



SOBA AMERICA

## **JOINT STATEMENT FROM THE PRESIDENT GENERAL OF SOBA AND THE PRESIDENT OF SOBA AMERICA REGARDING THE RECENT VIDEO OF SJC SASSE.**

December 20, 2021

Fellow SOBANS,

Greetings. This week has been a tough one for us given the circulation of a video presenting a very unsanitary view of our beloved alma mater, Saint Joseph's College Sasse. Like you, the leadership of SJC Sasse, SOBA and the Bishop's House, are very perturbed by this video. Everybody is frustrated, especially parents who have children in SJC Sasse. That is not the Sasse that most of us remember. That is not the Sasse that most of us brag about to our friends, relatives, and the world at large. Certainly, that is not the Sasse that we want for our kids and grand kids. There are obviously some areas of the campus that make us proud, but the ugly side is usually the side that will be talked about the most. Following the circulation of this video, the President General of SOBA and the President of Soba America (POSA), amongst others, reached out to the school's authorities. President General Iyok had a meeting with the school's authorities (Principal – Fr. Anuchem and Proprietor – His Lordship Bishop Bibi) yesterday regarding these concerns and the way forward. President Fote has also been in communication with them on this matter.

Gentlemen, before we proceed to discuss the way forward, we would like to put the current conundrum into perspective. As you already know, Sasse College was relocated to Soppo, then Mutengene, and finally to Tiko, as a result of the ongoing Anglophone crisis in Cameroon. The campus had become unsafe for the students hence a painful decision was made to move the students elsewhere. What this meant was that the campus was abandoned and left to the vagaries of Mother

Nature, passers-by, squatters, and anyone who happened to find themselves in Sasse. That was the state of Sasse College for about 3 years.

Secondly, at the time of the relocation, SJC Sasse had a population of around 1000 students. However, as we speak, the population has dwindled to less than a quarter of that number. The above factors, and many others, have posed a major challenge to the authorities of SJC Sasse, the Bishop's House, and the entire SOBA community, upon the resumption of life on the campus after the aforementioned hiatus. The million dollar question now is...what is being done to address the challenges that the school currently faces? What is being done to rehabilitate SJC Sasse?

We want SOBANS and all stakeholders of SJC Sasse to know that the challenges currently faced by SJC Sasse are not being ignored by the school's administration nor the Bishop's House. We have been in constant communication with the authorities to discuss concerns and seek solutions for a way forward.

During a dinner in honor of his Lordship Bishop Bibi hosted by Soba America's President Dr. Bertrand Fote and First Lady Laura Fote at their residence in North Carolina last summer, the Bishop had a very engaging side meeting with the leadership of SOBA America on the challenges that the school is currently facing. Similar meetings have also been held by the Bishop and other stakeholders, including President General Iyok. The Bishop discussed his plans for SJC Sasse and took note of the input from SOBANS. Please rest assured that the problems of the school are being addressed. The Bishop informed us that amongst the changes that he has instituted in Sasse is the fact that 25% of net revenue is dedicated to the maintenance of the campus. He also accepted the proposal from SOBANS regarding the creation of a Sasse College Heritage Board made up of representatives of all the stakeholders of SJC Sasse, to oversee and manage projects that will help rebuild

the historic façade of SJC Sasse. The Board will also play an advisory/oversight role to ensure that the school authorities follow through with the maintenance of the campus. Both SOBANS, the Principal, and the Bishop also recognize that the problems of SJC Sasse go way beyond its infrastructure. These commitments by the Proprietor, mentioned above, are a good first step towards finding long term and sustainable solutions. There are other issues e.g administrative, disciplinary and others, that are being examined and addressed by the school's authorities. Bishop Bibi and Principal Fr, Anuchem have also committed to working hard, with input and advice from SOBA leadership, PTA and other stakeholders to address these issues. At a meeting following the recent poor GCE results, a number decisions were made to address some of these matters.

In our conversations with the school authorities, we have been frank, open and engaging, sharing feedback from you – fellow SOBANS, and advice. The school authorities have been very receptive and appreciative and have committed to reviewing policies and procedures that have played a role in the current state of affairs. While we would all love to see instant results, we hope you will understand that these changes that are being implemented will take some time to yield results. We are committed to continuing to work with the school authorities to help them through this process, as well as hold them accountable to ensure they follow through with the reforms that they are implementing. Fellow SOBANS, we all share the same goal for SJC Sasse – SOBANS, school authorities and Proprietor.

