



**Service Œcuménique pour
la Paix**

**Ecumenical Service
for Peace**

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**A SPEECH BY NDI RICHARD TANTO, DIRECTOR OF ECUMENICAL SERVICE
FOR PEACE, ON THE OCCASION OF ORDINARY GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF 16
SEPTEMBER 2017**

The president of the Board of Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP),

Board members,

Representatives of the Eglise Evangelique du Cameroun and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon,

Representatives of civil society organizations,

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen,

I count it a privilege to address you on this very important occasion of the General Assembly Meeting of Ecumenical Service for Peace. You have all made time from your very busy schedules to be here. This to me is a sign of your commitment to Ecumenical Service for Peace and its vision for mankind. Thank you for coming and contributing to revamping the organization.

Who are we, Where are we coming from, what are we today and where are we going?

Who are we?

Ecumenical Service for Peace (SeP) is a Cameroonian inter-religious and ecumenical Association founded in July 1995 by the late pastor Luc Norbert Kenne. SeP is a proactive organisation that empowers communities and stakeholders with nonviolent strategies to

solve/transform conflicts as well as influence policy change to promote and protect human rights and good governance within Cameroon and the central African sub region. Built on Christian tenets, SeP exists to contribute to the advent of a society of participation based on justice, peace, reconciliation and compassion. Its main Strategic Axis include Improving access to justice, Promoting greater transparency and accountability in the management of public affairs, Promoting Democracy and responsible citizenship, promoting a peaceful participatory approach to resolving and transforming conflicts, and transforming itself into a vibrant and responsive organization

SeP has positioned itself as a leading civil society organization providing appropriate responses to conflict situations, strategies to pre-empt conflicts, strategies to promote participatory governance and as such contribute to building a just society of peace based on dialogue and reconciliation. SeP is under the supervision of the Evangelical Church of Cameroon (EEC) and the Presbyterian Church in Cameroon (PCC)

Where are we coming from?

It will be important to recall that Ecumenical Service for Peace organized its last General Assembly in 2007. The General Assembly of 2007 was organized against the backdrop of herculean challenges related to managing its growth. From 2002 to 2006, the organization witnessed very rapid growth. The growth was not matched by growth in staff capacity and resource mobilization. The major funding partners, Bread for the World and Catholic Relief Services were facing out. The General Assembly of 2007 put in place an interim executive body with the responsibility of restructuring the organization and mobilizing resources to support its growth. The Regional Offices of Bamenda, Douala and Garoua were closed down and their staffs laid off.

The new executive team put in place by the General Assembly of the 2007 worked for three years. In spite of its efforts, the situation of the organization continued to witness a decline in terms of outreach and resource mobilization as its traditional partners faced out.

In 2010, the Board of the organization took steps to rescue the organization from complete collapse by bring in a new Executive Director. The new Executive Director was mandated to rebuild the image of the organization, restore relationship with the funding partners and position the organization nationally and internationally.

The current executive has made deliberate efforts to maintain and foster the brand name of the organization, to reposition the organization nationally. Today the organization's point of view on national issues is always requested especially by the press. It has expressed such views on the war against Boko Haram, The Anglophone Problem, Land tenure reforms in Cameroon, corruption, election management, extractive sector transparency etc.

Internally, the organization went through an organizational audit in 2012. The organizational audit led to far reaching internal reforms culminating in the revision of the Procedure and

Financial Manual, the establishment of a Monitoring and Evaluation Manual, the restructuring of its website and the development of a new three years Strategic Plan.

The building hosting the Norbert Kenne Memorial Peace Home (NKMPH) is the main contributor to the sustainable funds of the organization. It is open to partners for training events, retreats, and lodging. The resources generated by the building have been plough back through renovation of the building maintenance cost and payment of Taxes.

