



United Nations
Economic Commission for Africa

**Brainstorming session on the
Operationalization
Of the "Douala Consensus":
"Pathways to economic
diversification in Central Africa"**

REPORT OF THE MEETING

February 2018

I. INTRODUCTION

1. The Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA/SRO-CA) organized on 31 January 2018 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaoundé, Cameroon, a brainstorming session on the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus".
2. The main objective of the brainstorming session was to identify practical actions that could lead to the effective implementation of the "Douala Consensus" which had been adopted at the end of the 33rd meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts (ICE).

II. PARTICIPATION

3. More than forty participants took part to the brainstorming session including representatives of the Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development of the Republic of Cameroon (MINEPAT), representatives of ECCAS and CEMAC, former ECA officials and consultants residing in Cameroon as well as senior economists from UNDP offices in Central Africa. The private sector, civil society, universities and research centers of the sub-region also took part the meeting.
4. The list of participants can be found in Annex I.
5. The ECA provided secretarial services for the meeting.

III. OPENING CEREMONY

6. The opening ceremony was chaired by Mr. Isaac Tamba, Director General for the Economy and Public Investments Programming at the MINEPAT. The opening ceremony featured three speeches by the following officials: Mr. **Antonio Pedro**, Director of ECA Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa, Mr. **Adam Elhiraika**, Director of ECA's Macroeconomic Policy Division and Mr. **Isaac Tamba** who opened the meeting.

IV. CONDUCT OF DELIBERATIONS

7. The proceedings were conducted in plenary sessions and in break-out sessions to deepen reflection. The discussions were chaired by the director General of the Economy.
8. The programme of work of the meeting can be found in Annex II.

a) Presentation of the issues paper

9. The issues paper prepared by the ECA/SRO-CA was presented to kick start the discussions. The presenter began his presentation by recalling that the recent slump in commodity prices, most notably those of oil and related products, has caused economic and fiscal difficulties which have necessitated structural adjustment programmes, under the supervision of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), to achieve macroeconomic stability on the short to medium-term and regain investors' confidence in the sub-region. After explaining the reasons for the renewed interest in diversification and industrialization in Central Africa, the speaker identified the constraints and drivers of diversification in Central Africa, which can be classified into four groups of key areas of intervention: (i) Effective public Leadership (ii) Infrastructure and human capital; (iii) Governance and operational capacities; and (iv) Financing industrialization. The presenter then described the key elements that would effectively pave the way for diversification and industrialization. These key elements are: (i) Pragmatic policies; (ii) Effective and coherent planning; (iii) Adequate human capacities, and (iv) Mobilization of all stakeholders as well as (v) Embedded autonomy of industrial policy organizations. The speaker completed his presentation by proposing a series of issues to be discussed and which cover several areas such as the flexibility to conduct an economic diversification policy; the coordination of diversification policy within the sub-region; partnerships or the role of the private sector.
10. The ensuing discussions enabled the participants to share various viewpoints on the modalities for operationalizing the "Douala Consensus". For example, horizontal diversification has been identified as a pathway to be explored before moving to vertical diversification. In view of the many issues and challenges of diversification, participants stressed the importance of setting prioritizing and argued for further coordination between ECCAS and CEMAC. The issue of "economic patriotism" has been addressed to enable Central African emerging

industries to develop as has been the case in other developing regions. In any case, macroeconomic stability, the quality of leadership and the mobilization of financial resources as well as the strengthening of human capacities have been identified as key elements for designing strategies geared towards diversifying the economy and developing a competitive manufacturing sector for the structural transformation of Central Africa.

b) Break-out sessions

The participants were divided into two working groups to further reflect on the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus". There were four proposed themes:

- ◆ Group 1: Political Leadership and Cognitive factors / human Capital.
- ◆ Group 2: Infrastructure, business climate, private sector and Financing / partnership.

11. The objective of the work of the break-out sessions was to identify key areas of intervention for the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus". To this end, the matrix of the fourteen recommendations from the 33rd ICE served as a working tool.

12. The Matrix of the fourteen recommendations can be found in Annex III.

c) Outcomes of the group sessions

13. The outcomes of the group session were presented in plenary. The reports of the two groups can be found in Annex IV.

V. CONCLUSION OF THE MEETING

14. Three closing remarks were delivered respectively by the Director of ECA/SRO-CA, the Director of the ECA's Macroeconomic Policy Division and the Director-General of the Economy.

15. The Director, Mr. Antonio Pedro, thanked the participants for attending the brainstorming session and for the quality of their contribution towards the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus". He noted that one of the main messages obtained from these discussions is that the promotion of economic diversification in the region requires the establishment and development of world class institutions with the best standard of rules and regulatory frameworks".

