



Cameroon

Douala's streets have reassumed their customary calm after the February protests

COUNTRY PROFILE



▶▶▶ RECENT CIVIL UNREST IN CAMEROON HAS CAUSED THE BIYA ADMINISTRATION TO TAKE ITS REFORM POLICIES TO GROUND LEVEL, A TASK THAT THE CAMEROONIAN LEADER HAS THE POLITICAL EXPERIENCE TO ACHIEVE

Back to basics is the way forward

GEOGRAPHY: Cameroon covers 179,700 sq miles, stretching from mangrove swamps on the Atlantic Coast through dense rainforests to the more arid north by Lake Chad. It borders Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic, Congo, Equatorial Guinea and Gabon

POPULATION: 18.2 million (July 2007 est.)

ETHNICITY: Some 200 ethnic groups. In the south, Doualas, Bamilekes, Tikars and Baumauns are prominent; in the west, the Eundons and Fulbes; in the north, the Fulanis; in the southeast, there is a Baka pygmy minority

RELIGION: A Christian majority in the south and a Muslim majority in the north, with half the population adhering to traditional African religions

LANGUAGE: French and English are the two official languages. About 200 African languages are spoken, the most prevalent being Beti and Bulu

CAPITAL: Yaounde

ECONOMY: Cameroon produces around 90,000 barrels of oil per day. It is also the world's fourth-biggest producer of cocoa, and produces large amounts of coffee, timber, cocoa and palm oil

Source: Reuters

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MINFOPRA

Bringing Cameroon up to speed

Computerization is enabling MINFOPRA to streamline the business of public service, recruit a record number of new teachers and fight corruption at source

PRESIDENT BIYA has outlined three major aspects of a reform strategy calculated to get Cameroon's economy kick-started. As Minister of Public Service and Administrative Reform Emmanuel Bondé points out, his own department is one of the first places to start applying and implementing these reforms.

The Ministry, MINFOPRA in its French acronym, is in charge of all aspects of human resources within the state departments, from recruitment and training to plans and salaries. Currently, the main challenge lies in the first, recruitment. "During the economic crisis, recruiting stopped," says Mr. Bondé. "Now we are under strong pressure to fill posts, but we need to make careful choices to ensure that we meet our standards."

IN ITS 58 YEARS as an independent country, Cameroon has lived a golden youth as the most prosperous and fastest-growing African economy. Recording an average yearly growth of 7% throughout the sixties and seventies, a harsh fall into recession followed as the economy was hit in the mid-eighties by a sharp decline in the commodity prices of its main exports: cocoa, coffee and oil. Between 1986 and 1994, GDP per capita dropped by 60%. In power since 1983, the government of President Paul Biya has since negotiated a recovery program aimed at restructuring the economy with international lenders, and its Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) was approved with high marks by both the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in 2003.

Although the country managed to overturn the recession, achieving 3.5% growth in 2006 with a projected 4.5% for 2008, it

is still far from enjoying the wealth it once had. Sparked by the rising price of food and fuel, the February protests that gripped the capital city Yaounde, Douala and several other cities were the most violent disturbances in over 15 years.

The voice of the people has, however, been heeded by President Biya. Earlier this month he raised state salaries by 15% and suspended customs duties on basic commodities. He also called for fuel prices, telephone rates and bank charges to be revised while assuring Cameroonians that he would press ahead with reforms in the agricultural, mining and industrial sectors.

All this is a far cry from the unbridled optimism of President Biya's New Year's address earlier this year in which he outlined a three-pronged strategy to take Cameroon forward. The first and most important step is the revival of the national economy. Annual growth is inching



up steadily, but this, says the president, is not nearly enough. A concerted effort must be made to implement large scale industrial and agricultural projects; improve energy production and distribution, taking into account renewable energy sources; encourage private sector participation across the economy and at the same time emphasize the government's role as a facilitator and regulator by creating an investment-friendly environment. The government has recently privatized various state companies, and the

positive impact is already noticeable. The electricity firm, AES SONEL, expects to add 750,000 new electricity connections throughout the country by 2021, while privatization of the mobile telephony firm, Camtel, has opened up the sector and exponentially increased the number of mobile telephone subscribers in only a few years.

Cameroon is also determined to diversify and add value to its exports. Cocoa production, for instance, is expected to reach 200,000 tons by 2010, and the aim

is to set aside between 5% and 10% of this to make chocolate. For the time being, trade with the European Union of key products such as bananas is safeguarded by bilateral agreements.

A boost to commercial relations with the U.S. took place this year when a forum of Cameroonian ministers and industrial executives visited three major U.S. cities to promote the improved facilities for investors – and to search for potential partners. A positive international perception of Cameroon, says Prime Minister Ephraim Enoni, is vital and must be actively projected.

Second of President Biya's priorities is the overall improvement of living standards. The International Monetary Fund has recently reviewed Cameroon's ongoing Poverty Reduction and Growth Program; its conclusion was that structural reform continues, albeit slowly, and public spending and fiscal administration strategies are on the right track. In his bid to reduce poverty, the president aims to raise standards in the education system, create a more efficient health system, provide drinking water to more of the population, provide housing and roads to connect rural populations, and generally improve safety. He has also created the National Agency for Information and Communications Technology to promote new technologies in the government, in commerce and in education.

Finally, Cameroon will continue to fight one of its major scourges: corruption. To date, the President's record on this strategy is good. In the last two years a law has been adopted on declaration of assets by officials and ministers, leading to the conviction of several high-profile businessmen, and a new anti-corruption commission has been established.

INTERVIEW: EPHRAIM ENONI

'We have no restrictive measures for national or foreign investors'

In spite of recent unrest in Cameroon, Prime Minister Ephraim Enoni describes a country with investment potential

How would you describe Cameroon's international relationships and with which countries does it enjoy especially close relations?

Cameroon has two kinds of relations with other countries. The first is multilateral: we belong to the same organizations. Our membership in the United Nations already gives us a connection with practically every other country, but we also belong to the Commonwealth, the association of francophone nations, and the Islamic community.

The second type is bilateral, with individual countries. We have good diplomatic and economic relations with the United States. Thanks to a noticeable increase in American investments and joint ventures, the U.S. is one of our biggest foreign investors. We also have bilateral agreements in specific areas such as education and security.

Cooperation between Cameroon and the European Union (EU) covers various domains, including commerce and industry, infrastructures, agriculture, environment and forests. The EU is Cameroon's principal trading partner. In addition, the transportation infrastructures sector benefits from substantial EU financing. For historical reasons, we have close relations with Germany, France and Britain.

What is Cameroon's role within CEMAC (Central African Economic and Monetary Community) countries?

Within CEMAC, we have the strongest economy and the largest population, which means we are bound to play a leading role in the sub-region. However, CEMAC nations enjoy equal sovereignty and we do not impose on or have a right of veto over the organization. Our main strength lies in our 400km of coastline, which makes the other countries dependent on us for their external trade.

Which are Cameroon's main economic sectors, and where do the best opportunities for investment lie?

We have very rich subsoil. Our region has practically all the minerals and many of them are still entirely unexploited. This is an area with much potential. Nevertheless, our main economic sector is agriculture. Petroleum production from the Gulf of Guinea has been a major economic booster for countries such as Equatorial Guinea and Gabon. Our production is not massive, but investment in this area could bring substantial returns.

What is being done to encourage foreign investment in these and other areas?

When it comes to fighting corruption, the third arm of President Biya's national strategy, Mr. Bondé is confident of the commitment shown by his department. "Civil servants must be seen to be honest. It is our responsibility to ensure this."

The first step is to remove opportunity at the earliest stage. Rather than dealing directly with civil servants, the general public will submit their requests or complaints to the office in the morning, and return to receive their replies in the afternoon. "This allows the staff to remain productive," explains the minister.

