

Public-Private Dialogue

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CAMEROON BUSINESS FORUM (CBF)

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A. BACKGROUND

The Cameroon Business Forum (CBF) Program aims to support the establishment of a forum for dialogue between the government and private sector to pursue the effective implementation of business reforms in order to improve the country's investment climate, a concern broadly shared by the government, the private sector (represented by Chamber of Commerce and GICAM as main stakeholders), the civil society and the donors.

Mandate

- The CBF mandate encompasses 3 aspects:
 - Create an adequate business environment / investment climate;
 - Create the foundation for ongoing, structured dialogue between the public and private sectors;
 - Increase the influence of the private sector over the country's economy.
- In practice the bulk of the dialogue and of the reforms undertaken focus on the Doing Business indicators, which address a subset of the necessary business environment reforms. For reference the 4 permanent working groups are Business entry, Paying taxes, Enforcing contract and Trade across border.
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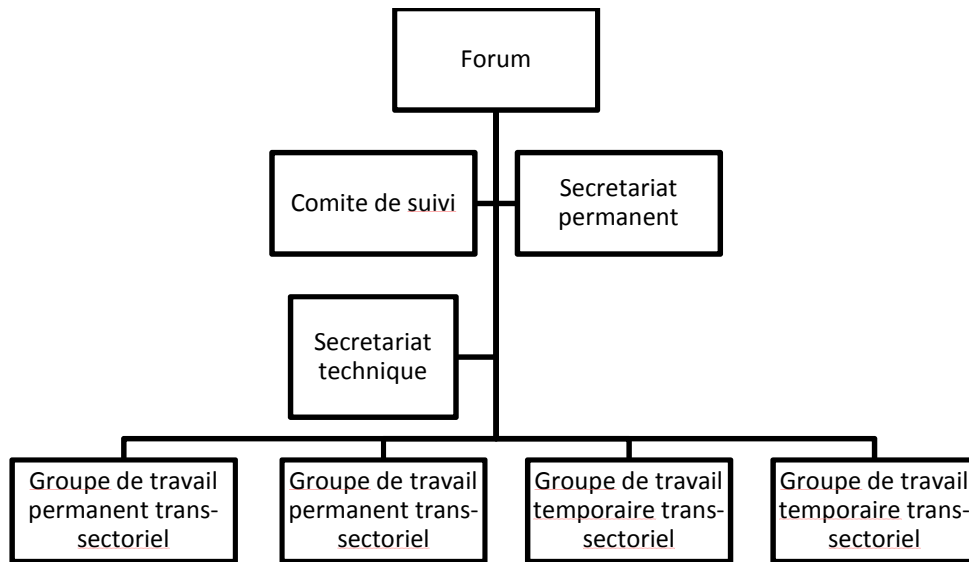
Institutional alignment

- The CBF is institutionally aligned to the Prime Minister Office. This is appropriate with most respects as the PM Office coordinates the Government's efforts with respects to economic development and business environment.

- There however are some concerns regarding the CBF’s ability to obtain full collaboration by the President’s Office (e.g. in obtaining signature of Decrees). It is important to contextualize this in the Cameroon political context where the President is seen by many as uninvolved (i.e. not specifically aimed at the CBF).
- If politically acceptable, a senior representative from the President’s Office should be added to the CBF Comité de Suivi et Secrétariat Technique.

B. STRUCTURE AND PARTICIPATION

The figure below illustrates the CBF’s structure.



Comparing the CBF structure with other PPDs, three features are noticeable:

- The existence of a Comité de Suivi that meets regularly to track progresses and follow up with stakeholders to ‘get things done’.
- The Comité Technique is the main CBF operational entity. It prioritizes issues to be addressed, decides on the creation and the composition of working groups, proposes reforms, etc. The working groups are purely technical structures that work on finding solutions on the issues they are mandated to address – often the working groups are temporary structures.
- The PPD governing responsibilities are not explicitly attributed to any of the CBF structures.

On the private sector side, business associations only entitled to be full CBF members while individual companies and private sector experts will be invited to take part to the working groups on ad hoc basis.

Further, **only three to four BMOs** are members of the Comités de Suivi et Techniques. Private sector participation is therefore limited to a very small number of influential individuals which may create significant threats of¹:

- Capture of the dialogue;
- Deficit in PS representation and hence in CBF legitimacy.

C. PROGRESS TO DATE

- The second session of the Forum, chaired by the Prime Minister was held on March 9, 2011. This illustrated the sustained governmental efforts to improve the investment climate through a constructive public/private dialogue. (NB: the 1st forum was held on February 2010);
- An Evaluation Committee chaired by the Secretary General of the Prime Minister Office has been put in place by GoC for the close monitoring of the CBF activities. This is a testimony of ownership of the CBF;
- Several meetings of working groups (include GoC and private sector representatives) have been organized to discuss issues and priorities on the agenda; During the last six months, about 118 participants attended these meetings, demonstrating the vitality of the CBF structure;
- Cameroon has implemented several Investment Climate reforms during FY10 covering the following main areas: Business start up, Trade logistics and PPD. The country's ranking improved in the Doing Business 2011 report from 173 to 168 out of 183;
- Since this progress has been less than expected, the CBF is providing assistance to GoC to get them focused on the implementation of the reforms. This will ensure that reforms made are really implemented on the ground and are picked up by the next Doing Business report;
- The government has demonstrated high level of commitment for the adoption by the OHADA Council of Ministers in December 2010 of two revised OHADA laws (General commercial law and Secured transactions law) and new regulations for the modernization (including computerization) of Registries for companies and secured transactions (RCCM).

D. NEXT STEPS/PENDING ISSUES/CHALLENGES

- 1) Translate into concrete improvements on the ground the FY 2010 reforms implemented in regulatory terms. This requires from GoC to take necessary measures to (i) render operational the single window for access to property, (ii) continue to simplify business start up processes, tax payments, trade across borders by streamlining required documents and procedures;
- 2) Accelerate the adoption of additional regulations (decree, law) needed to continue to improve the investment climate. This includes the adoption of the following regulations: (i) Law setting up the new commercial chambers; (ii) Decree liberalizing the publication of the

incorporation of the company in the legal journal; (iii) Implementing decrees of the law related to electronic trade and (iv) Regulation introducing and regulating mediation as an Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) mechanism in Cameroon;

- 3) Implement the OHADA reforms adopted in December 2010 and remain a champion in pushing the reforms expected to be adopted in December 2011 and related to Company Law and Insolvency Law;
- 4) Finalize the concept note, secure funding and launch the second phase of the CBF

Author

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Mr. Endene Ekeki is the Permanent Secretary of the Cameroon Business Forum CBF. Previously he served as the Secretary General of National Federation of SME's Associations. Mr. Endeni Ekeki held high level positions such as Technical Adviser of Lord Mayor of Douala City Council, and the Director of GPC and PHARMASERVICES in the private sector of Cameroon. He also worked as an Investment officer for Overseas Projects at Econofitech in Montreal, Canada and as a consultant in Project Management and in organization.

Mr. Endeni Ekeki holds an Engineering Degree from Universite Laval and a graduate degree in Project Management from Ecole Polytechnique in Montreal, Canada.