

Continuity Despite Power Change in France

President Biya last Wednesday received in audience French and Swiss Ambassadors to Cameroon.



Le chef de l'Etat accueillant Bruno Gain.

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The change at the helm of power in France will not in any way disrupt the historic and friendly ties that exist between France and Cameroon, the French Ambassador to Cameroon, Bruno Gain, said last Wednesday, May 16, after a one hour 15 minute- audience with the Head of State, President Paul Biya. The French diplomat who was received in audience barely one day after the swearing in of François Hollande as France's new President, stated *inter alia* that the latter's ascension to the help of power may simply usher in change in expression and approach but not disconti-

nunity in relations between the two nations. "We don't expect any major change because we have such an important cooperation in every field; financial, economic, security and defence which are topics we discussed with President Biya during the audience", he said, stating however that President Hollande could be "more vigilant in questions of democracy, human rights and the rule of law among others."

The meeting of Wednesday was occasion for the Head of State to discuss a number of issues with Bruno Gain, some of which included: President Biya's Greater Ambition programme, security, and Cameroon's internal policy, notably the single electoral code and institutio-

nal perspectives as announced by President Biya during his election campaign.

Talking to reporters after the audience, the French diplomat stated his country's readiness to support him as exemplified by the recent approval by the French Development Agency (AFD) of FCFA 40 billion for the financing of the Lom Pangar Hydroelectric Dam project. "We equally discussed the second bridge over River Wouri", he said without further details. France, he said, salutes the establishment of a single electoral code, stating that "it is normal that all the aspirations of the opposition are not met", but that the existence of a single code is already a step forward. That said, Bruno Gain, stated that his country is following with interest the fight against corruption and wishes that the initiative of the Head of State continues. "The law should be allowed to take its course and there should be no one above the law", he said.

The second audience that President Paul Biya gave the Swiss Ambassador hinged essentially on investment. Urs Berner, Switzerland's Ambassador to Cameroon who presented his letter of credence last December 27, 2011, and who was accompanied by an official of Nestlé Cameroon, told reporters his country had the ambition to step up investment in Cameroon beginning with Nestlé, the Swiss piloted milk production company. The company which already exists in Cameroon and has so far invested more than FCFA 20 billion intends to expand its investments, Urs Berner said. "The company has discovered in Cameroon wonderful species of cassava which it intends to process into the popular ingredient, called *magi cubes*", he assured, without giving further details. The perspective of the Swiss investment, he said, will depend on the will of the Cameroon authorities.