16. After the closing remarks of the Director of SRO-CA, Mr. Adam Elhiraika, congratulated the participants on the relevance of their interventions. He stressed that Central Banks should strengthen financial deepening as it is critical for financial development and unlocking finance for economic diversification. He also mentioned the fact that the national authorities must pursue favorable policies and set up appropriate mechanisms to attract Foreign Direct Investments (FDIs).
17. In his closing remarks, the Director-General of the Economy, Mr. Isaac Tamba, thanked the experts for their active participation during the brainstorming session. He stressed that economic diversification in Central Africa is fundamental and timely. It will serve as an opportunity to mitigate some of the risks inherent in Central African economies. He said that the focus should be on moving from horizontal diversification to vertical diversification given Central Africa's abundant resources. Mr. Isaac Tamba underlined the many hurdles that need to be overcome to achieve economic diversification. Notable among them is the lack of financing. According to him some of the proposals made by Group 2 on "Feasibility studies in creating development banks" are crucial. It is also important to explore alternative means for attracting FDIs in the region. Some of the solutions to these challenges include:
- ◆ Developing institutions to support small businesses in the absence of financing institutions.
 - ◆ Providing support to businesses with interest in vertical and horizontal integration.
 - ◆ Providing financing models for the Agriculture sector such as the "Agropoles Programs" which benefit certain operators of the agriculture industry.
 - ◆ Identifying financing instruments to support business investments.

The Director General of the Economy stressed the importance of strong leadership for it is vital for achieving economic diversification. Given the importance of operationalization of the "Douala Consensus", Mr. Tamba deemed necessary to organize such meetings on a quarterly basis and to allocate more time for discussions as one day is not enough. Mr. Tamba ended his closing remarks by insisting on the fact that the recommendations adopted during the meeting should be conveyed by each participant to their respective institutions in order to facilitate the implementation process. The report of the meeting should not be placed in drawers. "Experts should approach our various Directors, Ministers, and Head of States to see how these recommendations could be implemented" he said. It was on this note of hope that he declared closed the brainstorming session on the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus".

ANNEXES

Annex I: List of participants

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Annexe II : Program of work

TIME	ACTIVITIES
8 :30 – 09 :00	Arrival of participants
09 :00 – 09 :20	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Word of welcome by the Director of the ECA Sub-Regional Office for Central Africa - Introductory remarks by the Director of ECA’s Macroeconomic Policy Division - Opening statement by the Director General of the Economy
09 :20 – 09 :30	Presentation of the issues paper
09 :30 – 10 :30	Discussions
10 :30 – 10 :45	<i>Coffee break</i>
10 :45 – 13:00	Break-out sessions
13:00 – 14:30	<i>Lunch break</i>
14:30 – 16:30	Break-out sessions (continuation and end)
16 :30 – 17 :30	Presentation of the outcomes of the break-out sessions
17 :30	<i>Conclusion of the meeting</i>

Annex III : Recommendations matrix – Douala Consensus

Recommendations	Responsible	Time frame
1. Developing and having adopted by Community bodies a regional industrialization plan	ECCAS	ST
2. Assisting Member States in designing and adopting national industrialization plans	Member States, ECCAS CEMAC	ST
3. Developing and adopting national legal frameworks for industrialization	Member States	ST
4. Organizing annual meetings between Member States and private sector operators at the sub-regional level, in particular within the framework of a Central Africa Summit for Industrial Development (First meeting to be held in 2018)	ECCAS	December 2017
5. Promoting national and/or regional champions	Member States, ECCAS, CEMAC	ST
6. Establishing or strengthening quality standards at national and regional level	Member States, ECCAS, CEMAC	ST
7. Developing local content in the implementation of major national and regional development projects and programs	Member States, ECCAS, CEMAC	ST
8. Setting up specialized institutions to accompany SMEs in the acquisition and mastering of technologies	Member States	ST
9. Setting up economic zones (clusters, industrial parks, etc.) for SMEs with the aim of creating synergies and networking between the different links of the value chain	Member States	ST
10. Creating investment banks at the national and sub-regional levels	Member States, ECCAS, CEMAC	ST
11. Creating a regional project preparation fund housed at the BDEAC	Member States, ECCAS, CEMAC	ST
12. Creating or operationalizing deposit and consignment funds	Member States	ST
13. Creating export credit Agencies () (EXIM Banks)	Member States	ST
14. Providing Member States, regional economic communities and intergovernmental organizations with the necessary technical assistance for the implementation of all the above 13 recommendations	ECA	ST

ST (short term) : 2years

Annex IV : Break-out sessions

GROUP 1
1. POLITICAL LEADERSHIP 2. COGNITIVE FACTORS /HUMAN CAPITAL

Group 1 will designate a Chair and a Rapporteur. ECA will be the facilitator. The Working Group will need to address key interventions to promote and strengthen **Political Leadership (Sub-group 1)** and **Cognitive factors /human capital (sub-group 2)** that must underlie diversification strategies and Industrialization in Central Africa. As such, the members of the groups will use the matrix of the fourteen recommendations from the Douala ICE as a working framework.

