AN ADDRESS BY HIS EXCELLENCY ELUNG PAUL CHE, MINISTER ASSISTANT SECRETARY-GENERAL AT THE PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC, ON THE OCCASION OF THE COMMUNITY DIALOGUE ON PEACE AND DEVELOPMENT

Bangem, the 19th of October 2026

THE SENIOR DIVISIONAL OFFICER FOR KUPE MUANENGUBA,
THE DIVISIONAL OFFICERS FOR BANGEM, TOMBEL AND NGUTI,
DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT AND OTHER ELECTED OFFICIALS,
THE LORD MAYOR OF BANGEM,
DEFENCE AND SECURITY AUTHORITIES,
TRADITIONAL RULERS AND CUSTODIANS OF OUR CULTURAL HERITAGE,
RELIGIOUS LEADERS,
DISTINGUISHED MEMBERS OF THE KUPE-MUANENGUBA ELITE,
OUR WOMEN AND YOUTH,
DISTINGUISHED GUESTS,
LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,

For several years, our beloved North-West and South-West Regions have endured a painful sociopolitical crisis marked by violence, armed confrontations, school closures, ghost towns and disrupted economic activity. Our people have suffered. Families have been separated, young people have lost precious years of education and opportunity, and farmers, traders, transporters and small-business owners have seen their livelihoods threatened. Parents have lived with anxiety, and our children have borne the consequences of a crisis they neither created nor deserved. Kupe Muanenguba, like other Divisions in the two Regions, was not spared.

Yet our story did not end in suffering. Through sustained public sensitisation, engagement with young people who had taken up arms, back-to-school campaigns, and the mobilisation of traditional rulers and cultural custodians, our Division gradually moved towards peace and normalcy. Administrative authorities, defence and security forces, religious leaders, women, young people and the elite reinforced these efforts.

We chose engagement over indifference, persuasion over provocation, and reconciliation over division. We understood that no community can develop where fear reigns, schools are closed and farmers cannot safely reach their fields. We also recognised that every young person caught up in the crisis was a son, a daughter or a member of our community, whose future could not simply be abandoned. Our response therefore combined firmness with compassion, dialogue and the restoration of hope.

Today, we have good reason to be proud. Kupe Muanenguba can rightly be held up as an encouraging example of the return to peace and normalcy in the two Regions. This achievement is not the victory of one individual, party, village or group; it belongs to all the people of Kupe Muanenguba. Let us preserve it with humility and protect it with determination.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before looking forward, we must look back with gratitude. I wish to thank everyone who contributed to the restoration of peace in our Division.

To our external and local elites, who mobilised resources, engaged stakeholders, counselled young people and supported peace initiatives, thank you. To the administrative authorities, who worked tirelessly to facilitate dialogue, maintain public order and restore confidence, we offer our profound appreciation. To our defence and security forces, whose efforts restored security and allowed our people to resume their activities, we extend our recognition and gratitude.

We salute our traditional rulers, village chiefs, religious leaders and community leaders for guiding their people through difficult times. We owe a special debt to our traditional and cultural custodians, who drew on ancestral values, traditions and institutions in the service of peace. Our women, young people, teachers, farmers, traders and ordinary citizens who refused to abandon hope also deserve our recognition.

Some contributed money; others gave time, influence, counsel, prayers or personal sacrifice. Some worked quietly, away from public attention, but every sincere contribution mattered. We also acknowledge those who helped vulnerable young people regain their footing through livelihood support, employment and productive activities.
To all of you, thank you. May Almighty God bless your sacrifices and reward your commitment to the common good.

