Soudan Francois, « Cameroun: Ali et les soixante "voleurs" » *Jeune Afrique* No.2459 of 24 February -March 1, 2007, pp. 32-33.

strike recently, government summarily dismissed 'scapegoats' prison guards. Government interference in trade union matters has been so strong that silence of workers and other segments of society have not been due to favourable working conditions. Rather, it has been fear of victimization from a government that does not understand that strikes and non-violent action constitute accepted democratic means of expression.

Socialization over food and drink, inter-ethnic marriages and healthy relations between the main religions (Christianity and Islam) are peace generating factors that have helped build and keep peace among Cameroonians. Nevertheless, the introduction of a clause in the Constitution, tagging some Cameroonians 'foreigners' in their own country is a major source of tomorrow's crisis and xenophobic elements would be legally correct when they invoke this clause in the fundamental law of the nation.

A declining economy

Cameroon's economy has been on a decline and cost of living on the rise. Although official figures put the inflation rate at 2%, there has been a significant drop in purchasing power.

Mass unemployment and underemployment, weak banking sector and a non-functional stock exchange market has eclipsed the great potentials that Cameroon's economy represent. The great ambitions upon which the Biya government anchored its seven year mandate have not materialised. Cameroonian youths, frustrated by years of promises have joined the throng of African counterparts in the massive exodus to Europe and Asia by all means available. The youths have defied the scourging heat of the Sahara desert and the deadly waves of the Mediterranean and Atlantic waters and are ready to die rather than stay home. The youth crisis remains a time bomb and last month's uprising may just be the beginning of a youth revolution that may spare no part of Africa.¹⁰

A key question for Cameroonians in these tasking times is what the rise in petroleum is bringing to the government coffers. In Nigeria for instance, the rising cost of oil at world market already accumulated about 45 billion dollars as excess crude oil benefits by end of 2007. Figures on how much Cameroon made from hike in oil market prices remains a mystery.

Diplomatic isolation

The pulse of the country's diplomacy that is ironically anchored on the phrase "effective presence" is a shadow of itself. President Biya has been absent in forums that matter, and ambassadors are posted and abandoned to the extent that in country's where the dean of the diplomatic corps depends on longevity of service, Cameroon has broken all records. This policy of staying for ever is also reflected in deplorable state of some Cameroonian embassies abroad dire consequences on the country's image. The age of these ambassadors is also a phenomenon perhaps in line with the spirit of governance where old age seems to be a major criterion.

¹⁰ Even France, a developed country did not escape this menacing youth revolution that the political world keeps blaming on political manipulation.

In the backyard of these challenges, President Paul Biya and his government finally confirmed rumours that had been in circulation for long. In what started like a joke, the ruling party barons who have benefited immensely from this dysfunctional system of governance embarked on a campaign to change the Constitution (Article 6.2) that limited a presidential term of office to two seven (7) year mandate. This constitutional change constitutes the greatest accelerator to the current crisis as explained by the geography of the February riots. The crisis that rocked Cameroon was much a protest against government policies as it was against the planned constitutional change. The section that follows attempts an analysis of the political and contextual dimension of the crisis by linking the causes to the accelerators and reaction.

4. FEBRUARY RIOTS: CAUSES, CATALYSTS AND RESPONSE

According to President Paul Biya and his cabinet ministers, the riots were masterminded by politicians who cannot win elections through the ballot box. According to government sources, more than 1600 culprits of the riots were arrested and speedy trials which the press described as kangaroo trials have begun.

Since the 1990s, the Cameroon Government's handling of strike or attempted strike action has been unique. Any anti-policy demonstration in Cameroon is criminal and has always been treated as such. While demonstrators are usually controlled by police, the easiest way in the administrative language is ban. Before the transporters' union embarked upon their strike, the issue of the planned constitutional change was already gathering momentum. The opposition forces planned demonstrations to counter President Biya's assertion that popular opinion was calling for the amendment of what he described as an anti-democratic clause (Article 6.2) that limited the Presidential mandate. Fai Yengo Francis, the Governor of Littoral Province of Cameroon issued a circular banning all demonstrations in Douala.

Since the Lions lost the final to Egypt, it was clear that what the government planned to use as a political gain or asset was surely going to turn a liability. As spontaneous as the football street jubilations have always been, the anti-constitutional forces gained momentum. Activists like the father of 'ghost town' operations of the 1990s, Mboa Massock were already on the trail of security forces. Press reports say about a million signatories had been mobilized in Douala alone kicking against the prolongation of Biya's mandate. The opposition Social Democratic Front (SDF) organized press conferences and had planned anti-constitutional change demonstrations in Douala which were aborted due to intervention by security forces.

