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## THE TIME HAS COME FOR TOGO TO CEASE BEING A PERMANENT EXCEPTION IN THE ECOWAS UNION

ECOWAS is preparing to propose a roadmap to bring Togo out of the political crisis that has deepened since August 19, 2017. This crisis is the outcome of political decisions made in part by the Togolese government since the onset of demands for democracy in 1990 and in part by mismanagement of the 2005 crisis by regional institutions and the international community.

Immediately after the death of General GNASSINGBE Eyadema and the constitutional coup by his son Faure to become his successor, ECOWAS and the African Union (AU) proposed elections as a way out of the deadlock even though all parties knew they were rigged. Despite the bloodbath that followed, in which more than 500 people were slaughtered, Mr Faure GNASSINGBE was imposed on the people of Togo by the regional institutions with the support of some Western countries, notably France. Among the arguments put forward at the time to promote that dynastic succession was the fact that as the fruit of two ethnicities (south and north) Mr Faure GNASSINGBE would be able to reassure the army, preserve peace in Togo and institute democracy and good governance.

After many months of talks, a political agreement was signed in August 2006 between the protagonists of the Togolese political crisis. That agreement, called the Accord Politique Global (APG), included the 22 promises made by the late General GNASSINGBE Eyadema in exchange for resumption of cooperation with the European Union. It was intended to limit the number of presidential terms, ensure alternating leadership of the country and end the reign of impunity in the country. Today, twelve years later, none of the agreement's principal points has been implemented as promised and Togo remains an exception and an anachronism in Western Africa while openly violating several provisions of the ECOWAS protocol on democracy and good governance as well as the protocol covering the mechanisms for preventing, managing and ending conflicts and for maintaining peace and security.

**The international community needs to come to terms with the fact that they have consistently misread the political situation in Togo and that their suggested remedies have been invariably ineffective. It is vital for the international community to take into account the conclusion that most Togolese have reached: the GNASSINGBE system cannot be reformed or rehabilitated and will always be an obstacle for democracy and good governance in Togo and the entire region! It must be uprooted.**

It is clear to the large majority of Togolese people that the UNIR regime of Faure GNASSINGBE is nothing but a continuation of the one instituted by his father GNASSINGBE Eyadema in 1970 based on the models of Marshal Mobutu of Zaire and Kim Il Sung of North Korea.

The Faure GNASSINGBE regime (UNIR) is just like that of his father (RPT) and draws its strength from same sources:

- A repressive and tribalized army that uses arbitrary violence, terror and control of the territorial administration and economical institutions, both public and private, to maintain the GNASSINGBE dynasty in power while controlling the entire country with an iron grip.
- Guaranteed immunity of the army's officers and its militia from prosecution for human rights violations, illicit trafficking and immoral and illegal actions that constitute the foundation of their political and economical hegemony
- Failure to comply with promises and agreements signed throughout the ongoing crisis since the onset of calls for democracy in 1990

- Absolute control of all public institutions of the republic, which are used as a means to maintain the regime and keep power in the hands of the GNASSINGBE family
- Corruption and embezzlement of the country's economic and material resources for the benefit of a small group of loyal partisans while the vast majority of the population is relegated to poverty

This type of government relying on cronyism, nepotism and corruption leaves no room for projects to develop the country. The education and health systems are in ruin and there is no hope for their improvement under this regime. Endemic unemployment is the sad fate shared by Togolese youth who see their future compromised. Justice and public administration are under tight control.

In today's Togo, the promotion of ethnic tension by the government is rampant and notions of the public good, good governance, welfare of the population, and changes in political power are completely nonexistent under the regime of Faure GNASSINGBE.

After continuous rule of over 51 years by the same family, and in view of the explosive situation in Togo, any attempt to solve the crisis with the same solutions suggested by ECOWAS in 2005 would be suicidal. **The time has come to change the paradigm and bring an end to Togo's unique and inalterable status in the region.**

Any future elections organized by this regime of terror will undoubtedly lead to new post electoral violence and killings. Furthermore, as previous experiences of attempted political transition or a national unity government with the opposition parties have shown, **the GNASSINGBE regime has used subterfuge and violence to hinder any democratic progress in regards to a fair election process, including organizing sham elections with the results known in advance.**

The TogoDebout collective is calling on our shared beliefs about the basic rules of democracy and inalienable human rights to persuade both ECOWAS Heads of State and Civil Societies to use their influence in ensuring that the roadmap ECOWAS is preparing to resolve the crisis in Togo **is clearly aligned with the constitutional convergence principles shared by all ECOWAS member states and is thus in harmony with the deepest aspirations of the majority of the people of Togo and its Diaspora.** These include but are not limited to:

- Unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners and everyone who has been arbitrarily detained since the beginning of the popular uprising, the end to blockades imposed on besieged cities and neighborhoods under false pretenses, and the restoration of the people's basic freedoms.
- Reinstatement of the Constitution of 1992, adopted through a referendum with over 98.11% of the votes.
- Immediate dismissal of Faure GNASSINGBE with a grant of conditional amnesty.
- Establishment of transitional institutions in charge of the following:
  - Carrying out institutional reforms to ensure the **separation of powers, independence of the judiciary, and an apolitical army**
  - Finishing the process of decentralization while reasserting its primary goal as asset for democratic and regional development.
  - Completely **renewing the election process by reshaping the electoral code and the electoral files in order to organize credible, transparent and democratic elections.**
  - Taking all action necessary to start deep and lasting reforms of the judiciary to bring an end to impunity and arbitrary justice in Togo.

July 12, 2018

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