

LTN
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Présidence de la République

**Commission Nationale Anti-Corruption
(CONAC)**

Tél.: 237 22 20 37 32 / 658 26 26 27 /651 64 91 94
Fax: 237 22 20 37 30 **Ligne Verte: 1517**
B.P: 33 200 Yaoundé



REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
Peace – Work – Fatherland

Presidency of the Republic

**National Anti-Corruption Commission
(NACC)**

URL: [http:// www.conac.cm](http://www.conac.cm)
Mailto: infos@conac.cm

The Plenary sitting of the National Assembly

Statement by CONAC to Members of Parliament on the achievements in the fight against corruption in Cameroon and expectations

BY

Rev. Dr Dieudonné MASSI GAMS
Chairman of CONAC

Yaounde Conference Centre, Thursday 8th April 2021

- The Right Honourable President of the National Assembly,
- The Minister Delegate of the Presidency in charge of Relations with the Assemblies,
- Honourable Bureau Members of the National Assembly,
- Honourable Members of the National Assembly,
- Dear elected representatives of the people,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,

We are delighted to interact with you, for the first time in the history of this noble House, on a crucial issue concerning our country, that is, the fight against corruption.

First of all, we would like to thank the Speaker of the National Assembly, the Right Honourable CAVAYE YEGUIE DJIBRIL, for granting our request to present to the National Assembly the achievements in the fight against corruption in Cameroon and the expectations of CONAC.

We also thank all of you present here for the interest you have shown in the National Anti-Corruption Commission and the fight against corruption.

Right Honourable President,
Honourable Members of Parliament,

I- STATEMENT ON CONAC AND ITS PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER INSTITUTIONS

The National Anti-Corruption Commission (CONAC), set up by Decree N° 2006/088 of 11 March 2006, is an independent public body charged with contributing to the fight against corruption in Cameroon.

In that capacity, CONAC is responsible for:

1. "monitoring and evaluating the effective implementation of the Government's anti-corruption plan;
2. gathering, centralizing and analyzing denunciations and information forwarded to it in respect of corrupt practices, deeds, facts and similar offences;

3. conducting all studies or investigations and proposing any measures aimed at forestalling or curbing corruption;
4. carrying out, where necessary, on-the-spot controls of the execution of projects, as well as the evaluation of the conditions of public contracts award;
5. disseminating and popularizing anti-corruption instruments;
6. identifying the causes of corruption and proposing to the relevant authorities, measures likely to lead to its eradication from all public and semi-public services;
7. performing any other duties assigned it by the President of the Republic.”

CONAC became fully operational in 2010 following the appointment of its first Chairperson, Mr. Paul TESSA, of blessed memory, Members of the Coordination Committee and the Permanent Secretary.

Subsequently, with the support of the government's Technical and Financial Partners and the National Community, the Commission developed the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, which was validated by the Government in February 2011.

The National Anti-Corruption Strategy is a government-policy accompanying instrument designed to reduce corruption. It reviews corruption trends in priority sectors of national life as well as in pillars of integrity and identifies the existing strengths and weaknesses of each sector and pillar, the roles of stakeholders and the action plans to be implemented in combating corruption in each sector.

The ten priority sectors targeted by the National Anti-Corruption Strategy are:

1. Public Investment Budget
2. Public Contracts
3. Private Sector & Business Climate
4. Decentralisation
5. Education
6. Finance (Customs/Taxation/Treasury)
7. Forestry & Environment

8. Mining & Extractive Industries
9. Public Health
10. Transport

II- ACHIEVEMENTS IN THE FIGHT AGAINST CORRUPTION THROUGH THE PrECIS TOOL

According to the National Anti-Corruption Strategy, the National Integrity System (NIS) is supported by pillars of integrity. By virtue of their independence, these integrity pillars guarantee achievements in the fight against corruption through sector-based and national strategies.

The following ten priority pillars have been identified in this National Anti-Corruption Strategy for Cameroon:

1. The Executive System
2. The Judiciary System
3. The Legislative System
4. Anti-Corruption Institutions
5. Technical & Financial Partners
6. The Media
7. The Private Sector
8. The Civil Society
9. Religious authorities
10. Traditional authorities

The PrECIS tool, that is, Prevention-Education-Conditions-Incentives-Sanctions, was adopted as the medium to implement the Strategy in each sector.

- **Prevention:** In the fight against corruption, prevention is basically the elimination of opportunities for corruption or conditions conducive to the occurrence of corrupt acts in society and in both public and private services.

