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BADO PRESIDENT GENERAL SPEAKS OUT ON ACHIEVEMENTS AND PROSPECTS, ONE YEAR AFTER ASSUMING OFFICE

As a build up to the Annual General Meeting (AGM) of the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO), scheduled in Buea on the weekend of Friday and Saturday 27th and 28th of February 2026, the recently resurrected magazine of the Balikumbat Development Organization's Editor in Chief – Mr Lesigha Isaac, spoke with the President General – Baa GbanWaa-yeb Dr Munja Vitalis on phone from his Buea residence on the achievements and prospects of the organization that he heads, one year after he assumed office at the helm. Below are excerpts of the interview.

EDITOR IN CHIEF (EC): Thank you Mister President General of the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO) for making yourself available to talk to us about the Organization that you head, one year after your election into office.

When and how did you first come into contact with the Balikumbat Development Organisation (BADO), and what has been your journey within the organization, leading up to your election as President General?

PRESIDENT GENERAL (PG): *I first encountered the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO) as a young Form Two student when the organization undertook the construction of two classrooms at GHS Balikumbat. The announcement by the then Principal, late Pa Mbutuh Mathias, that sons and daughters of Balikumbat had risen to uplift their own community, stirred something profound within me. I became curious about this body of visionaries: who they were, how they mobilized resources, and what spirit moved them to serve. As I uncovered the philosophy of self-reliance that BADO anchors on, I felt a deep cultural awakening. It resonated with the ancestral wisdom of our people: that a community thrives when its children engage to uplift it.*

*Years later, while pursuing a Bachelor of Science Degree at the University of Buea in 2008, destiny brought me even closer to the organisation. Guided by my academic supervisor, I undertook a research study titled “**The Concept of Self-Reliance in Community Development Initiatives in the Cameroon Grassfields: Focused on BADO.**” Through interviews and field engagement with members of the then BADO “New Look”, headed by Senator Dingha Ignatius, I encountered not merely an Organization, but a movement rooted in solidarity, dignity, and communal responsibility. That scholarly exercise deepened my conviction and inspired me to join the Buea Sub-Zone as a young member. From serving as Secretary General of the Sub-zone to coordinating Mubako students in Buea, my journey unfolded as one of humble service and gradual responsibility.*

In 2013, I was entrusted with the role of Zonal Secretary General for Zone 4 in the South West Region, and in 2016, I assumed interim leadership when the Zonal Coordinator was transferred. Beyond these responsibilities, I had the honour of serving as 3rd Vice Chair of an Ad Hoc Committee created by His Royal Majesty, Fon Doh Gahnyamyin III, to revamp the foundational

structures of BADO, and as a member of the Constitutional Review Committee. These experiences refined my understanding of leadership as stewardship—anchored on respect for tradition, collective wisdom, and accountability to the people. Thus, in November 2024, at the Elective General Assembly in Bafoussam, I was called to serve as President General. What began as youthful curiosity has matured into a sacred duty to preserve our heritage and advance the development of Balikumbat in unity, resilience, and pride.

EC: One year after assuming office, what are your achievements so far? what can you ride home about?

PG: *One year after assuming office at the helm of the Balikumbat Development Organization, our foremost achievement remains the flagship **Lahmissang–Deuleu Potable Water Project**, which we inherited upon taking office. I am pleased to state that the project is now near completion, with an execution rate of over 90 percent. This milestone realization represents more than infrastructure; it points to dignity, public health, and relief for our mothers and children who have borne the burden of distant water sources for long. Delivering water to the people is, in our cultural understanding, akin to restoring life to the land. The progress recorded stands as a visible testament to discipline, continuity, and collective resolve.*

Beyond the water project, this first year has been defined by institutional consolidation and strategic developmental gains. At the national level, we successfully organized and installed all Zonal Executives, thereby strengthening our administrative structure and improving coordination across the various Zones. This exercise revitalized our foundational structures and rekindled spiritual and psychological unity among sons and daughters of Balikumbat, both at home and in the diaspora. In practical terms, we negotiated the reinstatement of the collapsed electricity grid, restoring socio-economic activities in the village; introduced official BADO revenue receipt booklets to enhance transparency and accountability; and launched the Balikumbat Citizens Register to properly document membership and improve planning. Altogether, this first year has been devoted to restoring order, reinforcing unity, and delivering measurable development anchored on self-reliance.

EC: Apart from the Water Project and the revitalization of electricity and administrative structures, are there other projects that BADO has carried out?