In the midst of these discontents, the pump price for fuel continued to rise and negotiations between the transporters' union and government failed to resolve the crisis. The strike served to catalyze the accumulated disgruntlement from many fronts. The youths, it could be stated, were the greatest beneficiaries of the situation and lawlessness descended much to the chagrin of the trade unionists who admitted that things had gone out of control.

The vandalization, burning and looting of property have been seriously condemned by Cameroonians of all divides and opinion. The difference only lies in apportioning blame. The street option is an indication of failed institutions. Parliament, media (particularly

radio and television) and the print press constitute avenues and outlets for national debates. In Cameroon, parliament oversight of government is often limited. The ordinary citizen does not have a feeling of oversight functions by parliament, neither are they recorded memories of cases or attempts of impeachment of executive. Critics say salary increments for themselves and parliamentary benefits are some of issues the peoples' representatives made headlines on news tabloids, besides rubber-stamping of bills.

An important point to note is the peculiarities of the February riots. It was led by youths, most of who were born during the reign of Paul Biya. The choice of targets was revealing. Although some government structures were blind targets, it has come out that brewery company depots (*Brasserie du Cameroun* and Guinness Cameroon SA), the French gambling horse raising outfit known as *tiercé*, were mostly targeted, including finance and taxation department structures. Youth anger on breweries can be interpreted as venting anger on that which has kept Cameroonians drinking and forgetting their problems.¹¹ The free for all drinking spree and looting of these brewery outfits was surely the handiwork of vandals, some of whom were killed by collapsing crates.

However, the same may not hold for taxation structures. Reports have it that computers were removed and set on fire. While other analysts saw vengeful on taxation authorities who have fed fat from taxpayers' sweat and toil, it is important to consider the government version of sponsored vandalism. It is possible that corrupt officials eager to erase evidence of looted funds and embezzlement could have facilitated this selective destruction.

Of great significance also was the fact that Yaoundé too was greatly affected. This is rare. "As long as Yaoundé breathes, Cameroon is alive" was Biya's response to spontaneous protests of the 1990s that paralyzed the country for weeks. This logic of responding to national issues may now be counter-productive. The February strike therefore sent Cameroon bed-ridden and President Biya's body language during his February 27th speech was telling.

Response to Protests

Cameroonians seemed to have been alarmed and shocked at the wave of violent protests by a largely disaffected youth and the highhanded reaction from the security forces. It was apparently clear that government capacity of responding to crisis once again proved dismally ineffective and resort to coercion seems to be the most desired option. Although apparently unrelated, the transporters strike and the anti-constitutional change mobilization found a confluence. The tough talking and intimidating government that had banned peaceful protests was suddenly confronted with rampaging youths. President Biya's speech instead galvanized the crisis as youths, disappointed with the head of state's statement resorted to street power.

An early casualty in the tension around the constitutional change (February 21) was the closure of a private television channel, TV and Radio Equinox although the motive given

¹¹ President Biya in response to a question as to what he has done for Cameroonians responded he has eased documentation and time lag in opening up drinking spots. Critics saw the response as an insult and interpreted it to mean: "you love drinking, continue to drink, get drunk and leave me in peace."

was non-payment of authorization fee hence illegal broadcast. With the social unrest, another private radio station, Magic FM Radio was sealed for abating violence when it criticized government's position on the youth riots.

Response from the international community was cautious. Western foreign missions issued travel alerts to its citizens. The US Embassy on Friday February 29 reportedly encouraged US citizens to be evacuated and as violence eased, the statement was reworded, urging Americans to exercise strong caution and restrict travel within and into the country.¹² The French Government in a statement calling on political actors (not trade unionists) to dialogue advised its citizens to remain indoors. Despite the number of casualties, there was no pronouncement from the United Nations on the issue.

A serious outcome of the crisis and perhaps a sign of worse things to come has been the use of bellicose language and hate speech. Local Yaoundé elites of Mfoundi did not mince words when they called on "foreigners" who purportedly fomented trouble to pack and leave for henceforth, they would know no peace. Next time, the Minister for Public who hails from the Yaoundé environ warned, it would "an eye for an eye and tooth for tooth", a stark warning of what may come. The ethnic war drum speeches were echoed on state radio as well as on government owned national daily, Cameroon Tribune. In 1990, an elite from Yaoundé (of blessed memory)¹³ called for vigilance because there was "an enemy in the house," and offered Paul Biya a spear and cutlass with the advice, "if you want peace, prepare for war." Analysts fear the ethnic tensions may resurface given the disproportional dominance of Biya's ethnic group in all sectors of governance and administration in Cameroon, including the military and security forces. That such language came from the mouth of government ministers, intellectual and public figures, who, have not withdrawn or apologized despite attempts at downplaying them by other elites is a major cause for concern.