The progressive computerization of public administration is also helping to weed out possible instances of bad practise. The new SIGIPES system, an integrated personnel and salary management program, records data input, meaning wrong information can be traced to its source. As an extra, computerization is helping to speed up administrative matters. "In 2001 we dealt with 2,072 files; last year we dealt with 29,816," says Mr. Bondé.



EPHRAIM ENONI, Prime Minister of Cameroon

We have no restrictive measures for investors, whether national or foreign. We have a very liberal exchange policy, we have established an attractive investment code, our fiscal policy is transparent and we have an efficient legal system in place to protect investors.

How does the government plan to implement President Paul Biya's three main priorities for the revival of economic development in Cameroon?

In order to fully tackle the problem of poverty we need to produce and generate more wealth. We are therefore introducing more productive investment to boost employment. At the same time, we are focusing on the provision of education, health and social amenities such as water and electricity, particularly to rural areas. Lastly, we are devoting a lot of energy to the fight against corruption, with noticeable success. As Prime Minister, I have taken the appropriate steps to make sure these strategies are implemented and that we obtain results.

MINISTRY OF JUSTICE

Promoting Cameroon's potential for foreign investment and overseeing the privatization process

Investment opportunities abound in Cameroon, from timber to agriculture. New regulations will tackle corruption and improve the concessionary process

OVER THE PAST DECADE, Cameroon has been placing more and more importance on the role of the private sector. The country is aware of the natural incentives it can offer the discerning investor, not only in terms of its exploitable resources and assets, but also in terms of peace of mind, thanks to the existence of a stable and peaceful democratic administration and a steady macroeconomic environment.

In order to consolidate the role of the private sector, several measures have been taken, including the adoption of a new investment charter and the privatization of a large number of state firms, while the state has defined its role as regulator by creating new laws for various economic sectors.

Transparency, says Vice Prime Minister and Minister of Justice Amadou Ali, is the key element that will make investing in Cameroon a desirable option for international businesses and traders. This can be achieved only through the offices of a sound and fair judicial system, and a concerted effort to eradicate corruption at every level. "The fight against corruption concerns my ministry in a special manner," says Mr. Ali. "We have set up an anti-corruption commission as well as the National Agency for Financial Investigation, which looks into any suspicious movement of funds." The reforms set in motion within the justice department in-

clude the revision of the penal code, a synthesis of the French and British judicial procedures.

As far as investment opportunities are concerned, the government of Cameroon has made it clear that anybody can commence any type of economic activity within the country, without fear of expropriation and subject to generous tax and customs benefits that include procedure simplification – in other words, exonerating new enterprises from business licenses during the first two years of their creation – and the application of zero VAT on exports.

While several other privatizations are currently under way, the government is keen to provide information on the most attractive sectors for investment. Chief among these is timber – Cameroon has the second largest forestry reserves in Africa – 22.5 million hectares comprising 800 commercially viable species. Current exploitation levels are weak, and the internal market is minimal.

A sector code is being drawn up to improve regulations regarding concession granting, management and environmental protection.

Agriculture and agro-industry offer a range of options. Production for national consumption, mainly plantain and manioc, is on average 6.2 million tons a year, but around one million tons a year are destined for export. Cameroon ranks 4th in the world for cocoa production and 8th for coffee. Thanks to a recently signed agreement with the EU, these and other products such as sugar and bananas are guaranteed free access to the European market.

Other areas that harbor investment potential – in addition to mining – are tourism, maritime transport and construction.

Transparency is the key element that will make investing in Cameroon a desirable option for international businesses

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Cameroon

ENERGY

Powering the growth of Cameroon through alternatives

Cameroon's energy potential is one of the greatest in the region, with a hydroelectric capacity of 55.2GW and a reserve of 110 billion cubic meters of gas

CAMEROON, firmly planted on the path towards development, can already claim more than 10 years of slow but steady economic growth, and yet the bulk of the country's natural resources potential has not yet been fully exploited.

Thanks to abundant water supplies, Cameroon has a hydroelectric potential of 55.2 GW; it possesses 110 billion cubic meters of gas; crude oil is available at the rate of more than 90,000 barrels per day; and even the waste product of wood treatment from its extensive forests could provide around one million cubic meters a year for energy purposes. This, of course, does not take into account renewable sources of power such as solar energy, particularly in the south of the country, or wind energy, which could be harnessed along the country's coastline and in the northern provinces.

The government, prompted by President Paul Biya's determination to resolve Cameroon's energy production issues, has taken on the challenge of utilizing the country's resources to the maximum. The Ministry of Energy and Water (Minee), led by minister Jean Bernard Sindeu, has embarked upon a series of projects that aim not only to renovate and improve the existing energy production networks, but also to create new ones worthy of investor interest, whether national or foreign.

With regard to water production and distribution, in particular drinking water, the country's resources are in the hands of the now privatized National Water Corporation (SNEC), which produces 415,000 cubic meters a day. Over the past few years, particular attention has been paid to the extension of the existing network, in many instances with the cooperation of foreign partners. "In addition to ongoing programs, our ambition is to create a



Cameroon's oil production has decreased in recent years but is still a major economic contributor

drinking water supply network for the entire country using our existing hydraulic and hydrologic resources, just as we now do for Douala and Yaounde," says Mr. Sindeu.

However, water in Cameroon has another use: most of the country's energy is hydroelectric, sourced from three major power stations at Edea, Lagdo and Songloulou. Given that the total electricity output of these three stations is only around half of the country's actual hydroelectric production capacity, new plants are being set up at Nachtigal, Colomines and Meemvele to make use of both man-made dams and natural waterfalls. "Over the next two to three years, the realization of these projects will allow us to provide the additional energy required to supply the growing industrial sector and to continue economic

development and the improvement of living standards for the general population," says the minister.

While Cameroon's verified oil supplies are currently showing a slight drop in production, interest in the exploration of new sites has not waned, thanks in part to a favorable legal and investment framework. Also influential was the 2006 decision taken by the International Court of Justice to cede authority over the Bakassi peninsula, subject of a long-term border dispute with neighboring Nigeria, to Cameroon. Bakassi juts into the Gulf of Guinea, an area which may contain up to 10% of the world's oil and gas reserves.

Minister Sindeu points out that Cameroon needs upstream capacity, particularly in crude oil refining. At present, Cameroon has only one refinery, SONARA, which cannot provide all the

country's needs, let alone supply neighboring landlocked nations such as Chad or the Central African Republic. Increasing refinery capacity is therefore a priority for the ministry.

"In the same vein, we want to develop the oil and petrochemical industries, particularly with regard to the exploitation of our gas fields," says Mr. Sindeu. Cameroon has extensive gas fields in the Kribi, Sanaga and Rio del Rey areas; with the cooperation of national or foreign private investors, the country hopes to continue with exploration and exploitation activities. These fields have the potential not only to fuel industrial development, but to boost agriculture with the production of fertilizer, and to provide liquefied gas for domestic consumption, thus putting a stop to the insidious destruction of the country's forest ecosystems – wood burning is currently the main source of energy at household level.

Minee has developed long-term regulatory frameworks for the oil, gas and water sectors, and set up regulatory agencies for electricity production, providing a solid basis for development and investment. In addition, the ministry is in the process of drafting a development plan for the electricity sector running to 2030, which will improve the use of production sites throughout the country to reduce the cost of electricity supply, while adding at least 5,000MW to the regional market by 2020.

Cameroon is appealing to international investors through the standard practice of issuing tenders. For instance, the tender on the Memveele hydroelectric dam brought in an expression of interest from British firm Global, which, in partnership with a South African company, SudEnergy, will be heading the development. AES Sonel, currently the main provider of electricity to Cameroon as a whole, is 60% owned by AES Corporation, a private American company.

"We have a working regulatory and legislative framework, and the energy sector has vast potential. Investors who are prepared to show confidence in Cameroon are practically assured of good returns on their investments," explains Mr. Sindeu.

