

PRESIDENCY OF THE REPUBLIC

REPUBLIC OF CONGO

Unity *Work* Progress

**ADDRESS OF HIS EXCELLENCY MR DENIS
SASSOU-N'GUESSO, PRESIDENT OF THE
REPUBLIC,
ON THE OCCASION OF THE 2017 NEW YEAR**

Brazzaville, 31 December 2016

My Dear Compatriots,

The passage from one year to another is a special moment that each one of us considers, always, with joy and hope. Tradition has made it a time of great joy. But, as we know, it is not open to everyone to participate in this general rejoicing. Many people are unfortunately deprived of this opportunity.

They are all those who are affected by various trials: sorrow, mourning, the weight of illness, isolation, loneliness. My first thoughts and my solidarity in these last hours of the year 2016 go to them.

These are those who, in the name of the general interest, are compelled to work in hospitals, businesses and administrations, who are held back by

their work and do not know neither a public holiday nor a feast day. To them I express my total sympathy.

They are the valiant officers and brave soldiers of our defence and security forces. I salute the spirit of mission, self-denial and sacrifice they make every day to ensure our collective security and peace. My deepest feelings go to them.

Finally, there are those who can no longer be with us, our beloved departed, in memory of whom I join my prayers to yours so that they may find eternal peace and rest.

My Dear Compatriots,

On December 31, 2015, I was telling you that 2016 would be the year of institutional renewal and audacity in the face of the ups and downs of the economy. It is, indeed, what it has been.

Following the approval of the new constitution in 2016, we began the gradual establishment of the national institutional system, giving priority to the heart of the Executive: the President of the Republic was elected; The Prime Minister appointed, in the person of Mr. Clément MOUAMBA; the government formed into a team with a remarkable presence of women and young people.

The New Republic, it can be said with confidence, has been firmly placed on the rails.

The year 2016, on the political level was mainly marked by the election of the President of the Republic. Through this major election, our people undoubtedly confirmed their full support for the new institutions which

henceforth serve as a springboard for its great march towards progress.

On the economic front, in 2016 we faced a general unfavourable situation. The continued decline in world oil prices seriously undermined the economic and financial equilibrium of our country. Overall production fell by more than 5%. Growth slowed and our overall development objectives witnessed a decline.

In order to deal with this worrying economic and financial situation, the government had to boldly take vigorous and responsible measures to give priority only to essential aspects. To take just one example of these measures, I will cite the reduction of public expenditure in particular and in general the adjustment of the State budget to fall in line with the drop in State revenue. It is for this reason that our country has stood its ground and has been able to fulfil its commitments.

In 2016, in spite of difficulties, we were able to meet the double challenge of the accelerated municipalisation of Bouenza and the organization of the national day in Madingou. This enable us to achieve in grand style the first series of accelerated municipalisation and the rotating celebrations of the national day.

My Dear Compatriots,

What should we do in the coming year?

Obviously, the collective effort we have embarked on throughout 2016 must be continued in 2017. It must be pursued with greater vigour and rigor. Rigor for all. Rigor for the government to set an example, show the way, tell the truth. Because the economic and financial situation of our country will certainly be tougher in 2017 than it was in 2016.

This difficult context is not exclusive to our country

alone. In Central Africa, the entire CEMAC zone is almost entirely affected. This is what called for an Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State of the Community last 23 December in Yaoundé.

2017 will therefore be the year of rigor and truth. Rigor and truth for the adoption of the stronger economic measures likely to accelerate the implementation without delay of the reforms carried out by the "march towards development".

We wanted these reforms. They are indispensable because they will highlight the path we must take to get out of the mud. They must be led by all and in the interest of all to create a real dynamic of diversification of our economy and sustainable growth.

That is why we must get together and move forward without being distracted by useless quarrels and artificial conflicts. Without allowing ourselves to be carried away

by this morbid inclination to violence and to the systematic contestation of everything and nothing.

To put us together, in rigor and truth, to face in cohesion the difficulties and the pains to come.

To come together and move forward, united towards the goals of our great common dream: the one, indivisible, secular, solidary and fraternal Republic. The Republic, the place of gathering for all the sons and daughters of the nation; A haven where all the citizens of Congo are welcomed in peace, security, cohesion, unity and solidarity: the rich, the poor, the vulnerable, the intellectuals, the authorities, the workers, the peasants, the believers , the atheists, the misguided and the misled.

Whenever hatred and divisions arise in our society, armed conflicts develop, and cowardly, ignoble, and blind terrorism grows. We should be saddened by this

since it is the Republic that will end up diminishing and withering away.

My Dear Compatriots,

Difficulties and obstacles are meant to be overcome. There is nothing before us that cannot be overcome, no obstacle that cannot be crossed.

In 2017, we will continue our "walk towards development" with method and determination, with rigor and trust, making sure to focus on the essential and the possible.

Our best defence against the vagaries of life is our will. Our best weapon against resignation and fatality is hope.

Let hope and will inspire our collective action, from the first to the last day of the year.

Happy New Year to you all!

Long live the Republic!

Long live Congo!