

Ordre des Avocats au  
Barreau du Cameroun



Cameroon Bar Association

Conseil de l'Ordre

Bar Council

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*Le Bâtonnier de l'Ordre*  
*The Bar President*

## **THE BAR PRESIDENT'S END-OF-YEAR ADDRESS** **TO THE BAR**

*My Dear Esteemed Learned Colleagues,*

Once more, as the curtains drop down on us for the year, I am pleased to extend to you my best wishes for the year 2023. It is equally my wish that the specter of death, which has snatched twenty-four (24) of our colleagues from our midst this year, will recede from Bar in the coming year.

As we move on, in the hope of a better year, I urge us all to keep our departed colleagues and their loved ones in our prayers. On behalf of the Cameroon Bar Association, while wishing a speedy recovery to all sick colleagues, I would like to thank all colleagues who have shown compassion and strong brotherhood on such sorrowful and distressing situations.

More than ever before, learned colleagues, the call for subscription to a life and health insurance policy is more compelling. This is the only way we can avoid the occasional and embarrassing quest for contributions that we are sometimes obliged to make when a colleague falls, whereas, with our numbers, we can run and benefit from the best affordable insurance schemes available. With the Bar Council, we can negotiate insurance policies at favorable conditions and

accessible to all. Therefore, I strongly invite you all to subscribe massively the insurance policy negotiated for you by the Cameroon Bar Association.

*Dear Learned Colleagues,*

Tradition requires that at this time of the year, we must pause and take stock of our activities carried out during the past year, and assess our performance, as we project ourselves into the new year.

The year 2022 closes barely six (06) months after you entrusted me with the baton of command of our association. As such, it is my duty to ensure that we take a firm, objective look at the road we have travelled, the obstacles encountered, the victories won and the challenges we are confronted with.

The state of affairs at the Bar as confronted at the time of our election into office on June 20, 2022, was known to all of us. I regret to inform you that the reality proved to be contradictory and more serious.

As far as the activities carried out are concerned, and as is the tradition, we started our mandate by paying a courtesy visit to the Minister of State, Minister of Justice, Keeper of the Seals, the objective being to establish a better working relationship of collaboration with the Chancellery. We took advantage of this meeting to present some of our most urgent pre-occupations.

The next work area concerned ethics and discipline, the state of which was and remains very disturbing. As an illustration, the Bar Council has received more than one hundred and twenty (120) disciplinary files on different domains of transgressions from the Chancellery, not taking into account the plethora of complaints addressed directly to the Bar against lawyers.

On the financial level, I must inform you that before accessing the Bar's bank accounts, we were confronted with significant debts that were sometimes undocumented in the financial reports that had been presented to us, and some which required immediate redress for a good take-off. This difficult financial situation is aggravated by the grave accumulation of unpaid bar dues, which has contributed to slowing down the conduct of the undertakings to which we have committed ourselves.

More so, the ongoing state of affairs with some of our partners and project funders is plagued by disturbing episodes to the extent that one of our major project funders is laying claims to the reimbursement of a huge sum by the Bar.

*Dear Colleagues,*

Under these conditions and with a better understanding of the tasks that await it, the Bar Council, under my leadership, has made it a priority to improve relations between lawyers and other actors of the Justice system.

In particular, we have met with the Heads of the Courts, and held several working sessions with the hierarchy of the Military Justice, culminating in the exchange of focal points to better the treatment of lawyers before the military tribunals, as well as a working session with the Directorate of Judicial police towards the same goal.

At the same time, we have focused on addressing some of the major pre-occupations of colleagues which include but are not limited to the following:

- In September 2022, we seized the Minister of State, Minister of Justice, in relation to the organization of the Bar entrance exams and the discussions with the supervisory authority are ongoing;
- We are involved in the process of revising our organic law and have already submitted a draft of the Bar's proposed amendments to the Chancellery;
- We have equally prioritized reflections on the construction of the Bar Head office and hope that the fruits of this thinking will be felt in the very near future;
- With a view to improving communication between the organs of the Bar and its members, while adapting to the technological demands of our time towards a better visibility at the international level, we have updated and reconfigured the website of the Bar of Cameroon. I, hereby, I invite you to use this tool which offers the advantage of modernity for a better visibility.
- In the same spirit, we have resurrected the *Bulletin du Bâtonnier* for a better communication and to offer more visibility of the activities of the Bar. I

also invite you to furnish this Bulletin with your articles and scientific opinions.

- As a further move towards the modernization of the bar, particularly in the fight against charlatans, we worked on the attribution of matricules to all identified Advocates, which shall be subsequently ascribed on the newly improved professional ID cards carrying the NFC/QR coding system.

This goes alongside the material victories recorded in judgments obtained against certain charlatans, notably the Watchou case in Yaounde, the Ndjayig Nack Daniel Andre case in Kribi and the KENDECK Jean Diedonne case in Edea.

As far as continuing education is concerned, training has been a high point on this Bar Council's agenda as we have secured avenues for lawyers to train in different domains and specialties, for example, intellectual property at Catholic University of Central Africa.