BAKASSI PENINSULA

Bakassi may hold 10% of the world's oil and gas reserves

The International Court of Justice has ceded authority of the disputed Bakassi peninsula to Cameroon

WITH 52 TYPES of exploitable mineral substances currently known to be available in Cameroon, from precious stones to industrially useful metals, the government has woken up to the need for a determined, systematic and sustained campaign to make full use of these natural resources.

"Until recently, apart from quarrying limestone and marble, and the artisan exploitation of gold, diamond and sapphire, we have had no industrial mining activity," says Ndanga Ndinga Badel, Cameroon's Minister of Industry, Mines and Technological Development. "Our challenge now is to develop our resources more fully."

While a certain amount of geological surveying was carried out around 30 years ago, this covered only 40% of the nation's landmass. The minister underlines the urgent need to commission further surveys and create a more detailed cartography, in order to provide better knowledge of the contents of the subsoil.

A priority in the projected exploitation of Cameroon's mineral wealth – effectively a non-renewable resource – is sustainability, which means that any project will be assessed with due care for the surrounding areas. "Sustainable and stable development is possible only when there is an awareness of the need to protect the environment," explains Mr. Badel. Particularly of the essence in this regard is the channeling of current informal craft-level mining into more regulated systems that are also environmentally aware. The state plans to reorganize this type of mining, a ma-

major source of employment, and provide it with the necessary support. Equally important is the training of technical staff ready to take their places in the newly expanded industrialized mining sector.

In addition to creating a favorable environment for potential investment by setting up an incentive mining code and applying customs exemptions to the materials required for exploration and exploitation activities, the ministry is looking at ways to promote the country's mining possibilities to potential investors. Interest is already high and several countries have become involved in mining activities, including the United States.

Cameroon's first commercial-scale mining development is headed by Geovic Cameroon (GeoCam), the local aspect of an American mining company, which has found what it believes to be the world's largest primary resource of cobalt in the East Province. GeoCam expects

to produce 4,000 tonnes of cobalt and 3,000 tonnes of nickel a year for 21 years once work starts in July 2009; high-grade cobalt and nickel oxides are currently in fast-growing demand for hybrid electric vehicle batteries.

Other projects are shaping up. Australian firm Sundance Resources Ltd. is working on a joint-venture with CamIron to extract iron ore from a deposit estimated at 220 million tons at Mbalam, also in the East Province, while a South Korean firm aims to exploit gold in Lom and Pangar, and a Canadian company is prospecting a deposit of around 500 tons of uranium in the North Province.

Key to all these investments will be their direct impact on employment in the local communities. GeoCam's project will require around 300 direct employees, and the firm plans to provide small loans to local businesses that can benefit its project; CamIron's iron ore extraction activities will create about 800 direct and indirect jobs.

'Sustainable development is possible only when there is awareness of the need to protect the environment'



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Cameroon

AGRICULTURE

A sector for all seasons as Cameroon embraces a new approach

An infusion of cash and scientific talent is helping Cameroon's agriculture sector regain its former status as one of Africa's key exporters

THE WEST African nation, with direction from the Ministry of Agricultural and Rural Development, is investing heavily in infrastructure, scientific research and agricultural training for young farmers to fully exploit the country's agricultural potential. Bolstered by a \$35 million grant from the World Bank for forestry research, as well as projects spearheaded by the central government, investment in this key Cameroonian industry is flowing at unprecedented levels.

Agriculture accounts for 40% of Cameroon's GDP, and some 60% of Cameroonians are employed in the sector. The country is also one of the world's top cocoa and coffee producers. Cotton, whose cultivation and distribution is managed by the state-run Sodecoton company, employs more than 300,000 people alone out of a population of 18 million.

Thanks to a diverse climate that allows for varied crops to grow, the country produces enough food to be self-sufficient.

Mr. Jean Nkuete, Cameroon's Deputy Prime Minister of Agricultural and Rural Development, says proper education is essential to ensuring the sector's future.

"We think that it is rather important to encourage trained young people to settle in the agricultural sector," Mr. Nkuete says. A new program is set to be implemented this year, and the government hopes to attract young people to the sector and turn them into professionals, thereby reducing poverty.

The agriculture sector experienced a crisis in the 1980s that spurred the government to enact a series of measures, including privatization of some state corporations in the sector. Additional new policies include ambitious production targets, such as a goal to produce 200,000 tons of cocoa per year by 2010, up from the current 165,000 tons per year.

"There is real political will. We have our natural potentials which, generally, are insufficiently exploited," Mr. Nkuete says.

The products with the highest potential for expansion are bananas, rubber, palm oil and sugar cane. "Cameroon is endowed with important natural resources. There are particularly varied agro-ecological conditions, availability of arable soil and the dynamism of the populations."

Prospective investors "should start by visiting Cameroon to see for themselves on the one hand that a number of other investors have settled and operate in peace, and on the other hand that efforts are constantly being made to stabilize the business environment, and, finally, to discuss with local actors what they can achieve in the path of their choice," Mr. Nkuete says.

The government's authority on research is equally keen on the sector. Ms. Madeleine Tchuinte, Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation, says advances in the laboratory are making significant contributions to the agriculture sector in Cameroon. Ms. Tchuinte points to bananas as an example.

"We are well placed on agricultural research. We support all the agro-industries in Cameroon. We have about a hundred species of bananas. We have systems to grow bananas in any and all

of Cameroon's ecosystems," Ms. Tchuinte says.

A further example of the link between agriculture and science is a researcher who uncovered seven varieties of maize that can be planted year-round in the various ecosystems in Cameroon.

"That makes it possible to have maize all year round. You know that it does not rain much here," Ms. Tchuinte explains. "So for agricultural research, we have convincing results that we put at the disposal of the populations."

Forestry is another key sector, accounting for 10% of GDP. Cameroon received a \$35 million grant from the World Bank in 2006 to foster better foresting practices. Specifically, the money is earmarked to complete a forest zoning plan, and promote more efficient timber processing and better enforcement of penalties for those who violate harvesting rules.

The fight against illegal forest exploitation is of the utmost importance, says Mr. Elvis Ngolle Ngolle, Minister of Forests and Fauna. Mr. Ngolle explains that this corruption stems from many factors, including a general increase in the need for wood products and insufficient financial means to adequately control the forests.

To improve governance, many actions have been taken, Mr. Ngolle says, including the appointment of the independent group Global Forest Watch. There are also increased numbers of security personnel and the government has reinstated a visa certifying the origin of harvested wood.

"We are dreaming of a forestry sector that generates activities with high added value, combining exploitation with respect of biodiversity," Mr. Ngolle says.



MADELEINE TCHUINTE
Minister of Scientific Research and Innovation



In an increasing number of cases Cameroon's ministry of research and science has exploited technology to create year-round crops

SODECOTON

'We want to make the company attractive for the market'

Cameroon's once robust cotton sector is at a crossroads, as rising production costs and a weakening currency have led to historically low yields of the cash crop

CAMEROON, whose high-quality cotton is exported worldwide, is grappling with these problems as it tries to modernize production methods and deal with the increasing cost of fertilizers and insecticides. The country expects to produce some 160,000 tons of cotton this year, far below the 300,000 tons it harvested as recently as three years ago.

Sodecoton, the state-owned company which buys and ships cotton produced by 200,000 farmers, is making a desperate plea for help. As the CFA franc currency loses value against the dollar and the euro, growers simply aren't motivated, says Mr. Mohammed Iya, the group's Director General.

"The price we pay them to buy their cotton is meaningless," Mr. Iya says. "The price of cotton expressed in dollars has dropped and the exchange rate of the dollar vis-à-vis the euro has also dropped. This can only discourage the producer."

Global cotton consumption has outstripped production for three years running, according to a 2007 report by the Foundation for World Agriculture and Rural Life. Total annual revenue shrank by 36% over the three previous growing seasons, increasing unemployment and prompting urban-rural migration, further destabilizing the West African economy.

