



**Cotonou Declaration on Democracy, the Rule of Law and Respect for Constitutional Principles in Africa.**

**Cotonou, January 26, 2023**

From January 23 to 26, 2023, the General Assembly of Tournons La Page (TLP) was held in Cotonou. This important event in the life of TLP saw the participation of a hundred actors from Africa, Europe, America, and the Middle East, including representatives of TLP's national coalitions, representatives of coalitions aspiring to membership, partner organizations as well as representatives of technical and financial partners.

At the conclusion of this event, we, the members of the General Assembly of Tournons La Page, declare the following:

1. First of all, we warmly thank all the technical and financial partners, the international secretariat as well as all the people who contributed to the holding and the success of this meeting. We thank in particular the Beninese authorities for the hospitable reception that was reserved for the various delegates;
2. We regret that in many of the countries represented, enormous challenges to democratic change, the rule of law, respect for constitutional principles and human rights persist. Dictatorial and repressive reflexes, exclusionary and bad governance practices, electoral fraud, oppression against TLP members as well as pro-democracy actors, military and constitutional coups, terrorism and armed conflicts are evils that undermine our countries and constitute serious handicaps to the emergence of a true democracy;
3. We condemn the growing restriction of civic space and all the consequences that this situation has on the lives of citizens. Thus, we strongly condemn the arbitrary arrest and imprisonment of our colleagues Ibrahima DIALLO, Oumar SYLLA and Mamadou Billo BAH in Guinea, Jean Rémy YAMA in Gabon, Prince FADEL in Togo and Floriane IRANGABIYE in Burundi, who were arrested for their work as citizens' watchdogs and for denouncing violations. We unanimously call for their unconditional release and we reaffirm our full support for them. These dissuasive and repressive practices initiated by some governments will neither discourage us nor prevent us from continuing our citizen's struggle in favor of democracy, the rule of law, the respect of constitutional principles as well as the equality of citizens before the law;
4. In many countries, citizens are not equal before the law. Discriminatory practices based on political affiliation have become commonplace and create all kinds of frustrations. The instrumentalization of justice is such that it has become a tool of repression, subject to the will of the executive power instead of being a power that protects citizens;



5. We note with regret that some heads of state have already expressed their desire to remain in power in violation of constitutional principles related to presidential term limits, practices that jeopardize the stability of countries and the achievements of democracy while mortgaging the future of the youth of their countries;
6. We are aware of the central role of women and youth in the different countries. In order to perpetuate the TLP network and to make it relevant to the realities of our contexts of action, we are committed to the progressive and effective inclusion of youth and women in all its structures and more particularly in the decision-making bodies;
7. We are pleased and proud to welcome the new Tournons La Page coalitions in Benin, Malawi, Mali and Uganda. We welcome these new coalitions who have chosen to join our network, and we are convinced that their membership will strengthen TLP and vice versa.

**From all of the above:**

1. **TLP renews its commitment to democracy, respect for the constitutional principles of presidential term limits, the rule of law, equality of all before the law, and the opening of the civic space;**
2. **TLP calls on the governments of Burundi, Gabon, Guinea and Togo to release our colleagues Floriane IRANGABIYE, Jean Rémy YAMA, Ibrahima DIALLO, Oumar SYLLA, Mamadou Billo BAH and Prince FADEL who are languishing in prison, prosecuted for their work in defense of human rights and democracy;**
3. **We call on all African leaders to stop state violence against citizens, human rights defenders, and pro-democracy actors and to open up the civic space in order to guarantee social stability and the development of the population;**
4. **One Two and No more! There is not democracy without power alternation!**