However, in spite of these efforts, very little has been achieved with regards to restoring confidence and reestablishing contact with traditional funding partners. Efforts to reconnect with traditional partners have not yielded results. The activities organized by SeP since 2010 have been financed by a set of completely new partners. These new partners are Counterpart International, African Women's Development Fund, the UN Human Rights Commission and the organization's sustainability fund. With these minor grants, SeP has been able to:

- Mobilize voters for elections in Cameroon
- Carryout a survey on biometric voter system
- Published a Guide on Biometric voter Registration
- Carried out and published results of a survey on the predicament Old people of Cameroon
- Carried out a survey and sensitized Police and Gendarmes officers on Rights of female detainees in Police and Gendarmerie cells
- Review internal policy documents
- Carried out an organizational scan /audit
- Participation in influencing land Tenure reform in Cameroon through the National engagement Strategy for land reforms
- Contributed to Cameroons accession to the status of complaint country of the Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI)
- Mobilized Cameroonian youths against Boko Haram and the proliferation Small arms and light Weapons
- Advocated for the ratification of the Arms Trade Treaty etc.
- Contributed to the training Manual on the Domestication of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) in Cameroon

At International level, SeP has equally been very active.

- SeP is a **Board Member of the Global Advisory Council** of the Peacebuilding Evaluation Consortium (PEC), project on Effective Inter-religious Action (EIAP) for Peacebuilding since 2014
- SeP participated in the EIAP Global Advisory Council Meeting in Istanbul in June 2015
- SeP is a member of the **African Insider Mediators Platform** and has participated in Consultation and Validation of the Mapping of Infrastructures for Peace"

- SeP participated in an EITI conference for Central African Sub Region in Bangui in 2013
- SeP presented a paper on Actors and new strategies in the face of security challenges in sub-Saharan Africa: The case of Cameroon in the fight against Boko Haram at Abidjan
- SeP participated in the EITI International Conference in Lima Peru in February 2016
- SeP participated in the Conference to operationalized the Livingstone Formula in Lusaka Zambia in 2016.

What are we today?

Today, the context of Cameroon has greatly changed. It is no longer the island of peace as it was considered especially by the international community. Within four years (2013-2017) the country has witnessed three major crises: the Boko Haram insurgency in the Far North Region, the influx of Central African Republic Refugees in the East Region, the Anglophone identity crisis. These crises are ongoing and require strategic reflections at both policy and practical levels. These crises directly relate to the mandate of the organisation.

Furthermore, the organization has not been in close touch with its base. The General Assemble has not held for 10 years. The Board of SeP has not been very operational. Of a board membership of 12, only 5 have been operational. There is therefore need for the Board to be restructured, renewed, and energized

Today the organization is confronted with serious challenges amongst which are:

- The financial crisis affecting the NGO world. Funding has been on the decline following the financial crises in Europe and the massive influx of refugees into Europe. This has dealt a heavy blow at many local civil society organizations in Cameroon including SeP.
- The social media revolution calls for the organization to upgrade its media outreach
- The organization has limited staff to run its services effectively
- There is need to strategize to face current challenges within the context of Cameroon

Where are we going?

The overall objective of the General Assembly is to, “Revamp and sustain SeP as a lead civil society organization in Cameroon.

Specifically, the general assemble will

- Review the membership of the Board of administration
- Review the staffing needs of the organization
- Reflect on new strategies to meet current challenges in Cameroon and the world
- Review fundraising strategies of the organization

Expected Results

- Participants at the General Assembly are informed about SeP programs, and challenges
- Participants contribute to debates on present challenges and perspectives of the organization and make proposals for addressing them
- Participants see the need to contribute materially and financially to sustaining the organization as it is barely surviving on its sustainability funds.
- The Board of SeP is restructured and mobilized to give full supports to its programs
- SeP is more proactive in responding to changes within the context of Cameroon and central Africa.

Ladies and Gentlemen, esteemed members of this general Assembly meeting, we need to move into the future together because the challenges are many and far reaching. The future of the organization depends on your contribution, my contribution, our contribution. When we all put our energies together and look in the same direction, God will show us the way forward. Your reward might not come today but remember Mathew 5: 9 which states, “Blessed are the peace Makers, for they will be called sons of God”. Mathew 5:14-15 reads, “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand and it gives light to everyone in the house”. Ecumenical service for Peace is our lamp. We have the responsibility to make it shine the light of peace to Cameroon and the world at large.

Thank you again for being here.

May God richly bless and keep you.

Dr. Ndi Richard Tanto,

Director-SeP