I would like to take this opportunity to salute the interest that young lawyers are now showing in both trainings and specializations. I have also been able to observe the dynamism of the younger colleagues with regard to the activities of the Bar. I encourage them to put their richly diverse and multiple talents at the service of the Bar, for the good Bar of tomorrow that we dream of, depends on the one we build today.

On the international scene, we have actively participated in several international conferences, notably those of the UIA, the CIB, RUBAC and the Pan African Lawyers' Union (PAU), with the primary mission of the latter being to build the capacity of its members. In the same vein, we are currently negotiating the best conditions for membership into the Commonwealth Lawyers Conference with its next session scheduled to take place in India in 2023.

The CIB conference in particular, that took place in Niamey, was of remarkable importance to the Cameroon Bar for two reasons: The exemplary participation of Barrister Njambe Felina Agnes at the eloquence competition wherein she

came out second (2<sup>nd</sup>). On behalf of the Cameroon Bar, I seize this opportunity to congratulate her for the brilliant performance. Secondly, seized of the exclusion of lawyers in the defense of litigants by the 2023 tax law, the said CIB conference, in consonance with our plight to safeguard areas of our professional competence, took a resolution denouncing such obnoxious provisions of the law. On behalf of the Cameroon Bar, I salute this endeavor while stating that we shall, if this transgression of our professional rights, is not locally redressed, seize further competent jurisdictions.

Still on the international level, I welcome on behalf of the entire Bar Association, the election of our colleague, Mr. ABDOUL BAGUI, to the prestigious position of President of the Pan African Lawyers Union. This is a mark of confidence that honors the Cameroon Bar Association.

To close this chapter, I invite you to enroll in these institutions which are real crucibles for continuous training, specialization, and which also offer professional opportunities, networking, etc.

Discipline and Deontology have equally been at the center of the Bar Council's agenda these past six months. In fact, the Bar Council has already had two (02) disciplinary sessions with the third scheduled for 14th January 2023.

In the same vein, we organized and dedicated an entire week to training on Ethics and Deontology, as a refresher to colleagues, towards a more honorable performance of our duties and obligations as lawyers towards one another, our clients and society at large.

***My dear learned colleagues,***

It is important, as a Bar Association, that we continue to work relentlessly for the independence of justice in general, and of our corporation, in particular. At the same time, we must fully play our role as the guarantor of civil liberties.

The commissions of the Bar that shall be set up in the days ahead are part of this outlook. Some novelties are expected, in particular, with regard to the creation of an anti-corruption commission. This commission is very important

for the independence of justice and its credibility. In this regard, the Bar is naturally competent, and must position itself resolutely as the city's watchman.

In the same light, we shall revamp the human rights commission, with the clear objective being to ensure that it fully assumes its role as a human rights' watchdog, thereby guaranteeing citizens the respect of their rights and freedoms.

I invite all those who will be appointed to these commissions, to offer the best of their abilities whenever and wherever called to serve, especially those who shall be called to reinforce the professional capacities of their colleagues, in the best interest of the Bar. I also implore those who shall be called upon to learn to do so with diligence and humility, and to make themselves available whenever such the opportunities for knowledge acquisition and capacity building arise.

It is worth noting that, to afford the needed trainings and specializations in varied domains to render us globally competitive, it is imperative for the Bar to invest in this area. I therefore, enjoin us all to show proof of civic responsibility to the Bar by paying our Bar dues without coercion.

On this note, colleagues who are financially constrained or who are unable to redress their arrears are invited to take-up a payment plan with the treasurer before the coercive phase in March 2023. May I equally thank and encourage all colleagues who have made continuous efforts to uphold the dignity and integrity of our profession by fulfilling their responsibilities towards the Bar. Please, continue in this exemplary conduct, for that is the true spirit of our oath.

***My Dear Esteemed Colleagues,***

Notwithstanding the challenges we are facing as a corps, we would have done better, had we all resolved to work for the common interests of the Bar. Unfortunately, we have never had a full council in session because some of our elected representatives have either chosen not to attend bar Council meetings at all or to attend optionally, thereby making the quorum required for deliberations problematic.

It is my conviction that if we stop living in perpetual political ideologies and desist from propagating divisive propaganda, and rather embrace our beliefs in the true creed of confraternity, then can we become the Bar that we all dream of; then we can truly celebrate confraternity by serving those who elected us to the positions we hold. We must remember, after all, that despite our diversities and differences, we can only be strong, feared and respected if we are united.

My dear esteemed colleagues,

With this recap of the year 2022, it behooves on me, on behalf of the Cameroon Bar, to wish us all the best for the coming new year 2023! May the spirit of solidarity and conviviality that usually accompanies this time of the year, revitalize our spirit of confraternity, and usher in new opportunities for our individual and collective growth.

*Long live the spirit of confraternity!*

*Long live the Cameroon Bar Association!*

*Yaoundé, the 31<sup>st</sup> Day of December 2022*

**MBAH Eric MBAH Esq.**

**President of the Cameroon Bar Association**



A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several overlapping loops and lines, extending from the seal to the right.