Sub-group 1 was chaired by Marcel Essi Mba'ale and the rapporteur was Henri Lucien Ticky. Sub-group 1 identified the following actions to be carried out for the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus":

Studies

1. Developing a practical guide for the formulation of industrial development policies (IDPs).
2. Developing a compendium of good practices in industrialization.
3. Assessing existing national IDPs, institutional frameworks and macroeconomic policies.
4. Developing criteria for the monitoring and evaluation of IDPs.
5. Assessing the coherence between national IDPs, trade policies and technology development.
6. Conducting economic studies highlighting conflicts of interest and ensuring that economic operators are interested in the transformation of local products.
7. Conducting a study that will quantify the benefits of free trade and regional integration.

Improving coordination frameworks

1. Establishing a platform to improve the quality of national public/private dialogue in order to better take into account the private sector concerns in the formulation and implementation of public policies.
2. Fostering the exchange of experiences between countries that have successfully implemented diversification policies (Singapore, Malaysia, Mauritius, etc.) and Central African countries.
3. Facilitating the creation of regional legal frameworks for alternative trade dispute resolution like the Dubai Dispute Resolution Authority (DRA). For this purpose a partnership could be facilitated between the Douala Stock Exchange and the DRA.
4. Strengthening information and communication channels of national reform systems and monitoring of reforms.
5. Improving public access to information including public procurement, investment opportunities for improved transparency.
6. Taking advantage of existing platforms like the PDCT-AC.
7. Establishing a coordination framework on good practices in the field of industrialization.
8. Identifying areas where countries have a comparative advantage, intensifying research and developing skills to enable countries to position themselves as leaders in the knowledge-based economy.

Sub-group 2 was chaired by Prof. Georges Kobou and the rapporteur was Anne-Marie Nyemb. Sub-group 2 identified the following actions to be carried out for the operationalization of the "Douala Consensus":

1. Adding training modules for entrepreneurship and leadership in education curricula.
2. Creating and organizing skilled trades.
3. Strengthening the provision of technical technological training through the establishment of training centers for specialized technicians (access opened to all education levels).
4. Promoting girls' access to technical and technological training schools.
5. Ensuring compliance with technology transfer clauses in the design and implementation of projects.
6. Improving access to health.
7. Setting up incentive mechanisms to guide young graduates to productive sectors through certificate trainings.
8. Valuing endogenous know-how for economic diversification.
9. Facilitating the mobility of human resources in the Sub-region.
10. Strengthening labor market information systems.
11. Creating regional hubs of excellence in high-potential sectors.
12. Promoting partnerships between research centers and the private sector.
13. Promoting business incubators for young project-holders.

GROUP 2

1. INFRASTRUCTURE, BUSINESS CLIMATE, PRIVATE SECTOR
2. FINANCING/PARTNERSHIP

Group 2 will designate a Chair and a Rapporteur. ECA will be the facilitator. The Working Group will need to address key interventions to develop **Infrastructure** including standards, improve **the business climate** and promote the **private sector (sub-group 1)**. Group 2 will also identify practical actions to enable the **financing** of diversification and industrialization and identify potential **partnerships** for accelerating investment and industrialization (**sub-group 2**). As such, the members of the groups will use the matrix of the fourteen recommendations from the Douala ICE as a working framework.

Sub-group 1 and Sub-group 2 were chaired by Martin Tsounkeu and Mr. Babissakana was the rapporteur. Group 2 identified the following actions for operationalizing 10 of the fourteen recommendations from the Douala ICE.

Sub-group 1: Infrastructure, business climate and private sector

Actions: Recommendations 4 and 5

1. Increasing capacity of private sector institutions (national champions etc.) accompanied with the stakeholders of the industrial sector.
2. Revive the UNIPACE (Union of the Entrepreneur of Central Africa).
3. Put in place policies for promoting national or regional champions.

Actions: Recommendation 6

1. Implement regional quality mechanisms with clear frameworks (regional standard policies, Quality awards, Additional studies to strengthen the above actions).

Actions: Recommendation 7

1. Put in place a regional local content policy.

Actions: Recommendation 8

1. Create an Information Technology Agencies.
2. Reinforce and strengthen local research institutions.

Actions: Recommendation 9

1. A cluster-based industrial parks that address specific issues in the value chain for each country.
2. Establish a regional network of industrial parks.

Sub-group 2: Financing and partnerships

Actions: Recommendation 10, 11, 12 and 13

1. Feasibility studies for the creation of development banks and funds for project designing.
2. Establishing a standard framework for Investment Banks.