PG: *Beyond the flagship Lahmissang–Deuleu Water Project, BADO has actively supported and facilitated several sub-community-driven, self-reliant initiatives across our quarters. These include structured support to the Munanji-Munchu Quarters’ Development Association Community Hall Project, the Nsup Quarter Road Project, the Fat-Fat Quarter Bridge and adjoining Road Projects, and the Joguru Quarter Hall Project.*

Our philosophy has not been to centralize every development initiative at the national level, but rather to encourage each Quarter or Sub-quarter to rise up with responsibility and ownership. In the true spirit of our ancestral tradition, where each lineage strengthens the larger clan, BADO has provided coordination, legitimacy, and institutional backing while empowering Sub-quarters to champion their own projects. This approach nurtures initiative, strengthens solidarity, and ensures that development is both participatory and sustainable.

EC: Surely you have met with some challenges in the course of your one year in office. Do you want to tell us about some of these challenges?

PG: Our foremost challenge has been financial constraint, because development aspirations can only be matched with financial capacity. Participation levels in certain zones have fluctuated, and the persistent deterioration of roads during the rainy season continues to strain our limited resources. Youth unemployment also exerts socio-economic pressure on families and community structures. We have equally confronted historical perceptions regarding politicisation and inclusiveness. Rebuilding confidence has required deliberate sensitization, open dialogue, and consistent transparency. Trust, once shaken, may only be patiently restored through integrity and visible action. Adversity refines leadership, though. These challenges have strengthened our resolve and sharpened our planning. Like the raffia palm that bends but does not break, in the wind, BADO has drawn resilience from difficulty and transformed obstacles into stepping stones for sustainable growth.

EC: What is the way forward that you and your team members are charting for BADO and Balikumbat per say?

The way forward for BADO is anchored on structured, prioritized, and sustainable development. Our immediate priority remains universal access to potable water across all quarters, for water is life and dignity. Once stability in water distribution is secured, we shall intensify road rehabilitation and pursue the acquisition of essential equipment such as a bulldozer, a grader, and an excavator. We also envision scholarship schemes for deserving students, strengthened support to health facilities, environmental restoration through tree-planting, and the revitalization of the sites of our cultural heritage, including village shrines that embody our ancestral covenant. We equally plan to modernize the palace esplanade in harmony with tradition, preserving our sacred identity marks, while embracing progress. All these initiatives shall be executed within a strict framework of transparency and accountability. Our development philosophy remains rooted in stewardship, honouring the legacy of our forebears while preparing fertile grounds for generations yet unborn.

EC: Tell us about this year's AGM. What is the theme of the Buea rendezvous?

*PG: The theme of this year's Annual General Assembly is: **“Strength in Unity: Fostering Peace and Advancing Sustainable Development for an Emergent Balikumbat.”** This theme is not merely a slogan; it is a declaration of collective intent. It captures our belief that unity is the bedrock upon which enduring progress can be built. It calls upon every son and daughter of Balikumbat to recognize that peace is not passive. It is an active commitment to cooperation, dialogue, and shared responsibility in shaping our future.*

EC: How does this theme capture the realities of today's Balikumbat?

PG: This theme reflects a community that has journeyed through moments of misunderstanding and emerged with renewed determination for cohesion. In the recent years, perception gaps and participation apathy slowed our collective momentum. Yet, under the wise guidance of His Majesty, Fon Doh Gahnnyamyin III, unity has steadily been restored. People have recognized that

peace is the first pillar of progress. Without harmony among ourselves, development remains fragile. Sustainable advancement demands collective ownership, discipline, and trust. Thus, the theme acknowledges both where we have come from and where we are determined to go to, forward together, reconciled in spirit and united in purpose.

EC: In the past year, BADO undertook discreet peace and reconciliation engagements in line with the Head of State's 6th November 2025 anniversary address. What motivated the organisation to take on this sensitive responsibility, and how would you assess the impact of those consultations on restoring calm and unity in Balikumbat?

PG: As the President General of the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO), I was highly guided by the Head of State's Anniversary Speech of 6th November 2025, in which he called on local actors and traditional stakeholders to promote a return to normalcy. Within that spirit, we felt it was our moral and community responsibility to act. Our motivation was simple but urgent: to preserve peace, protect lives, and strengthen unity in Balikumbat. We recognized the fear, tension, and uncertainty being lived by many families, especially our youths. Our consultations were deliberate and discreet because the goal was not political alignment, but community preservation. I can say that these engagements have contributed to improved communication between concerned groups, reduced misunderstandings among sections of the youths, and renewed commitment from community leaders to advocate peaceful solutions. Peace-building is gradual, but we have certainly laid a stronger foundation for stability and for the safe return of our AGMs to the village.

EC: Youth protection and reintegration featured prominently in your dialogue initiatives. What concrete measures is the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO) putting in place to prevent further radicalization? What sustainable opportunities are being created, that address the root causes of frustration among young people?