- **Education:** It refers to the set of means used to build an individual's personality and promote team spirit. Some people equate it with the acquisition of civic duty. As regards the fight against corruption, education can be understood as the transmission of principles of integrity, morality and rigour to citizens in order to empower or incite them to oppose or resist corruption. This includes raising awareness about corruption and possible actions to take when one is a victim of corruption.
- **Conditions** refer to the key determinants of success in the anti-corruption drive, without which actions in the other areas may not yield the desired results. Generally speaking, it is a matter of identifying actions that prevent positive actors from being rendered vulnerable by the inadequate conditions in which they conduct anti-corruption initiatives. Such actions are "necessary but not sufficient" to fight corruption.
- **Incentives** are more about rewarding the honest worker or service, as opposed to stigmatising them. The rationale is to encourage good behaviour, as opposed to the widely acclaimed practice of punishing bad behaviour. Incentives mean rewarding and encouraging good practices, good behaviour and attitudes of probity and integrity so that they may spread.

Incentive schemes are very important in anti-corruption efforts because they help to promote positive role models, motivate people of integrity and give reasons to those who are reluctant to switch to the right track.

- **Sanction** is widely understood as any measure, even remedial, prompted by a breach of duty. As regards the fight against corruption, sanction is any action aimed at suppressing acts of corruption by punishing the perpetrators so as to deter other people from repeating them. For this tool to be fully effective, it is indispensable to consolidate the pillars of integrity (at local, regional and national levels).

The PrECIS tool is used in the Rapid Results Initiatives (RRIs) to solve corruption and governance problems in public, semi-public and private institutions within 100 days. Accordingly, the 11th Series of the Rapid Results Initiatives was conducted by six Ministries and as many public enterprises. See page 7 of **Cameroon's 2019 Anti Corruption Status Report**.

Apart from this tool that has been provided to all administrations to enable them to contribute to the anti-corruption drive in their own way, CONAC has developed other intervention tools and programmes.

As far as programmes are concerned, the Institution disposes of:

1. the National Integrity Education Programme and
2. a charter of the National Anti-corruption Coalition.

As for tools, CONAC is currently implementing:

1. Rapid Intervention Actions (RIAs) to establish and punish flagrant corruption offences following reports from victims or third parties;
2. sector-based anti-corruption campaigns conducted within the framework of the cocoa, coffee, cotton, forestry, harvesting and marketing campaigns;
3. anti-corruption awareness-raising caravans to empower the population in the fight against corruption. These caravans target young people, women, public officials, the finance sector, politicians during elections, and stakeholders in the transport sector;
4. The Corruption-Free Competitive Examination Campaign, for justice, transparency and equity in official competitive and other examinations, such as the entrance examinations into the National Advanced School of Engineering and the National Advanced School of Public Works. The entrance examination into ENAM is still being considered;
5. audiovisual and print media communication tools such as: ESPACE CONAC radio and TV programmes as well as the CONAC Newsletter;

6. the press review as a reliable information source on reports published in the press;
7. the hotline, 1517, which was launched in 2018 and has led to a sharp rise in the number of complaints received by CONAC each year, from 3 982 in 2017 to 23 048 in 2018.

In its daily operations, CONAC also carries out studies on capacity-building of anti-corruption bodies and liaises with other national and international anti-corruption bodies.

On the national level, the Institution works with:

1. the National Agency for Financial Investigation (NAFI);
2. the Business Coalition for Good Governance (BCGG)
3. the Public Contracts Regulation Board (ARMP);
4. the Cameroon Employers' Union (GICAM);
5. the Ministry of Youth and Civic Education (MINJEC)
6. the National Advanced School of Public Works (ENSTP);
7. the National Advanced School of Engineering (ENSTP);
8. Cameroon Radio Television (CRTV) which supports CONAC in its awareness-raising activities through free broadcast of the ESPACE CONAC radio and TV programmes.

At the international level:

1. the French Anti-Corruption Agency (AFA);
2. the Administrative Control Authority of Egypt (ACA);
3. the Independent Corrupt Practices Commission (ICPC) of Nigeria
4. the Economic and Financial Crimes Commission (EFCC) of Nigeria.

CONAC is also a member of the following international associations and networks:

1. Commonwealth Africa Anti-corruption Agencies (CAACA);
2. Commonwealth Africa Anti-Corruption Centre (CAACC);
3. International Association of Anti-corruption Agencies (IAACA);
4. Association of African Anti-Corruption Authorities (AAACA) ;
5. Network of Central African Anti-Corruption Agencies (RINACC);
6. Interpol

From 2013 to 2017, investigations enabled the State to recover or prevent the misappropriation of CFA1,652 billion 582 million 114 thousand 037 francs.

All these activities are published every year in a report on the state of the fight against corruption in Cameroon, in accordance with the provisions of article 24 paragraphs 3 and 4 of CONAC's constitutive instrument.