Distinguished participants,

Some may reasonably ask: if peace has returned, schools are open, farmers are back in their fields and daily life has resumed, why do we still need a dialogue for peace?
My answer is simple: we need dialogue not because peace has failed, but because peace must endure. The absence of armed confrontation does not by itself guarantee lasting peace. True peace must also exist in our hearts and families, between our villages, among our political actors, and within our institutions and community structures.
We must ensure that the bitterness, suspicion and division created by the crisis do not become the seeds of future conflict. That requires us to sit together, speak frankly, listen to one another and find the courage to heal. It also requires honest reflection on our conduct during this difficult period. What did we do right? Where did we go wrong? When did anger overcome reason, or personal interest prevail over the common good? When might a word of wisdom have helped?
We ask these questions not to humiliate anyone or reopen old wounds, but because a community that refuses to learn from its past risks repeating its mistakes. Guided by our traditional and religious authorities, we must also find culturally meaningful ways to mourn our losses, honour those who died, seek forgiveness where necessary, and symbolically cleanse our land of the pain of the years of unrest.
Those who have been hurt must have the opportunity to heal; those who have offended others should find the courage to seek forgiveness; and those who have suffered must receive support and solidarity. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting the lessons of the past, and reconciliation does not mean abandoning justice. It means refusing to let yesterday's pain dictate tomorrow's destiny.
Our objective is to move from peace in our streets to peace in our hearts, and from peace in our hearts to lasting unity among our communities. That is why this dialogue is necessary.

Ladies and gentlemen,

If one priority deserves our collective attention, it is education. Our schools must not merely be open in name; they must be fully operational, well attended and conducive to teaching and learning. Every child in Kupe Muanenguba must have the opportunity to learn, complete school and prepare for a productive future. We must never again allow our children to become the principal victims of circumstances beyond their control.
A child who loses years of schooling risks losing the chance to compete in an increasingly demanding world. Education lays the foundation for human capital, innovation, productivity, responsible citizenship and sustainable development. China's transformation in recent decades, for example, has been supported in part by sustained investment in education, science, technical skills and human capital. If Kupe Muanenguba is to advance, we too must invest deliberately in the knowledge, skills and talents of our young people.
We must therefore mobilise our elites, our rich diaspora, our councils, parents, teachers, traditional authorities, religious institutions and development partners to support our schools. Let us encourage regular attendance and discourage any action that disrupts education.
Our appeal to parents is simple: send your children to school and keep them there. To our young people we say: embrace education, acquire practical skills, reject violence and become active participants in the development of your community. The greatest legacy we can leave our children is not land, houses or money, but an education that equips them to stand on their own feet and build a better future.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

While celebrating the return of peace and the reopening of our schools, we must confront another danger to our young people: drug and substance abuse.

Our youth are among our greatest assets and the future leaders of Kupe Muanenguba. We cannot remain indifferent when illicit drugs and the harmful misuse of other substances threaten their lives, health and prospects. Substance abuse undermines concentration and judgement, damages physical and mental health, disrupts education, strains family relationships and exposes young people to exploitation and violence. It also deepens poverty by reducing productivity. We must be particularly concerned about school-going children and unemployed young people, who may be vulnerable to peer pressure, frustration, idleness and the false promise of temporary escape from their difficulties.

Our response must be firm and collective. Parents must take a greater interest in their children's lives, friendships and activities. Schools must strengthen awareness and prevention programmes. Traditional rulers and elders must use their moral authority to discourage harmful practices, and religious leaders must continue to guide young people towards responsible living. The administration and security services must enforce the law against drug consumption, trafficking and related offences.

We cannot preach peace to our youth while allowing drugs to destroy their health and future. Our commitment to peace must include a commitment to healthy living and to protecting young people from substance abuse. Let this dialogue send a clear message throughout Kupe Muanenguba: our children are too precious to surrender to drugs, violence or hopelessness.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Peace is not an end in itself; it must bring tangible improvements to people's lives. Our farmers must prosper, our traders must grow their businesses, our young people must find productive opportunities, and our women must have the means to strengthen their economic independence. Our villages must become more accessible, and our children must be able to look forward to a better life.

The return to normalcy must therefore be accompanied by renewed determination to accelerate development. I am particularly encouraged by the prospects of major road and bridge projects that could transform the economic life of our Division.

Among the priority road projects is the ongoing construction of the Bangem–Nguti road, which will improve connectivity, facilitate the movement of people and goods, and strengthen links between our communities and neighbouring economic centres.

We also look forward to the full rehabilitation of the Tombel–Bangem road, for which the Government has made available 1,640,000,000 (one billion six hundred and forty million) FCFA. This strategically important road, which traverses numerous villages between the Tombel and Bangem Subdivisions, will facilitate trade, ease the transport of agricultural produce and open up new economic opportunities.