While the church condemned the violence and appealed for calm, there are fears that witch hunting and reign of fear would persist as arbitrary trials of suspected arsonists and looters is already raising a lot of dust. These trials are coming barely a year since the country reformed the penal code. All eyes and ears are focused on the national assembly as it resumes this March. Their action or non-action would determine the trend of events in Cameroon.

As we were finalizing this report, President Paul Biya called an emergency cabinet meeting and took a series of short and medium term relief measures to salvage the crisis. Notable among these were salary increments for civil servants, customs duty and tax relief on imports of necessities like wheat flour, rice, table oil, in addition to cement (earlier exempted from customs charges) and increase in import quota for pal oil. Also on the menu of reforms in medium term are probable review of petroleum sector, telecommunications and banking sector to reduce overbearing cost on consumers and the re-launch of recruitments temporary staff in the public service to address chronic unemployment. Energy sector projects and continuous fight against corruption were some of the issues the president and his cabinet discussed and tasked the prime

¹² Connors Will, "After week of unrest, Cameroon Appears Calmer", *New York Times*, March 2, 2008 (www.nytimes.com/2008/03/02/world/africa/02Cameroon.html)

¹³ Emah Basile, Government Delegate to the Yaoundé Urban Council and national treasurer of the ruling party, CPDM.

minister to implement the decisions to the letter. This was a reaffirmation that the language of the street was more understood than any other.

5. POSSIBLE SCENARIOS (Time frame: In the next 1-24 months)

Scenarios would be premised on what we think is a major fundamental factor that can have adverse or positive effects Cameroon's peace and stability today. That factor (they are others) is the planned constitutional revision which to us is not bad provided it is not dictated by narrow motives of certain individuals or groups.

Good Case Scenario (Rating: Less plausible)

Biya renounces ambition to change constitution and accepts to relinquish power by 2011 latest. Begins a process of allowing a successor emerge from within his party ranks refrains from stifling young aspirants and progressives within the party. Parliament ceases to see itself as an arm of the executive, assert its independence and oversight functions. Instead, the Cameroon parliament focuses on Constitutional amendment to reduce presidential mandate from seven to five years renewable once with effect from 2011. Outstanding constitutional provisions like the senate, constitutional council and decentralization are implemented and debate contradictory debate encouraged. Military and security forces refrain from excessive use of force and review its repressive security strategy. Sweeping defence and security sector reforms are implemented, appointing young and learned officers to reflect 21st century force and massively retire octogenarian officers manning the security forces since independence.

Worst Case Scenario (Rating: Plausible)

Biya goes ahead and uses his 'arrogant majority' in parliament and changes the Constitution and qualifies himself for elections in 2011. Besides changing Article 6.2, more clauses are injected to stifle opposition and freedom of expression. Opposition leaders are implicated in the ongoing crisis, arrested and sentenced to imprisonment terms. More riots follow and ethnic based violence ensues and Cameroon descends into the abyss of civil war with attendant national and sub-regional implications.

6. POSSIBLE OPTIONS FOR RESPONSE/ACTION

This section proposes possible options for response action to avert a worse case scenario and work towards realizing the best case. Friday March 7 initial reaction and reforms by President Paul Biya are welcome and should spur the government and stakeholders to deepen the package.

To the Government of Cameroon

- a) *Reduce the cost of living*: Decision to reduce prices of certain necessities is critical. However, it should be comprehensive and thoroughly implemented. One fundamental problem in Cameroon is not the lack of policies and rules, but their implementation.
- b) *Give genuine dialogue a chance*: Cameroon has a culture of shelving issues and dialogue (which naturally exists in every society) is grossly inadequate and faulty. A

government minister was quoted as saying: 'are we not dialoguing in newspapers?' Many ideas are discussed and solutions proffered in interactive programs in Cameroon's media, both government and private. It is time to take such proposals seriously.

- c) *Start preparing an exit strategy now.* This is the moment for President Biya to position himself as a distinguished statesman by renouncing the intrigues of his entourage and renounce the bid to change the constitution and run elections billed for 2011. This should also involve complete transformation or overhaul of the system by retiring the recycled civil servants and military officers that are the real impediment to change.
- d) *Revamp conflict management and security strategy:* It seems that Cameroon administrative authorities have not evolved their perception of security as relates to public manifestation and how to deal with it. Issue of ban orders, tear gas use and security forces brutality have worsened civil-security forces relationships. Inheriting a colonial security strategy that aimed at suppressing the nationalist uprising led by the *Union des populations du Cameroun* (UPC), Cameroon has carried this strategy and critics blame it on the ageing (octogenarian) senior military officers and decision makers who have outlived their time. It is therefore time to revamp and reform the entire security and defense sector in Cameroon and give young officers a chance.
- e) *Mutual respect for contradictory views:* The imbedded perception of the government vis a vis the opposition (and vice versa) is often reflected in statements by government officials. Intolerance of opposition views has been responsible for the decision to always ban protests instead of protecting and ensuring orderliness in demonstrations which are part of democratic expression.
- f) *Beware of elites and Governance by deceit:* In the 1990s, Cameroon elites and sympathizers of the ruling party marched against multi-party and Biya ignored. These same elite are clamouring for constitutional change through same methods and strategists. Biya must beware of their deceitful and parochial motives and discourage this new phenomenon of motions of support reminiscent of the East European communist era.
- g) *Engage the Cameroon Diaspora:* The Cameroon diaspora is a veritable force for socio-economic transformation that has remained under-exploited. Cameroonians in Europe and the America's, at international organizations have been sidelined in policy making despite resourcefulness. The narrow minded decision to exclude them from voting has shot so many doors; including investments at home. Remittances sent home have greatly contributed to poverty alleviation. The football diaspora have proved their point.