In contrast to the United States, which subsidizes cotton growers, producers in Cameroon lack such aid. African producers are putting pressure on the World Trade Organization to abolish subsidies. Sodecoton is also training its growers to begin cultivating genetically modified cotton, a variety which can produce up to 150% more fiber than traditional seeds. Mr. Iya says, "We are concerned in all areas: techno-

logical lateness, subsidies, increases in the price of fertilizers."

Sodecoton says government intervention is essential to the industry's survival. Cotton producers on average have a family of seven people and subsist on the food they grow. Nevertheless, they have few resources to pay for other basic needs, Mr. Iya says: "We have reached a level where we can no longer continue. We absolutely need the government's help."

It's not the first time that Mr. Iya has faced crisis. In the early 1980s, cotton production stood at 100,000 tons per season. The central government requested that Sodecoton fix guaranteed competitive prices as incentives to growers. But Sodecoton began posting losses by 1986, coinciding with a national economic crisis. The sector had to be restructured until production returned to 300,000 tons per season.

Of the current crisis, Mr. Iya says: "We are doing everything possible to redress the sector which is experiencing some difficulties this year compared to the past 12 years due to a price drop in the world market. We want to make the company attractive."

Sodecoton has also been a major investor in roads in Cameroon. Mr. Iya faults the government for not investing sufficiently in infrastructure: "It is not my duty to construct roads, to maintain them and at the same time to see other people use them. I cannot prevent someone from using those tracks, those access roads."

Sodecoton operates in northern Cameroon, working to promote cotton cul-

tivation among growers through village producers' associations, collecting the cotton produced in the village and organizing the sale of the manufactured goods.

The majority of processed cotton produced in the ginneries owned by Sodecoton is exported to American, Asian and European markets, while only 7% is sold locally, for the production of African prints and other cloths, according to the Cotonnière Industrielle du Cameroun.

Sodecoton was active in southern Cameroon, implementing the Sud-Est Bénoué in the 1970s and 1980s. The company resettled migrants from the densely populated northern province to entirely new villages in the southern regions. These farmers were trained in modern production techniques and given support for the production of food crops. The combination of mechanized field preparation, fertilizers and crop rotation achieved yields of up to 2,500 kilograms per hectare.

Mr. Iya ensures that the cotton produced in Cameroon is of the highest quality and produced under ecologically sound methods. "Today when you go to Paris, in the stores, there are socks and ties and they can certify there that it is a product from Cameroon that has been produced in satisfactory ecological conditions. Today I have some producers that specialize in that domain."

High energy prices, poor infrastructure and the issue of subsidies are the sector's three main barriers, Mr. Iya says: "I am not saying that I am losing hope. Firstly because the drop in prices is cyclic. We should live on hope. We should coordinate the efforts made by the government, the producers and Sodecoton, as we are the three partners. I think that if we put our efforts together, we will improve things. We shall overcome the crisis."



MOHAMMED IYA
Director General of Sodecoton



Moving Cameroon Forward

Convenient and efficient transportation plays a key role in moving economies forward. This is why the Ministry of Transport of Cameroon is working harder than ever before in its newly expanded role as overseer of all means of transportation. As coordinator of eight state and para-state organizations in the sector, the Ministry is taking on the challenges involved in developing and maintaining the country's dynamically growing air, road, maritime and river infrastructure. Currently, the main priority lies in improving the roads network. Transportation represents over 7% of Cameroon's GDP and provides more than 62,000 direct jobs. The Ministry of Transport envisages a better-connected country in which the economy can thrive and is striving to make this vision a reality.

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Cameroon

MINISTRY OF INDUSTRY

Africa Growth Opportunity Act spurs privatization drive

The Ministry of Industry plans to expand the national industrial sector from its nerve center in Douala to a network of free zones across the country

CAMEROON IS ALREADY the economic leader in its sub-region, the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC). Its wide diversity of available products plus its privileged and strategic position as the entrance point to a market of 200 million consumers has maintained its fairly solid industrial base for the past few decades.

However, despite the protectionist measures applied to national industry prior to the current privatization drive, the lack of adequate infrastructures and financial resources prevented Cameroon's industrial sector from becoming truly competitive, and so providing a basis for the increase in economic growth that the government is so actively pursuing. Given that Cameroon is experiencing progressive economic liberalization and globalization, the government is now placing industrial policy under a painstaking review.

Aside from the privatization of non-functioning state enterprises, the new investment charter, which provides organizational mechanisms and incentives, is the first step towards creating a fully open and competitive industrial sector. In the mid-term, the government considers the growth of this sector to be one of the main ways of reducing poverty, as the development of industry will have knock-on effects on agriculture, services, value-added exports, and the emergence of small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

"The realization of projects such as the extension of ALUCAM, the Limbe ship-building company and construction of the deep-sea port at Kribi falls within the logic of reaching our Millennium Development Objectives through a sustained GDP growth of 8%, with the industrial sector contributing 25% of this by 2015," says Ndanga Ndinga Badel, Minister of Mines,



Investment opportunities in the industrial sector have been augmented by the Africa Growth Opportunity Act, which offers incentives to free market enterprises

Industry and Technological Development.

At present, however, GDP rate is only half the 2015 objective, and industry accounts for only 15% of this. The ministry's technological development department is working on the promotion and implementation of appropriate technologies within the industrial sector. Specific technological studies are being carried out to look at the processing of agricultural, fisheries and farming products.

Indeed, agro-industry is one of the country's most important economic sectors, and divides into food-processing for national consumption and industrial agriculture geared towards exportation, both areas with much scope for development. The extractive industries – oil, gas and minerals – are also among the more dynamic within the economy, and include processing and distribution. Other viable industries are textiles and leather processing, chemicals, machinery and metallurgy, and electrical components manufacturing.

The ministry is not blind to the fact that in the immediate term, the measures need-

ed to boost industrial production relate not to the industries themselves but to the support actions and infrastructures that allow industry to function smoothly. Mr. Badel has emphasized that the overwhelming priorities are to create an adequate, efficient and comprehensive road transportation network within the country, and to continue to invest in measures that promote exports of national products, such as port enlargement. Addressing the problems of energy supply is also of vital importance. A lack of infrastructure and insufficient power supply provide a partial explanation as to why most of Cameroon's industrial production remains clustered in Douala, the economic capital, despite the existence of free industrial zones across the country. Creating a more evenly spread industrial base is also part of the ministry's remit.

The country's industrialists, meeting in the first ever industrialization forum held in Cameroon, in November 2007, came up with a series of recommendations to the government on how to boost the sector, most of which are already underway. Cameroon is a founding member of the Organization

for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), the Investment Charter is being applied, an attractive fiscal framework is in place for the creation of new enterprises and the state is firmly committed to a policy of good governance.



NDANGA NDIINGA BADEL
Minister of Industry

for the Harmonization of Business Law in Africa (OHADA), the Investment Charter is being applied, an attractive fiscal framework is in place for the creation of new enterprises and the state is firmly committed to a policy of good governance.

The restructuring of the Cameroon banking sector has led to a surge in liquidity, allowing a return of consumer confidence; however, both banking experts and industrialists themselves point out the need for specialized banking institutions for the financing of larger-scale industry and industrial development as a whole.

Altogether, the prospects for reviving Cameroon's industry look good but require a substantial boom in investment, both national and foreign. "The strategy that will enable Cameroon to reach its maximum potential is outlined in the president's new industrial policy vision," says Mr. Badel. "The implementation of that vision by my ministry centers around the solidity of the industrial base, the promotion of industrial activities and projects, the mobilization, upgrading and follow-up of industrial activity, and finally, ensuring the safety of investments, of the environment and of sustainable development."

