

**1<sup>st</sup> Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting  
8 - 10 February 2015, Yaoundé Conference Centre**

**OPENING SPEECH DELIVERED BY:**

**H.E. PHILEMON YANG**

*Prime Minister, Head of Government*

*Personal Representative of the President of the Republic  
of Cameroon*

**Yaoundé Conference Centre, Monday 09 February 2015**

- **Your Excellency The Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth;**
- **Commonwealth Ministers in charge of Youth Development from Africa Region Commonwealth member countries;**
- **Members of Government of the Republic of Cameroon;**
- **Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps and Representaives of Interational Organisations**
- **The President, Pan African Youth Union;**
- **The Africa Region Representative, Commonwealth Youth Council;**
- **The President, Cameroon National Youth Council;**
- **Youth Delegates from Commonwealth member countries of the Africa Region.**
- **Ladies and Gentlemen.**

I am pleased on behalf of His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, and my personal behalf to wish you a very warm welcome to cameroon

I wish to thank Mr Kiziah Philbert, Africa Region Representative of the Commonwealth Youth Council for his kind words, and also Excellency Deodat Maharaj, Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth for his remarks.

The Republic of Cameroon is once more delighted to set the stage for forward thinking exchanges such as this 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting. You would recall that in November 2014, members of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Association gathered in this same hall for over a week to discuss common issues affecting the operations of parliamentary institutions across Commonwealth member countries.

Specifically talking about youth development, I recall that in July 2013, the former Deputy Secretary General of the Commonwealth, Mrs. Masire Mwamba, participated in the discussions led by the Ministry of Youth Affairs and Civic Education on the broad concepts of civic education and national integration.

This 1<sup>st</sup> Africa Region Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting on the theme; **“Young people, building a stable and sustainable future”** comes at a time when our societies are experiencing social, economic, political, technological, cultural, and security transformations, carrying with it different opportunities and different challenges to our nations and the Commonwealth.

In these transition, the young people of our nations occupy the centre stage – either positively leading the innovations that

contribute to the advancement of society or negatively imposing strategies that promote counter productive vices towards development.

As you all know, the Republic of Cameroon has always been referred to as Africa in Miniature, an island of peace. Over the past few months Cameroon's peace and national security has been threatened by the terrorist sect Boko-Haram. Another member of the Commonwealth family, our neighbours of the Federal Republic of Nigeria Boko Haram has created more serious problems of insecurity. The same applies to the Republic of Kenya, that has been battling extremists and terrorists movements.

Development and progress can only be consolidated in conditions of peace and security and the young people of our nations have a great role to play and responsibility in helping our societies consolidate them

. We welcome the African solidarity that is currently building up support towards the fight against Boko Haram, but more forthrightly, against extremism and terrorism.

Therefore, during your deliberations, I wish to remind you that our societies cannot attain significant levels of socioeconomic development without the full contribution of young people whose ingenuity over the ages have moved societies forward. Let your meeting identify concrete actions that our nations and the Commonwealth can undertake to ensure that our young people are

protected from extremism. This will harness their energies for the benefit of our nations.

In Cameroon, young people are leading innovation in the social and economic sectors. Besides Cameroon's growth and employment strategy currently being executed, His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon launched Cameroon's Emergency Development plan in January 2015. This plan places the development of services for local communities as a precursor to opportunities for economic development that guarantees wealth creation by, and for our young people.

In identifying National Youth Councils as veritable channels for the involvement of youths in development voice, the Commonwealth thinks right. As a Government, we can only encourage other governments to find opportunity to create such structures that bring the opinion of the youth to the table of decision making. We are comforted that the Cameroon National Youth Council created in 2009 is working towards this end. More importantly, it is serving as a channel of communication between government and the young people in promoting mutual aspirations, actions and future perspectives.

**Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,**

This Ministerial meeting is holding at a time the world is reflecting on what obtains in the post 2015 period, the period after the Millennium Development Goals. I therefore salute your choice of the theme to guide the reflections, discussions and debates. I also and encourage you to search in all openness for those innovative strategies that could be fine tuned and implemented to advance the youth, which is equal to advancing society.

I wish you successful deliberations in this inaugural Commonwealth Youth Ministers' Meeting.

Long live His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon;

Long live Cameroon - Commonwealth relations;

Long live the young people of the Commonwealth;

I thank you for your kind attention.