With respect to the look of the campus, some major infrastructural projects have already been undertaken and some are currently underway to reshape the image of Sasse. Prior to getting students back on campus after three years, the Bishop undertook a massive remodeling project with the goal of making the campus habitable again as well as improving safety of the students. Major work was undertaken to rehabilitate the refectory, dormitories and the main block prior the students could move back to the campus. Fencing the main campus was done to keep the students safe. We have seen the complete remodeling of Saint Martin's dormitory by the school's authorities following the unfortunate fire last January.

Currently the project to give a major face lift to the assembly hall is underway in honor of long time principal Pa Ngando. Updates on this project were recently shared with SOBANS. The Sasse road project has just been launched. This project is aimed at rehabilitating the road leading from the main gate of SJC Sasse up to the main campus. The President General of Soba, Mr Sammy Pride Ayuk Iyok, and his collaborators are working tirelessly to make sure that this project is completed on time. SOBANS will be updated on the progress of this project. Those who have visited Sasse recently can testify that while much work still needs to be done around the campus, much has already been accomplished by the new proprietor of SJC Sasse, His Lordship Bishop Bibi, in collaboration with SOBANS, the PTA of SJC Sasse, and other stakeholders.

Fellow SOBANS, inasmuch as the current state of SJC Sasse is worrisome to some of us, most of us, and all of us, we firmly believe that it presents a unique opportunity for us to reshape and rebrand our beloved alma mater. As the saying goes, “the greatest glory in living lies not in never falling, but in rising every time we fall.” We need to seize the opportunity posed by the current challenges SJC Sasse is facing to place the school back on the mantle of academic excellence. It is time for us to channel our energy and frustration to recast Sasse as the shining city on the hill.

To the above end, we need all hands on deck. The Bishop’s House, SOBA, PTA and other stakeholders have to work hand in gloves to make things happen. SJC Sasse is going through a dark moment and some of our detractors are already cheering the demise of the once “almighty Sasse.” Calls are being made to the effect that Sasse will never be the same; that Sasse is now history. Some are asking if Sasse will/can ever rise again. Guys, we need to prove these naysayers wrong. We need to regain our pride in our alma mater. We need to hold on to our creed of being the few, proud, and different. We need to let the world know that the “Harvard of Cameroon” is alive and destined for greater achievements. We share a common

heritage and legacy that will forever be a part of us – SJC Sasse. Together, we can and we should work to shape this legacy the way we all envision. Bishop Bibi and Fr. Anuchem are committed to doing all they can to get SJC Sasse back to its rightful place at the top of the academic pillar in Cameroon. Let us work together to help them, while we hold them accountable, to make our common dream for SJC Sasse come true. SJC Sasse is a part of us.

It is often said that talk is cheap hence our aspirations of Sasse may be mere pronouncements about some lofty, yet unattainable, ideas and goals. That, we can assure you all, will never be said about SOBANS and their passion for Sasse. The Bishop's House has taken a very proactive approach to the problems of Sasse, unlike the wait-for-SOBANS-to-fix-it approach that existed in the yesteryears. Bishop Bibi has demonstrated his commitment to making impactful changes to how Sasse is being managed, both financially and otherwise, and we have seen some of the benefits of his commitment. President Iyok and his team are leaving no stones unturned in their collaboration with the proprietor of Sasse to bring this meaningful changes to Sasse. Lastly, the SOBA America family, under the leadership of President Fote, as well as the entire SOBA community in the diaspora, have been engaged in this revolution.

As we set about to revolutionize Sasse, please keep in mind that no amount of participation is too small or too large. We may not all agree with all the aspects of the modernization of Sasse. However, we all agree that if we stay united and committed, no challenge facing Sasse will be insurmountable.

Let's stay focused. Let's stay engaged. Let's continue to stand tall and proud. We will turn things around for good. We have the commitment. We have the passion, energy, and will. As Churchill once said, "the pride of greatness is responsibility. "The authorities of SJC Sasse, the Bishop's House, SOBA, Sasse PTA, and all

stakeholders, let's all take the collective responsibility of not putting this opportunity to waste. As President Fote always says, teamwork makes the dream work. Let us come together, keep together, and work together. Let the world once again see what the greatness of Sasse and SOBANS is.

Thank you.

SOBANLY,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'S. Ayuk Iyok', written in a cursive style.

Sammy Pride Ayuk Iyok, President General of SOBA.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'B. Fote', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Bertrand Fote, President of Soba America (POSA).