SMALL INDUSTRIES

Small and medium enterprises form vanguard of new economic shift

Showcasing Cameroon's workmanship heads a new agenda. An inaugural craft fair was held this year

WHILE BIG COMPANIES may grab the headlines and seem, on the surface, to be the main movers of a country, it is safe to say that the combined efforts of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are vital to the healthy functioning of any economy.

This knowledge, particularly apposite in the case of Cameroon, which has a long-standing tradition of small-scale farming and craftsmanship, has led the government to set up the Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises, Social Economy and Crafts.

By promoting smaller types of enterprise, more economic sectors can be covered and regional variations can be exploited.

At the moment, Cameroon has only around 30 large companies, and they are specific to certain sectors. "When a large company is restructured, the first result is unemployment," says Laurent Serge Etoundi Ngoa, the minister in charge. "Small outfits can easily adapt to their surroundings, and can target regional differences of soil, mineral resources, agriculture, animal rearing and crafts. Financing this type of industry is much easier and more effective." Also, this type of company is in a better position to employ young people, helping to counteract unemployment.

Mr. Etoundi Ngoa, a scientist who has held his current post since 2006, has lost no time in tackling the immediate promotion of SMEs and crafts while waiting for a large-scale sectoral strategy to emerge. "The area which appeared to us to be the most affordable and the most profitable in the short term was the craft industry," he explains.

Certainly, Cameroon can boast an astonishing range of high-quality crafted workmanship, including leather goods in the South, woodwork in the North, bronze artifacts in the West, and raffia and weaving in all three areas. The crafts sector to date has operated informally, with small groups dotted around the Republic and few resources to consolidate production.

After conducting a tour of the craft-producing provinces and visiting an international exhibition at Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso), Mr. Etoundi Ngoa decided that it would be expedient for Cameroon to organize its own international craft trade fair. The event, which helped to highlight the importance of arts and crafts to Cameroon's economic development, was held in Yaounde between January 25 and February 2 this year, and showcased some of the country's finest work, as well as goods from neighboring countries.

Another area targeted by the Ministry is the food sector. At present, Cameroon mainly grows produce, exports it untreated and ends up importing processed foodstuffs at five or ten times the price. With the help of HIPC funding to the tune of CFA 11bn (around \$25m), a four-year project has been set up to establish 150 small and industrial food-processing and preservation units across the country, with a percentage of these being targeted specifically at female entrepreneurs.

Mr. Etoundi Ngoa is also fighting for the creation of a set of management initiatives encompassing financing structures for ongoing training. As he points out, if a structure is well set up and managed it can resist even the level of economic crisis experienced by Cameroon in the 1980s. "The Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises places special emphasis on what we call 'empowerment'," he says. "This sector can lend a new dynamic to the economy in the short term."



LAURENT SERGE ETOUNDI NGOA
Minister for Small and Medium Enterprises



JOINT EFFORTS TO BUILD A GREATER CAMEROON

CAMEROON IS ABOUT TO RECEIVE A \$273 MILLION FACELIFT. THANKS TO INTERNATIONAL INVESTORS AND THE GOVERNMENT'S HEIGHTENED INTEREST IN IMPROVING INFRASTRUCTURE, THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS IS DEVELOPING STRONGER REGIONAL TRANSPORT IN AN EFFORT TO BOOST REGIONAL INTEGRATION.

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PICTURES PROVIDED BY THE MINISTRY OF PUBLIC WORKS

Cameroon

TOWN PLANNING AND WATER PROVISION

A modern urban conundrum presents PDUE with a delicate balancing act

Cameroon's rate of urban development is about half that of population growth, presenting authorities with a challenge to provide clean water for all citizens

ACCORDING TO CALCULATIONS based on underground water resources and projected demographic growth, it would still take around 210 years to use up all Cameroon's water. This does not even take into account surface water in the form of rivers, lakes and flood plains. Despite this, much of the population has inadequate access to drinking water.

Once again it is the lack of adequate infrastructure, in this case water processing facilities and distribution networks, which constitutes the challenge facing Cameroon in its bid to reduce poverty, improve living standards, and give the economy a boost.

The government has stated its objective to provide one water faucet for every 250 people. This may not seem like much, but in a country of 16 million inhabitants – half of whom live in rural, inaccessible areas with the other half concentrated in cities struggling to take up the strain – it is a challenge indeed.

With the help of private partners from Japan and Belgium among others, Cameroon has initiated a campaign to increase rural access to water. Over the past decade, joint public and private investment has led to the provision of hundreds of boreholes and water points; many more are planned.

Water access in cities presents a different problem. The populations in Cameroon's urban nuclei are growing at a rate of around 6% to 7% per year, while the towns themselves are spreading at about 3%. Existing housing and amenities resources are already insufficient, which means that more and more people are subsisting in slums, living precariously with no adequate wa-

ter, sanitation, transport or refuse removal.

With the aim of meeting this challenge, the Project for the Development of Town Planning and Water Provision (PDUE) was launched in January 2008. This project, financed with the help of the World Bank, initially targets five towns – Douala, Yaounde, Bamenda, Mbalmayo and Maroua – over a period of five years and aims to respond to the more pressing needs of the urban and water sectors at local government level.

As part of the central government's move towards decentralization, town planning and drinking water supply has devolved on local authorities. The state has retained a supervisory role, ensuring that adequate technical, managerial and financial means are available, and encourages private sector companies to participate in urban provision activities. Investing in urban regeneration ties in with the provisions set out in the country's Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP) and with the government's determination to increase the rates of economic growth and social development. A network of efficient and coherent cities and towns will provide a sound basis for wealth creation.

The PDUE follows on from other urban projects, such as the Douala infrastructures

program, and will cost around CFA80 billion (\$181 million). Its main priority is to help local governments work out the strategy and tools needed to provide basic urban amenities, in particular drinking water, to residents in under-equipped parts of the city.

The project will be divided into three parts: the first lies in reinforcing devolved capacity in urban development; the second means to establish active management projects within the more precarious living areas; and the third will concentrate on promoting public-private partnerships in urban water supply.

This approach moves away from previous, heavy-handed 'destroy and rebuild' operations, which start by evicting the residents of informally built neighborhoods. The PDUE applies the philosophy of working in accordance with the priorities of the beneficiaries, considering problems globally but always within the context of specific technical and financial parameters and socio-cultural constraints. Instead of moving populations on to commence living precariously elsewhere, the PDUE envisages a progressive improvement of their existing environment. Its successful completion will open the doors for other, similar programs.



The rate of population growth in Cameroon's urban areas is 6-7%. Urban development stands at 3%

SANITATION

Behind-the-scenes sector takes to center stage

In a city of 1.5 million people prone to heavy precipitation, sanitation remains a top priority

APROJECT MANAGED by the African Development Bank aims to end the unsanitary conditions that plague Cameroon's capital city, Yaounde. The city's main rainwater drainage systems are regularly blocked by solid waste, prompting floods during the rainy season that affect nearly 300,000 residents, or just under 50,000 households. People live in damp, unhealthy surroundings that have a serious impact on their quality of life.

The Yaounde Sanitation Project aims to improve rainwater drainage in the city, improve residents' living conditions and build capacity among the residents themselves to help develop a sanitation infrastructure and manage the system in the long term. The project began in 2006 and is scheduled for completion by December, 2009.

Yaounde's population has increased by 6% every year since the early 1990s and stands today at nearly 1.5 million. A 2002

survey showed that slums covered more than 60% of the city's area.

During the rainy season, 15 to 20 floods can occur, causing major disruptions and wreaking particular harm on those residing in slums. The impact on public health and the environment is particularly pronounced. Latrines overflow, causing the water supply to be contaminated. The abundance of water becomes a breeding ground for mosquitoes, carrying the threat of disease.

The floods prompt soil erosion and landslides, and often pollute the Akomyanda drinking water treatment station, Yaounde's source of potable water. Economic losses are measured in the destruction of residential and commercial property. The Yaounde City Sanitation Master Plan has been developed to control flooding in Yaounde and offer solutions to the worsening problem. This project was financed by the African Development Bank Group.