On the Melong–Bangem road, whose poor condition has caused considerable hardship, the Government has released funds to address critical sections and keep it passable following the failure of the company originally contracted for maintenance. We look forward to the award of a construction contract to a more capable company, to provide a lasting solution for road users.

Several important bridge projects will also improve connectivity across the Division. These include a modern bridge on the Nyandong–Konye road, valued at over 260 million FCFA and nearing completion; the Mungo River bridge at Mombo Bajoh, costing over 730 million FCFA; the Njungo River bridge, valued at 200 million FCFA; and the proposed bridge over the Ohumpe River in Nguti. These investments will help overcome geographical barriers, enable farmers to take their produce to market more easily, reduce transport costs for traders, create jobs for young people and attract investment to our Division. Our collective responsibility is to keep advocating for their effective implementation and timely completion. We must remain patient and involved, while understanding that public infrastructure requires money, technical expertise and administrative procedures.

Digital connectivity is equally essential. Today, progress is measured not only by roads, bridges, schools and hospitals, but also by access to reliable internet. I am pleased to announce that several of our villages have been earmarked to benefit from a World Bank-funded programme to extend internet connectivity to rural communities across the country. Preparations are under way for the construction of telecommunications base stations in Elah, Ntale, Mbat, Nninong, Muambong, Baseng, Bambele and Nyandong. Work is expected to begin in the coming days, but will proceed gradually, depending on studies and access to sites. This initiative will help bridge the digital divide and create new opportunities for education and economic development.

Alongside roads and internet access, we must work towards better access to water and electricity, stronger health facilities, improved agricultural productivity and more opportunities for local enterprise. We should also encourage our sons and daughters in the diaspora to invest in their home communities, transfer knowledge, support local businesses and help create employment.

When young people can earn a living, support their families and build a future with dignity, the appeal of violence diminishes and the foundations of peace grow stronger. Our ambition must be to make peace visible in our marketplaces, on our farms and roads, in our schools and homes, and through reliable digital connectivity.

Distinguished brothers and sisters of the Kupe Muanenguba elite,

Permit me to address an issue that is vital to our collective future: unity among our elite. Our Division is endowed with intelligent, experienced and capable men and women, including public servants, businesspeople, academics, elected officials, traditional leaders and a high-quality diaspora. Together, they possess considerable influence, aptitudes and knowledge. Imagine what Kupe Muanenguba could achieve if these strengths were coordinated in the service of the common good.

No community can reach its full potential when its leaders spend more time competing with one another than working for their people. We must distinguish healthy differences of opinion from destructive rivalry, constructive criticism from malicious attacks, and legitimate personal ambition from the collective interest of our Division.

There is nothing wrong with ambition; it can inspire achievement, service and excellence. But personal ambition must never destroy our shared purpose. On matters concerning the development of Kupe Muanenguba, we must be ready to set aside individual preferences, political differences and personal interests, and look in the same direction. We do not have to agree on everything, but we must agree that the future of our Division is greater than any one of us.

Let us build a culture in which disagreements are handled maturely, criticism is constructive and worthwhile initiatives receive the support they deserve. We must reject blackmail, slander, character assassination, greed and the manipulation of community concerns for personal advantage. Nor should we undermine an initiative simply because we did not propose it, or because its promoter belongs to a different circle.

When an initiative genuinely serves Kupe Muanenguba, let us support it, improve it where necessary and help it succeed. If we disagree, let us propose a better alternative. If we see a weakness, let us help correct it. If we have resources, let us contribute; if we have expertise, let us share it. And if we have nothing constructive to offer at a particular moment, there is wisdom in remaining silent and letting others do their work.

What is unacceptable is malicious conduct that discredits or obstructs well-intentioned sons and daughters working for the development of our Division. We must not let envy become an obstacle to progress, or personal grievances take precedence over the welfare of our people.

The success of one son or daughter of Kupe Muanenguba, when directed towards the common good, is an opportunity for the entire community. Let us celebrate one another, complement one another’s strengths and build on one another’s achievements. Our people do not expect us to be perfect or to share every opinion; they expect us to be responsible and to place their interests above our differences.

