

**SPEECH BY H.E. THE AMBASSADOR OF CAMEROON ON THE
OCCASION OF CAMEROON'S PRESIDENCY OF THE CONFERENCE
ON DISARMAMENT**

Ms. Director General of UNOG,

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen Ambassadors,

Mr. Executive Secretary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty Organization (CTBTO), Dr. Lassina ZERBO

Ladies and Gentlemen of the Secretariat of the Conference on Disarmament

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is a great privilege for me and a great honor for my country, Cameroon, to assume the presidency of this important United Nations institution, the Conference on Disarmament.

As I am in 4th position in the P6 for the year 2021, it is only natural that I should pay tribute to the leadership of my three predecessors with great eagerness.

First of all, H.E. Ambassador Marc PECSTEEN of the Kingdom of Belgium, who had the great honor and the heavy task of inaugurating our Presidency for this year, and it is with great determination that he has, with finesse, faced the difficult elaboration of our work program marking our Presidency of 2021.

Secondly, H.E. Ambassador Gonçalo Mello of Brazil, as a talented diplomat, has followed the path set by his predecessor to consolidate our 2021 work program.

I would like to congratulate them for their commitment, which has made it possible to move the lines of this Conference on Disarmament, whose momentum has been somewhat stalled for some years.

What can I say about my predecessor, H.E. Mr. Yuri Borissov STERK, Ambassador of Bulgaria. An experienced negotiator and diplomat, his openness and flexibility set the tone for these thematic exchanges, for which we have a responsibility to ensure continuity and contribute to their success.

I hope, dear Colleagues, that with your unfailing support and your precious advice, I will be able to continue serenely on the path traced out, so that at the end of my term of office, I can confidently pass on the flame of disarmament to our distinguished Colleague, H.E. Mrs. Leslie NORTON, Ambassador of Canada,

and, of course, for a fitting conclusion to our presidency, to H.E. Frank TRESSLER ZAMORANO, Ambassador of Chile.

I would also like to acknowledge the enormous contribution of Ambassador Yuri AMBRAZEVITCH of Belarus, the outgoing President of 2020, and of H.E. Mr Li SONG, Ambassador of the People's Republic of China, who will take over in 2022.

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the impressive technological progress of recent decades, underpinned by the legitimate concern to provide themselves with maximum protection, has led a number of States in the world to acquire so-called weapons of mass destruction. Their constant improvement, and above all their proliferation, are today major concerns for the whole of humanity. I am not exaggerating when I say that these weapons, which are nuclear, biological and chemical, constitute more than ever, serious reasons for permanent fear for both their holders and non-holders.

By creating this important negotiating platform within the UN at the end of the 1970s, the international community clearly understood that only the world organisation could, in accordance with the principles of the Charter, effectively and sustainably guarantee international peace and security.

Yes, ladies and gentlemen, international security remains, more than any other, the greatest challenge of our time. I do not think that I am being alarmist by underlining the fragility and, above all, the precariousness of our existence, which can end in a few seconds by the manipulation of a so-called "red button".

This fragility of global security is linked to the community of destinies, illustrated in the last two years by the occurrence of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has, more than ever, demonstrated that all of humanity is doomed to the same fate. In this globalised world, the threat posed by weapons of mass destruction is a common and ongoing concern. As I am not a specialist in this field, I would not like to venture an estimate of the potential of these weapons that the planet has so far.

Since the 1970s, humanity has become aware of the extent of the arms race of all kinds and has resolutely committed itself, through a series of treaties, agreements and other arrangements, to reducing as far as possible, and why not putting an end to, these potentially dangerous arsenals.

In the name of the sacrosanct principle of the community of destinies, I would like to believe that thanks to the strength of multilateralism, which is carried and promoted by the United Nations, the framework par excellence for disarmament negotiations, the world will succeed, thanks to the combined efforts of this

institution, the Conference on Disarmament, of course, in achieving the objective of restoring hope and serenity to the whole of humanity. The Conference on Disarmament bears the seeds of hope for a peaceful and sustainable existence for all peoples and all nations.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, disarmament is a cross-cutting and inclusive issue. If the fear of collective death, or simply the end of our existence, is a probability today, then we must constantly ask ourselves these fundamentally existential questions: what is the value of these technological advances if they continue to keep us in fear? What is the point of all these arsenals that imprison us and hold us up in a dead-end rivalry?

Ladies and Gentlemen, as you all know, I come from a developing country, Cameroon. My presence among you and in this position may seem absurd; we understand each other. I said earlier that disarmament is a cross-cutting issue. The UN is currently engaged in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Has it occurred to anyone to imagine what the world would be like if, for a short while, we managed to establish a close link between disarmament and development? I know this debate is ongoing. It is time, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, in view of the precariousness of a large part of humanity, and in the name of the community of destinies, this reality that we must never lose sight of, it is time, as I said, to revive the disarmament and development debate.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Head of State of Cameroon, my President H.E. Mr Paul BIYA, rightly nicknamed by his compatriots and many others, "Beggar of Peace", insofar as the search for peace both within and outside Cameroon has always been the major axis of his governance, said in 2017 before the United Nations General Assembly, and I quote: "the quest for peace concerns us all. All countries must work for its advent. He went on to say that "our most precious asset is peace, without it we cannot undertake anything lasting or effective for the benefit of our young people and our peoples". This posture has made it possible to keep Cameroon stable in a regional and sub-regional environment that is subject to frequent turbulence.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, in accordance with the program before us, my presidency will be based on exchanges around the following three themes

- Prevention of an arms race in space;
- Effective international arrangements to assure non-nuclear-weapon States against the use or threat of use of nuclear weapons;
- New types of weapons of mass destruction and new systems of such weapons, radiological weapons.

As you can see, this is the implementation of the draft package drawn up under the aegis of my predecessors and whose implementation in terms of thematic exchanges was initiated by Ambassador Yuri Borissov STERK of Bulgaria.

The approach of the thematic debates, Ladies and Gentlemen, may seem out of step with traditional negotiations. But you will agree with me that the expression of the views of the various delegations in this august assembly, which reflect the fundamental options of each State in this area, is also a form of negotiation.

It is obvious to all, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, that our first priority at this conference is nuclear disarmament. The world lives in fear of the possible use of nuclear weapons. This is the place for us to encourage all parties involved in the ongoing negotiations on this issue.

The debates on the above-mentioned issues will allow us to listen to the voices of all the regions of the world, and above all to the deep call for peace that resides in each of our peoples.

Today, ladies and gentlemen, we still have a great opportunity, thanks to all the efforts of our States and UN institutions to control these weapons. Imagine for a moment if we were to lose control of these weapons?

Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I take this opportunity to reiterate the firm commitment of my country, Cameroon, to the initiatives and objectives of this important United Nations Conference on Disarmament. I am at your disposal, while counting on your unfailing support, and assure you of my total dedication to the successful completion of the work of this segment of the 2021 Conference on Disarmament.

I thank you for your kind attention.