Following the development of the master plan, work was carried out to recalibrate the Mfoundi Canal and the rainwater collectors. Engineering design work was also funded by the African Development

Bank Group. The Sanitation Project encompasses work on the canal system itself, as well as construction projects related to the cleaning and overhaul of the canals.

Plans call for a study for landscaping along the Mfoundi Canal, the introduction of a project monitoring and evaluation system, and the building of a 2.6-mile canal.

Three underground collectors totaling 1.5 miles in length are also to be cleaned. The work calls for two maintenance roads on both sides of the canal, access ramps, two pedestrian bridges, a rail bridge and a bridge open to vehicular traffic.

Four disposal structures are scheduled to be built at the forks in the canal. In a practical move to improve sanitary conditions, 50 containers and 50 garbage bins will be placed along the canal.

Aesthetic concerns have also been taken into consideration. Development of the area surrounding the canal will include 2.5 miles of paved footpaths, the planting of trees and gardens, the installation of public benches and lighting, and two parking areas. The plans also call for the training of Cameroonian sanitation professionals and other staff.

PUBLIC WORKS

'Where the road goes, development follows'

The challenge facing Cameroon's Ministry of Public works is to expand its 31,000-mile network and improve that which already exists

THERE IS A POPULAR saying in Cameroon: "Where the road goes, development follows". Road construction provides instant employment opportunities at the local level, while the creation of new networks allows industry to grow, facilitating transport of materials, goods and people, and opening up rural areas to trade and enterprise as well as boosting international commercial exchanges. It is this vision that has spurred the Cameroon government, headed by President Paul Biya, to focus on infrastructure and public works, making road construction, maintenance and rehabilitation one of the key targets of the current term.

At the moment, Cameroon, which has a surface area slightly larger than California and West Virginia combined, has a road network of 31,000 miles. Of this, under a tenth is paved; the rest is kept in varying states of repair and remains susceptible to weather conditions. The Ministry of Public Works is in charge of maintaining the nation's road infrastructure and at the same time implementing a continued development strategy: no sinecure.

"Road infrastructure is the very nerve centre of Cameroon's economic growth," says Minister of Public Works Bernard Messengue Avom. "At the most basic level, we maintain road infrastructure in good condition with the limited means available." Shortly after his appointment, Minister Messengue Avom, who has a doctorate in law and holds a certificate from the Washington International Management Institute, undertook a tour of the national road network. The results of his research showed that at least CFA 465bn (about \$1bn) are required for the upkeep of the national network; the current budget is limited to CFA 11.5bn (\$25.6m), already earmarked for a series of projects such as bridge construction and road paving works.

However, this is not the final extent of the country's available resources. Under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, Cameroon is the



The African Development Bank recently approved a \$66 million loan for roads expansion in South West province

recipient of debt relief; the country also benefits from international financial aid and development loans. In November 2006, the African Development Bank (ADB) approved a loan of about \$66.15m to finance a major road extension project in the South West province. The European Union is also engaged in several cooperative projects developing some of Cameroon's main transport axes, financing among others part of the North-South transportation route which links landlocked Chad to the sea. The EU and the ADB are jointly financing construction of the Ngaoundere-Garoua-Boulai regional road.

Mr. Messengue Avom is planning to launch four or five more priority projects as funds – or partners – become available. A law implemented last November allows private partners to be sought for certain basic infrastructure developments. Through the issuing of tenders, the minister hopes that interested parties will come forward to participate. "I would like to construct a motorway linking Douala, Yaounde and Bafoussam, which is the

main triangle where business is being developed," he says. Investing partners are sought for other motorway construction projects, as well as civil engineering works such as the building of a second bridge over the river Wouri in the country's business capital, Douala.

The other major projects up his sleeve are trunk roads linking Cameroon with neighboring Nigeria, Chad and the Central African Republic. "The EU, the World Bank and the ADB are interested in helping to integrate the sub-region,

which is why they finance road infrastructures with a regional character," explains Mr. Messengue Avom. "It is therefore a matter of creating road infrastructures that serve the sub-region, mostly to help landlocked countries such as Chad, CAR and Congo because at their level transportation is still very expensive. As the whole network is developed, this improves transportation and helps to give their economies a boost.


"The ministers of transport and public works of the sub-region generally meet within the framework of a main road plan, a plan for Central Africa reached by consensus," he says. "We have determined a number of projects in order to favor sub-regional integration, and we have invited the ADB to convene a round table with donors in order to enable us to finance these infrastructures."

In addition to its remit of maintaining and protecting the nation's road infrastructure system, the Ministry of Public Works is in charge of supervising and regulating public building construction. In all its undertakings, the ministry ensures that the necessary studies are made prior to construction, to respect local environments. Housing in particular is facing a shortage, as demand for dwellings increases by 10% each year. The Cameroon Housing Company (SIC), in cooperation with other relevant institutions, has several new construction programs under way.

However, the fact remains that improving road infrastructure is the number one priority for Cameroon's continued economic development, and to do this, financial input is required. "If I had the necessary resources, I would like to double or triple the 4,900km of tarred road that we now have," says Mr. Messengue Avom. "It is a dream."




BERNARD MESSENGUE AVOM
Minister of Public Works



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TRANSPORT

'Important measures must be taken in this sector'

An increase in tourist arrivals in 2005 was the fruit of infrastructure overhauls and improved security at airports, and has created new employment

SECURING A MODERN, efficient transportation network is a key component of Cameroon's comprehensive plan for economic stimulus.

Transport Minister Gounoko Haounaye says several projects are in the pipeline to boost economic development and address longstanding deficiencies in air, rail, maritime and road transport. Above all, according to Mr. Haounaye, the government must seek solutions based on safety, efficiency and affordability.

The government recently concluded an inventory to determine its most pressing transportation needs, identifying a number of actions to be taken.

In the realm of air transport, the government is drafting civil aviation codes and putting them into practice, while developing clearer regulations for aviation inspections. Facilities concerns such as lighting must be addressed at some airports, while others must update their emergency plans and develop security protocols, Mr. Haounaye says.

"All these actions, which are already operational, aim at rendering the activities of civil aviation more secure," Mr. Haounaye says.

Improvements related to shipping are to focus on the security of river and lake navigation, the adoption of international conventions on maritime trade, and increased training for shipping crews. Special attention will be paid to recruiting more trained personnel at the Cameroon Shipyard in Douala. Construction is to continue at the Petroleum Yard of Limbe, and provisions are to be made for general protection of the coasts.

The government plans to study the feasibility of new railways, as well as the rehabilitation of existing lines. Roads will

also get attention, beginning with a census to track the goods that are shipped on the roads, evaluating their nature, origin, destination and volume.

One of the biggest infrastructure projects calls for modern highways linking the port city of Douala with Bangui, capital of the Central African Republic; Douala and N'Djamena, capital of Chad; and Bamenda, a city in north-western Cameroon with Enugu, an important economic center in southern Nigeria.

"It is important to note that all these actions will contribute to the creation of jobs and consequently to the fight against poverty, as well as to the improvement of the living conditions of the population," Mr. Haounaye asserts.

The aviation sector has been receiving attention since airline traffic began rising in 2000. There are 10 modern airports in Cameroon, according to the International Civil Aviation Organization. Three international airports are located



GOUNOKO HAOUNAYE
Minister of Transport

in Douala, Yaounde and Garoua, offering service to the principal cities in Africa, as well as Paris, Brussels and Zurich in Europe.

Modernization efforts, such as the installation of screening equipment at the Douala and Yaounde airports in 2003, led to an increased sense of security. Government officials met in 2005 to discuss tourism and set a goal of attracting 500,000 tourists to the country, over the total of 350,000 that visited the year before.