Honourable Members of Parliament,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

Today, one sustainable achievement in the fight against corruption in Cameroon is the change in attitudes, given that all efforts are focused on building an anti-corruption mentality. The ongoing anti-corruption drive in Cameroon is real, dynamic and inclusive. An increasing number of Cameroonians are saying NO to corruption. This is evident from the growing number of complaints received over the years: from 482 in 2010 to 23 048 in 2018, indicating a growing number of positive actors committed to rejecting corruption.

This observed change in mentality stems from the public awareness campaigns conducted by CONAC through anti-corruption caravans, Road shows, anti-corruption notices affixed on front walls of public and

semi-public administrative buildings, Integrity Clubs in Institutions of Higher Education as well as in some high schools and colleges, and the public utility number to make the Institution more accessible to all citizens for purposes of denunciations.

With regards to public utility numbers or toll-free numbers, their implementation is becoming more widespread in administrations to foster and ease the work of whistleblowers. Administrations such as the Police, the National Gendarmerie, Customs, the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Trade, ELECAM, already have them.

Other achievements in the fight against corruption are:

1. The setting up of anti-corruption units within Ministries, companies and public institutions;
2. The ongoing computerisation of road toll gates.
3. The decline in corruption. According to the Corruption Perception Index in Cameroon, published by CONAC in its Cameroon Anti-Corruption Status Report, corruption has declined by 0.73 points out of 10 during the first five years of the National Anti-Corruption Strategy implementation, i.e. from 2010 to 2015. The baseline of 6.6/10 has been reduced to 5.87/10.
4. In the Second General Business Survey Report (RGE-2), published in September 2018, after interviewing private and public business operators, the National Institute of Statistics concluded that corruption, which in 2009 was considered by 50.6% of respondents as the third major obstacle to entrepreneurship, fell to fourth place in 2016, with a rate of 18.1%.

There have also been significant achievements in the fight against corruption in Cameroon at the level of legislation. The most recent leap forward is the ratification by the President of the Republic of Cameroon, on 1 April 2020, of the African Union Convention on Preventing and

Combating Corruption. It is important to mention that Cameroon has been State Party to the United Nations Convention against Corruption since 2004.

From 2010 to 2020, the instruments and institutions put in place to fight corruption at the national level have been reinforced. These include:

1. the creation of a Ministry of Public Contracts in 2011;
2. the creation of the Special Criminal Court in 2011;
3. the 2016 Penal Code, which criminalised many more offences similar to corruption, such as:
 - a) misappropriation of public funds,
 - b) corruption in election matters,
 - c) insider trading,
 - d) prohibited employment,
 - e) corruption in competitive and other examinations,
 - f) money laundering through gaming and lotteries,
 - g) conflict of interest,
 - h) accounting irregularities;
4. the amendment of the Public Contracts Code in 2018;
5. the adoption and enactment of the Law on the Code of Transparency and Good Governance in Public Finance Management in Cameroon in 2018.

III- SOME CHALLENGES

We would like to point out that the Transparency International Index, which has consistently ranked Cameroon negatively over the years, emphasises the application of Article 66 of the Constitution and the adoption of an anti-corruption law. Furthermore, the Transparency International Index shows that Cameroon has been stagnant for two or

even three years, from 2019 to 2021, indicating that Cameroonians are increasingly concerned about the fight against corruption.

The Right Honourable President,
Honourable Members of Parliament;

IV- OUR EXPECTATIONS

We are convinced that to reinforce CONAC's authority and independence and enable it to effectively perform its duties, Cameroon should adopt an anti-corruption law that will incorporate the following elements:

- a. a mechanism for the protection of whistle-blowers;
- b. decentralisation of the Institution to take it closer to the local populations who are the main beneficiaries of the fight against corruption;
- c. application of Article 66 of the 1996 Constitution through a law that defines offences and sanctions in case of illicit enrichment, thereby endorsing the ratification of the United Nations Convention against Corruption and the African Union Convention on Preventing and Combating Corruption, which the Head of State is committed to implementing;
- d. granting CONAC a secure seat;
- e. granting CONAC senior staff the status of Specialised Judicial Police Officers.

The Right Honourable President,
Honourable Members of Parliament,

CONCLUSION

Given that the fight against corruption concerns every citizen of our Nation, and that it is a continuous struggle as the Head of State stated, we thought it important to draw your attention to the successes, achievements, difficulties and prospects of the anti-corruption drive in our country, especially as you represent the vast majority of the Cameroonian people.

We appeal to you to take another 15 minutes to watch a documentary that summarises the field activities of CONAC.

Thank you for your kind attention.