Ladies and gentlemen,

The future of Kupe Muanenguba will depend on what we do for our young people today and on the values we pass to the next generation. Our youth must see themselves not as spectators in development, but as principal actors. We must listen to them, understand their concerns and create opportunities for them to contribute their energy, creativity and talents to our collective progress.
We must continue to engage with those who were drawn into the crisis and help them reintegrate into peaceful community life through lawful, appropriate and sustainable pathways. A strong community can address wrongdoing while still offering people a constructive route towards a better future.
Our traditional rulers, cultural custodians and elders also have an indispensable role. Our customs, traditions and community institutions remain important sources of identity, discipline, solidarity and social cohesion. We must preserve what is noble in our heritage, pass it on to our children and use it to strengthen peace rather than deepen division.
Let our villages remain places where differences are settled through wisdom, elders are respected, vulnerable people are protected, and every citizen understands that the welfare of the community is a shared responsibility.

Distinguished participants,

As we look to the future, I wish to reaffirm the importance of patience, perseverance, responsible citizenship and respect for our institutions. We are part of a Republic whose Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya, President of the Republic of Cameroon, has consistently called for peace, national unity and the preservation of our country's territorial integrity.
As citizens and sons and daughters of Kupe Muanenguba, we must remain committed to peace, national cohesion and the lawful pursuit of our aspirations. Our loyalty to the President of the Republic and our commitment to State institutions must show in our actions: respect for the law, rejection of violence, support for education and a willingness to contribute to the development of our communities.
We must also be patient and persevering in pursuing development. Not every road can be completed overnight, and not every need can be met immediately. Public projects require planning, resources, coordination and sustained follow-up. A peaceful, united and well-organised Kupe Muanenguba will be better placed to attract public investment, private enterprise and development partnerships.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Before we conclude, I invite each of us to make a personal commitment to the future of our Division. Let us protect peace in our villages and communities; ensure that our schools remain open and our children receive the education they deserve; and combat drug and substance abuse to protect our young people's health, dignity and future.
Let us work together for the completion and improvement of our major roads, including the Bangem-Nguti, Tombel-Bangem and Melong-Bangem roads. Let us respect our traditional rulers, cultural custodians and community institutions. Let us resolve disagreements through dialogue, reject blackmail and destructive rivalry, and place the common interest above personal ambition. Above all, let us ensure that the peace we enjoy today becomes the lasting inheritance of generations yet unborn.
A dialogue succeeds not because people gather and deliver speeches, but because the commitments made here lead to action when we return to our communities. We owe that much to our children, to the families who endured the crisis, to those who sacrificed to restore peace, and to the future of Kupe Muanenguba.

Distinguished ladies and gentlemen,

Our Division has shown that peace is possible when people choose dialogue, leaders accept responsibility, communities stand together and hope triumphs over despair. Let us never take this achievement for granted. It is a precious asset that we must nurture, protect and pass on to the next generation.

Our task is clear. We have restored normalcy; now we must deepen reconciliation. We have reopened our schools; now we must improve educational outcomes. We have resumed economic activity; now we must expand opportunity. We have begun addressing our infrastructure needs; now we must pursue better roads, wider internet connectivity and improved access to essential services. We have demonstrated the power of collective action; now we must sustain that unity in the pursuit of development.

My dear brothers and sisters of Kupe Muanenguba, the time has come to rise above our differences and recognise the importance of the task before us. Our villages, political opinions, professional paths and personal ambitions may differ, but our destiny is shared. Let us stand together, work together and move forward together.

May Kupe Muanenguba remain a land of peace, a home of brotherhood and sisterhood, a place of learning, a centre of agricultural prosperity, and a Division united in its determination to progress.

May Almighty God bless our traditional rulers, administrative authorities, defence and security forces, women, young people, elite and every citizen who contributes to the common good. May God protect our children, strengthen our families, guide our leaders and bless our beloved Cameroon. And may God bless Kupe Muanenguba.

Long live peace and development!

Long live a united and prosperous Kupe Muanenguba!

Long live the Republic of Cameroon and its illustrious Head of State, His Excellency Paul Biya!

Thank you for your kind attention.