Growth has arguably been slowed in the wake of the debacle surrounding Cameroon Airlines. The company encountered a string of troubles beginning in 2005 that eventually led to its liquidation and restructuring. French aviation authorities banned flights to France in 2005, citing aircraft safety concerns. Subsequently, the Cameroonian government began a process of privatization, creating a new company called CAMAIR.

The government wants to sell a 51%

stake in the company to foreign companies to get the carrier back in the air and eliminate state subsidies. The new company would have to operate debt-free and its employees would be recruited from the ranks of the former Cameroon Airlines staff.

Maritime transport is arguably in better shape. The Port of Douala was founded in 1999 and plays an important role in the Gulf of Guinea, as more than 95% of goods shipped abroad pass through the port. According to data from 2006, the quantity of cargo handled by weight increased 11% during the first semester, and there were also significant increases in the number of containers handled.

Mr. Haounaye says the strategic position of the port makes Cameroon an essential trade partner for surrounding countries: "That is the reason why Chad and the Central African Republic, countries without a littoral, have always been subject to particular attention from the Cameroonian authorities. Political and economic improvements have been made in order to enable those countries to have a maritime face that can assure the development of their external trade."

A number of moves have been made to upgrade facilities at the port and cargo moving beyond it. There is increased communication between the states, an increase in the number of trucks and wagons used for ground transport and softening of police controls so that they are limited to those of strict security purposes.

There are more than 31,000 miles of roads in Cameroon's national highway system, only 10% of which are paved, according to various estimates. Mr. Haounaye says he'd like to see that figure increase to a full third of the nation's roads. In 2007, the World Bank, the European Union, the African Development Bank and the French Development Agency announced an \$880 million project to fund paving and rehabilitation on a 1,200-mile corridor linking the Douala Port with N'Djamena and Bangui.

"The economic and social development of Cameroon leads to a progressive increase in the movement of people and property," Mr. Haounaye says. "The sector of transport occupies a dominant place in the determination of the rhythm of development and the economic growth in the national territory. Important measures must be taken in this sector."

NATIONAL ROADS COUNCIL

The road to improved safety conditions

Improved roads and driver education are high on the agenda for the new body



The National Roads Council aims to cut the current rate of driver-related accidents

THE RENEWAL, improvement, and extension of the road infrastructure network are among Cameroon's most pressing requirements. In an effort to better coordinate the road-building and related activities of the relevant ministries, including those of public works, transport, urban development and town planning, the government has established the National Roads Council (Conaroute), which held its third session in January this year.

The meeting passed under review the projected activities and spending plans of each ministry with regard to road transport and infrastructure, as well as examining 2007 results. Prime Minister Enoni, president of the council, expressed a wish for Cameroon to follow the international trend, highlighted at the 23rd World Road Congress held in France in September 2007, which is to focus on making road travel easier, faster and, above all, safer.

Minister of Public Works Messengue Avom has made it clear that both large and small-scale projects are dependent on a serviceable road base. In 2007, available funds were directed primarily at maintenance works on the existing paved and non-paved roads. Given the advanced state of disrepair of many of the country's thoroughfares, in terms of larger projects financing was restricted to surfacing the road between Melong and Dschang, the upkeep of the Yaounde-Soa route, the construction of two river bridges and the renovation of a third.

This year, Mr. Messengue Avom has a range of sources funding his ministry's activities. In addition to the CFA27 bn (\$61m) available from inside the department, he can rely on CFA25 bn (\$56.5m) under the HIPC program; CFA13.5bn (\$30.5m) from the IMF under the multilateral debt relief initiative, and around \$147m from other providers.

Nonetheless, 2008 programming will continue to focus on general road management works while monitoring existing investment projects, including the construction of new roads linking Ayos-

Abong-Mbang-Boniss; Yaounde and Kribi; the renewal of the Garoua-Figuil and Muea-Kumba routes; the surfacing of the Ring Road; and the creation of new access routes to the south of the Lompangar dam.

There are also several new projects in the pipeline relating to road surfacing, access routes to dams and bridge building. "What is important is the creation of a vast roads infrastructure that will link the four corners of the Republic," says Mr. Messengue Avom.

With the Ministry of Public Works dealing with making road travel easier and faster, the Ministry of Transport is tackling road safety issues. Programming for 2008 will follow along the lines of last year's activities, concentrating on building up road safety awareness among drivers, and introducing speed checks and drunk-driving tests. "According to statistics, 60% of road accidents are due to motorists," says Gounoko Haounaye, the transport minister. "Education and sensitization is achieved through various means: seminars, meetings, radio and television broadcasting, press articles and informative flyers."

The ministry has been charged with setting up a database of accidents and of extending its powers in the removal of driving licences. In cooperation with the health department, it will also be responsible for ensuring that hospitals along the most controversial routes are set up to attend to traffic victims.



Of Cameroon's 31,000 miles of roads, less than 10 per cent are paved. Plans are to increase this figure to one-third



Cameroon, the Land of Opportunities

Cameroon is a land of opportunity with a vast wealth of natural resources. The mining industry is already one of the country's most important sectors and, yet, is still largely untapped. Cameroon's virgin territory, which covers approximately 40% of the whole, is attracting investment and several geological research projects have already begun. The country's mineral diversity is astounding, with at least 52 types of mineral resources already discovered, including gold, diamonds, copper, natural gas and petrol.

The Ministry of Industry, Mines and Technological Development is working towards the technological improvement of its industries and is opening doors to foreign companies interested in taking part in Cameroon's huge potential.



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DOUALA PORT

Floating international trade keeps economy buoyant

The Port of Douala is a major economic driver for Cameroon and the wider sub-region

CAMEROON'S CHIEF port is in the midst of a crucial expansion in preparation for what is predicted to be a surge in maritime traffic in central West Africa.

Douala's port sits 15 miles upstream from the Atlantic coast and handles more than 95% of seaborne cargo leaving Cameroon. Agricultural exports flowing through the port include bananas, cocoa, coffee and cotton, while industrial products include gasoline and bauxite.

Crossing the Wouri river, the mile-long Wouri Bridge links the Douala port to the Bonaberi, an important center for banana shipping. The city also serves as a hub for rail traffic to Kumba, Nkongsamba, Yaounde, and Ngaoundéré. It is also home to Cameroon's principal international airport.

Port authorities have taken a number of measures over the past several years to increase efficiency. For example, the channel extending inland to the port was dredged to 25 feet to handle larger ships. New cranes and other equipment have been installed to accommodate the larger vessels. In ad-



The key to Cameroon's economic success lies in supplying essentials to its landlocked neighbors

dition, the entire beacon system has been rebuilt, offering enhanced navigation.

"The results recorded are very important: the improvement of the traffic, the dredging and the maintenance of the

access channel to an acceptable draught to facilitate the passage of ships, the rigorous management and the payment of debts, quality services to port users, the institution of a rigorous work culture as well as a team spirit and the reevaluation of the social conditions of the workers," says Gounoko Haounaye, Cameroon's Minister of Transport.

Authorities have already designated 10 hectares at the port for the construction of the Chad-Cameroon oil pipeline, a venture that is expected to generate significant port traffic. A separate section of the port has been turned over specifically to handle traffic to the Central African Republic. Such countries associated with the port benefit from reductions on handling tariffs and other incentives.

The Maritime Traffic Facilitation Committee is also working on a new electronic system to more efficiently track clearance of goods entering and leaving the Douala port.

"These measures aim at strengthening the central role of the Port of Douala in the Gulf of Guinea, a region where the challenges are clear today, with reserves estimated at 24 billion barrels of oil, for whose exploration that port offers adequate logistics," Mr. Haounaye explains.

More Efficiency, More Rapidly

The Ministry of the Public Services and Administrative Reform (MINFOPRA) has decentralized and modernized its operations in order to expedite processing as well as to control and monitor all state employees and their salaries through a new integrated system called SIGIPES.