Our youths are the backbone of Balikumbat, and we are very conscious of the difficult environment in which many of them have found themselves. During our dialogue initiatives, we placed strong emphasis on preventing further radicalization and promoting safe reintegration pathways. Moving forward, BADO is committed to strengthening youth empowerment and employment initiatives. We believe that addressing the root causes of frustration, such as unemployment and lack of opportunities, is essential to lasting peace. Beyond words, we are encouraging constructive community participation, mentorship, and lawful engagement. Our message to the youths is clear: they are builders of our future, not victims of history. Protecting and guiding them remains our top priority.

EC: You emphasized respect for traditional institutions and the need for Balikumbat to remain neutral and safe for markets, schools, and development activities. How is BADO balancing peace advocacy with community development, and what practical steps are being taken to ensure that the Annual General Meetings safely return to the village?

Respect for the traditional authority is central in all our engagements. Our traditional institutions safeguard our culture, identity, and stability. We remind all parties that any action that undermines these structures ultimately weakens our community. At the same time, we

emphasize that Balikumbat must remain neutral and safe - a place where markets function freely, schools reopen securely, and development initiatives continue without intimidation. Development cannot thrive in an atmosphere of fear. BADO remains firmly committed to non-violence and lawful engagement. We will continue discreet peace efforts and collaborate with all stakeholders who prioritize the safety and unity of our people. For us, peace is not weakness; it is wisdom. And unity remains our greatest strength.

EC: Tell us why we need to raise funds at this year's AGA, and what is your target?

PG: Development is sustained by resources. The expansion of water distribution, comprehensive road rehabilitation, acquisition of heavy equipment, scholarship programmes, and cultural revitalization cannot be realized without a robust internal mobilisation. True self-reliance requires financial commitment from within. This AGA fundraising effort seeks to generate substantial capital to complete the next phase of water connections and establish a solid financial foundation towards acquiring road construction equipment. Our target is ambitious yet realistic, designed to significantly advance priority projects while maintaining prudence and accountability. The objective transcends monetary value. It is about demonstrating ownership. When the people invest in their own development, they safeguard it with pride and vigilance.

EC: What strategies have been put in place to ensure a successful AGM at the Buea Molyko Omnisport Stadium?

PG: To ensure a successful AGM at the Buea Molyko Omnisport Stadium, we adopted early planning, inclusive programming, and extensive sensitization across Zones and the diaspora networks. The programme was carefully crafted to blend governance, youth engagement, culture, and recreation. Activities include the Fon's address to the youths, National Identification Card sensitization, sporting competitions, cultural displays, a keep-fit walk, project presentations, the launching of our website, a structured fundraiser, a recognition ceremony, and a gala night. Each segment has been designed to attract every demographic group within our community. By harmonizing accountability with celebration, we hope to transform the AGM into both a parliament of progress and a festival of unity, where development reporting meets cultural pride.

EC: As Baa Gban Waa-yeb, literally translated as: the chief rallying force of kiths and kins, to what extent have you succeeded in reconciliation and rallying the sons and daughters of Balikumbat?

PG: The title Baa Gban Waa-yeb, graciously conferred on me by His Majesty, Doh Gahnnyamyin III, signifies a rallying force for reconciliation and unity. Since assuming office, deliberate efforts have been made to promote inclusive governance, expand sensitization, moderate divisive rhetorics, and rebuild institutional trust. The increased participation witnessed during the elective general assembly and the successful Bafoussam launching, and the renewed enthusiasm across various Zones, are tangible indicators of progress. Confidence in BADO as an apolitical and inclusive development platform has been steadily restored. However, reconciliation is not a

destination reached once and for all; it is a continuous covenant among a people. While much ground has been regained, we remain steadfast in patiently, consistently, and faithfully nurturing unity, for the enduring prosperity of Balikumbat.

EC: What is your ultimate message to the sons and daughters of Balikumbat as they gather in Buea at the Molyko Omnisport Stadium, come Friday and Saturday the 27th and 28th of February 2026?

PG: My ultimate message is simple yet profound: the destiny of Balikumbat rests in our collective discipline and unity. Development is not the sole responsibility of the Executive. Every quarter, every family, every elite, and every youth carries a sacred obligation to contribute. Let us renounce division and embrace cooperation. Let us invest our resources, intellect, and time in building institutions that will outlive us. The strength of a people is measured not by individual success but by shared advancement. If we stand together, guided by respect for tradition and commitment to progress, Balikumbat shall not merely grow, it shall flourish with dignity.

EC: Thank you Mister President General of the Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO) for the time you have shared with us, and most importantly for your exhaustive responses to our worries. We wish you a wonderful Annual General Assembly in Buea, and a very fruitful tenure of office at the helm of BADO. It was a wonderful experience and a big pleasure having you.

PG: The pleasure is shared, as all roads lead to Buea come the 27th and 28th of February 2026.

Interviewed by: LESIGHA ISAAC BUMBEDGHA

For: The Balikumbat Development Organization (BADO) VOICE