To Parliament of Cameroon

- h) *Independence of Legislature:* The greatest desire that Cameroonian legislatures should seek is their independence from the executive. The so-called party discipline has derailed the transformation role that parliament brings to nascent democracies. And no country is in dire need of this than Cameroon. There is no reason why any party official should threaten 'honourable' men and women and reduce them to hand-clappers and rubber stamps.
- i) *Constitutional Reform:* There is nothing wrong in reforming a constitution per se. The present problem is targeted reforms to allow the President go beyond his stipulated mandate. If there is a clause to reform, it is the indigene foreigner clause in Constitution. It is source of tomorrow's genocide, ethnic cleansing or xenophobia.

Review of constitution and reduce term of office from 7 to 5 years should be contemplated and this should come into force beginning 2011.

To Political Parties

- j) *Unite or Perish*: That there are more than 200 political parties in Cameroon is a more than a joke. No democracy can function without a credible opposition. In Cameroon, opposition political parties spend time quarreling over positions and leadership tussle. Lack of democracy and fact that founding opposition leaders are still clinging to power is the bane of the nation's democracy. Congresses or conventions (for those that even have the means to hold one) must demand term of office limitations for party presidents. Only then would they have courage to demand same from the ruling party.

To Civil Society

- k) *Mobilize and assert self*: A missing link in the Cameroon context has been the absence of a vibrant and consistent civil society. There is the urgent need for civil society to assume its space and fill the vacuum left by the inefficiencies of government and the governed, especially in the backdrop of a weak and divided opposition. Civil society actors must rise up to the challenge, especially lawyers and let their voices be heard.
- l) *Conflict Prevention Strategy*: A civil society led conflict prevention initiative is needed to proactively push for a preventive agenda and demand and ensure accountability of governance. That accountability must begin with civil society itself.

Role of the Church

- m) *Church as moral Compass of society*: Given its majority in Cameroon and that leaders in Cameroon are front bench sitters, the Church can do more to engage the leaders to listen and act when the people grumble. Leaders' responsiveness can be enhanced if the Church leadership can preach the truth no matter how bitter. In the Philippines, South Africa and other examples, the church refused to be 'neutral' and eventually transformed the political landscape. She can do more in Cameroon. The recent reactions from the Bishops of Bamenda, Douala and Yaoundé (and President of the National Episcopal Council) Arch Dioceses and Moderator of the Presbyterian Church must be commended and encouraged. Indeed, the Church is the sleeping giant with powers that have not been fully used.

Critical role of the Media

- n) *Free and Responsible press*: The media, both national and international has a critical role to play for sustainable peace and development to engrain in Cameroon. This media operates in a difficult economic environment. Cameroonians must be able to invest in the media and motivate journalists and reporters to do a credible and objective job. Abusive use of power in stifling private media must be condemned and over zealous officials must be sanctioned.
- o) Government outfits like CRTV must endeavour to be more balanced and learn to draw the thin line between a public corporation and narrow interests of government officials. Regulatory laws and practices like what operates in Ghana should inspire Cameroon to reform its public media practice.

To ECCAS, AU

- p) The sub-regional economic community needs to focus on Cameroon on Cameroon and ensure that rule of law and respect for human rights. Be it in Cameroon, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Chad, central African Republic or Republic of Congo (to name a few), democratic credentials are nothing to be proud of. Governments in the sub-region have survived thanks to narrow interests of the West who prefer the status quo in the name of stability at the detriment of suffering masses and perpetually humiliated political opposition yearning for change. It is time to let the people's voice be heard.
- q) The Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) and the AU should seek appropriate ways to improve political governance in the entire Central African sub-region beginning with Cameroon (prevention is better than cure).

Donors and International Community

- r) The EU, UN, and bilateral and influential partners such as France, Spain (lead trading partner) and Italy; the United States, UK and Canada can use their moral, economic and political authority to arrest the situation. If Cameroon glides into chaos, peace efforts in Chad, Central African Republic, and even Darfur would be compromised as the supply route that Douala is would be cut.