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Cameroon



Kribi, on Cameroon's Atlantic coast, is a picture perfect resort that rivals any in Africa



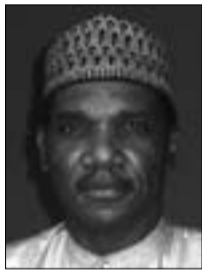
The Mandara mountains offer a spectacular backdrop for visitors to experience rural Cameroon

TOURISM

A snapshot of a continent in one country

'Africa in miniature' seems a fitting description for Cameroon, a triangle-shaped nation that packs the ecological marvels of the entire continent into an area slightly larger than California

ENDOWED WITH NATURAL DIVERSITY as disparate as savannas and rainforests, the country is promoting its resources to a global audience to position itself as a key tourist destination in Africa. This campaign, led by the Ministry of Tourism, includes an overhaul of the hotel sector, the opening of new hospitality training schools, and heavy promotion of Cameroon in Europe, the Americas and Asia.



BABA HAMADOU
Minister of
Tourism

Minister of Tourism Mr. Baba Hamadou says maximizing the potential of the sector has been a key goal of President Paul Biya. As the ministry restructures, the central administration has made it clear that tourism must be a vehicle to drive Cameroon's economy.

"This year, we are working to know all those who enter Cameroon, how long they stay, how much they spend, so that in two to three years, we can have statistics that can enable us to calculate exactly the share of tourism in the gross

national product," Mr. Hamadou says. The authority to promote the country has been placed in the hands of a Board of Tourism, Mr. Hamadou says. "We also want an investment code that can attract all those who want to come and invest in Cameroon in the domain of tourism."

Foreigners are actively being courted and many have already invested in the country. Advertising campaigns are being launched to promote Cameroon in the Benelux region, France and Germany. Meanwhile, American, Russian and Saudi interests have recently announced plans to develop several five-star hotels in the country. The quality of accommodations for tourists is receiving specific attention as the government rolls out a plan to more accurately classify hotels by stars depending on the amenities available.

"We no longer want the situation noticed and criticized by our tourists where you had a four-star hotel and people did not receive four-star service. So, we are severe, rigorous," Mr. Hamadou says. Such classifications will also extend to restaurants, travel agencies and tourist guides.

Leisure offerings abound in Cameroon, with some 250 miles of Atlantic Ocean coastline on the Bight of Biafra, an inlet in the Gulf of Guinea. Large expanses of

shoreline are home to mangroves, forming a natural border against an expansive coastal forest that stretches from Mundamba in the north to Campo in the south.

The rugged Adamawa plateau, a block of volcanic basalt, sits 3,600 feet above sea level and effectively divides the country between the north and south. Mount Cameroon, in the western highlands, rises to over 13,000 feet. Each February international competitors scale the peak for the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope. These stark contrasts in topography create extremely varied climate conditions. The coastal plains, given their proximity to the equator, are characterized by average temperatures of 77 degrees Fahrenheit with high relative humidity.

In the Adamawa plateau, which experiences heavy rain from March to November, temperatures are somewhat more moderate, averaging about 72 degrees Fahrenheit.

Visiting the various regions of the country can be challenging, as domestic air travel is hampered by poor airline connections. New companies entering the market are trying to ease transit among Cameroon's regional airports.

In 2006, nearly 300,000 of the 453,000 tourists who visited Cameroon were French. Mr. Hamadou wants to bring 500,000 tourists to the country on an annual basis, and emphasizes that growth can only be sustained if tourists encounter efficient, modern services.

In 2000, a regional tourism school opened in Ngaoundere, attracting stu-

dents from nearby Chad, Central African Republic, Gabon and other nations in the region. The University of Yaounde I and II also have plans to offer degrees in tourism. In addition, the government has signed agreements to launch high schools for hotel management and tourism at the seaside resorts of Limbe and Kribi.

"The Head of State and government are emphasizing training because we cannot promote our tourism without it," Mr. Hamadou concludes.



MANDARA

Northern Cameroon brings the past to life

The mountainous northern tip of Cameroon is often skipped by foreign visitors but offers an intriguing glimpse into cultures that preserve centuries-old traditions

PERHAPS ONLY THE MOST ADVENTUROUS tourists have ventured into the Mandara Mountains, a region that stretches about 120 miles along the northern border of Cameroon and Nigeria. Statistics collected over the past decade show that tourists largely overlooked the region when visiting Cameroon. Many foreigners are turned off by the area's remoteness or a simple lack of accurate information on the region.

Nicholas David and Judy Sterner, two Canadian researchers who have studied Mandara extensively, said in a 2006 report: "It is clear that the potential for tourism in the Mandara mountains is effectively unrealized ... we argue that its realization requires international cooperation and national intervention."

The current inhabitants of the region are descendants of the Mandara Kingdom, which dates back to the 15th century. Residents have sparred with neighboring groups for centuries, experiencing raids from those in the surrounding plains. The area's history includes a legacy of slave trading, colonization by Germany, Britain

and France, and later independence from European rule.

Researchers stress that the history of the Mandara peoples must be communicated accurately with their collaboration: "Clearly, any attempt to develop eco-cultural tourism in the Mandara region will require education of international tour guide firms besides the formation of the host communities," the Canadian investigators say.

Researchers say a trans-border park allowing access from either Nigeria or Cameroon would foster tourism in the region. Hiking guides exist, but information from travel agents remains sparse.

The researchers also call for a "pro-poor" approach to tourism that would generate benefits for the most disadvantaged people living in the region. The local residents must participate in their tourism decisions, as the history of attacks in the past explains why they are apprehensive about ideas from the outside.

Involving local residents in the decision making process would allow them to remain in the mountains instead of relocating to other areas in search of schools and other services.

"This 'descent from the hills' began forcibly in colonial times and has continued since independence in 1960," the researchers say. "The well-established system of terrace agriculture could be augmented by income generated from a form of tourism that enables and requires farmers and artisans to become teachers of sustainability, and of traditional skills and knowledge."

CULTURE

Bringing the culture of Cameroon to the world

Art and culture promoters want to push Cameroon to the forefront of cultural tourism in Africa

WITH MORE THAN 200 ethnic and language groups, Cameroon possesses a broad variety of music, European-influenced literature and film, and a strong national sense of sportsmanship.

What's lacking, says Ms. Ana Tutut Muna, Cameroon's Minister of Culture, is investment at institutional level so that the country may formally showcase its culture on a professional level. Plans call for a national library, fine arts schools and institutes to properly train people to administer museums and other institutions. "One of the key challenges is adequately trained staff. One may think anybody can talk about culture. But, for example, a national library must operate with competent people to run it," Ms. Muna says, adding that such a library might employ as many as 100 people.

Linguists estimate that there are approximately 230 languages spoken in Cameroon. English and French are



the official languages, and Cameroonian Pidgin English, or Cameroonian Creole, is spoken by considerable numbers of residents.

Promoting culture involves a deep understanding of this complex linguistic medley, Ms. Muna explains: "People lose sight of that. Aspects of culture such as the heritage of a country are

present in more than just books. There are aspects in this field that need to be fine-tuned. People need to understand that this is an industry, and this is part of the wider challenge."

In addition to the fine arts school a steering group has been created to decide which artists to subsidize.

"This will be an environment where people can learn to be an artist at an international level," Ms. Muna continues.

"I think this is a very important aspect of the ministry, to promote excellence and culture, as unfortunately culture is not really seen as something that needs to be invested in. I also believe that culture is an industry, and promoting the image of Cameroon and relating to people the nature of Cameroonians is an integral part of this."

Communications will play a key part in the campaign, "because to be able to sell your culture, you need to have a strategy," Ms. Muna says. "You also need meetings with stakeholders so that they can help to build a tangible vision of culture and participate in the process of ascertaining how we are best able to identify with that culture."



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