CHRONICLE OF ENGAGEMENTS TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE ECONOMIC DIVERSIFICATION IN CAMEROON
What have we achieved together since 2017?

Making the AfCFTA work for Cameroon ................................................................. 04
Promoting Economic Diversification through the Douala Consensus .................. 06
Reviving Cameroon’s industrial policy .................................................................. 08
Towards a Kribi-Douala-Edea (KED) Growth Triangle ....................................... 10
Building synergies for a productive pharmaceutical industry ............................... 12
Driving Cameroon’s digital economy ..................................................................... 14
Providing evidence for economic policy and action ............................................ 16
Aligning national development plans with Agendas 2030 and 2063 .................... 18
Understanding the socioeconomic impacts of COVID-19 on Central Africa ....... 20
Supporting Cameroon on road safety measures ................................................... 22
Designing an integrated approach to climate, land, water and energy strategies .... 24
Promoting resilience on climate change ................................................................. 26
Assisting Cameroonian officials to mainstream accountability measures in development planning ....................................................... 28
Preparing Cameroon to deal with an urban sprawl by 2050 ................................. 30
ECA: Who are we?

In the heart of Yaounde – the city of seven hills, Cameroon’s nature-studded capital, lies the Subregional Office for Central Africa of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). The Commission’s journey with Cameroon and the six other countries it covers in the subregion (the Central African Republic, Chad, Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon and Sao Tome and Principe) with an extension of its services to the rest of ECCAS, started in in 1962. This was just four years after its headquarters was established in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (in 1958) by the UN’s Economic and Social Council.

ECA’s current mandate is to promote economic and social development of its member States by delivering cutting-edge ideas and prompting action for an empowered and transformed Africa; informed by the 2030 Agenda and African Union’s Agenda 2063. The Commission’s special focus in Central Africa, in general, and Cameroon, in particular, is to foster economic diversification and structural transformation for inclusive and sustainable development. To achieve this, ECA helps countries and regional economic communities (RECs) in the sub-region formulate and implement relevant policies and strategies with the view to sustainably expanding the contribution of the manufacturing and high-value service sectors to GDP and increasing the share of tradeable and manufactured goods in total exports; deepening regional value chains; and improving the competitiveness and productivity of local economies.

Front view of ECA’s main building at its headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia
Apart from a communication campaign to explain the stakes of the advent of Africa’s common market since the Kigali accords of March 2018, ECA organized stakeholder briefings for the public and private sector and played a key role in the formulation of Cameroon’s national AfCFTA strategy.

The Commission also equipped the private sector with creative ideas for selling services to the continent and supported Cameroon with the assessment of its export potential in the Africa CFTA market through a report based on TRADE-DSM analysis. The report revealed that Cameroon could sell for between US$3 and US$9 billion of its products on the Common market at the outset.
Meeting between President Paul Biya (R) and UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of ECA – Vera Songwe (L) on 18 April 2019 (in the middle is the Director of ECA's Subregional Office for Central Africa, Antonio Pedro)

Ms Songwe made a strong case for Cameroon to deepen economic diversification, urgently ratify the AfCFTA, improve digital connectivity and holistically pursue peace/security/development.
A turning point of ECA’s Intergovernmental Committee of Experts and Senior Officials for Central Africa’s (ICE) meetings was its 33rd session held in Douala in September 2017 during which the Douala Consensus was reached.

The Douala Consensus principally calls on Governments and the private sector in Central Africa to speed up economic diversification, especially through natural resource and trade-induced industrialization. This was deemed to be the best option to break the region’s vicious cycles of booms and busts associated with its excessive dependence on the export of raw materials.

Since Douala 2017, the Cameroonian Government and other countries in the sub-region have not only put economic diversification at the centre of their development policy (e.g. Cameroon’s 2020-2030 National Development Strategy) but are practicing and implementing it.

Promoting Economic Diversification through the Douala Consensus
At circa 3%, the share of intra-Central African trade is the lowest in Africa (avg 16.6%). The sub-region export dependency ratio is amongst the highest on the continent. The Douala Consensus aims to fix these structural challenges.
Reviving Cameroon’s industrial policy

Cameroonian authorities sought ECA’s support to sharpen the country’s Industrial Development Masterplan (PDI) formulated in 2016, to render it more current, dynamic, and responsive to the new opportunities, including the AfCFTA.

The PDI review contributed to the identification of Agroindustry, Digital Economy, Energy, Mines-Metallurgy, Forestry-Wood, Textile-Leather and Clothing, Chemistry-Pharmacy and Hydrocarbons as the key priorities to Cameroon’s rapid industrialization. It also front-lined industrial clusters and special economic zones as vehicles for effective industrial policy implementation, with the Kribi-Edea-Douala (KED) Growth Triangle to kickstart the new approach.

ECA has mobilized the Africa Finance Corporation (AFC) to co-develop KED and inscribed the implementation of the PDI and the national AfCFTA strategy as two distinct pillars of the United Nations Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF) for Cameroon.
Where a road passes, development follows, goes the adage. So what can happen to already existing agglomerations of 4.2 million people neatly connected by both roads and waterways, with a 42% youthful population living near connected roads, a 90% adult literacy rate and a 33% internet penetration (which is more than double the national average)?

Through analyses from a georeferenced, spatial planning and investment decision-making tool, ECA and the Government of Cameroon have identified the Kribi-Douala-Edea assemblage of settlements as ideal for developing a growth triangle, and a mega industrial cluster. They are working to develop it.

Leveraging a 4.2 million manpower for a Kribi-Douala-Edea (KED) Growth Triangle
About one third of the population living near the DEK road has access to the internet at home, which is significantly higher than the national average of 14 percent.

Roughly 90 percent of individuals aged 15 and older have completed primary school or higher in the communities near the Douala-Edéa-Kribi ring road, which far outpaces the national average of 65 percent.
Building synergies for a US $369M+ pharmaceutical industry

Cameroon has a FCFA 200 billion (US$ 369 million) local market for pharmaceuticals but currently only 5% is supplied locally. Up to 90% of pharmaceutical products are imported while a whopping 40% of supplies are deemed to be contrabanded posing a serious threat to public health.

Together with the Ministry of Mines, Industry and Technological Development (MINMINDT) and the private sector, ECA is examining options to restructure the sector by boosting its value chains and creating a pharmaceuticals’ inter-professional corps. The plan is to produce more pharmaceuticals locally and capture the most immediate opportunities in the Nigerian and ECCAS markets.
Family photo during the workshop to restructure and boost the productivity of its pharmaceutical industry, Yaounde, 27 January 2021.
In an April 2019 discussion, President Paul Biya of Cameroon and United Nations Under-Secretary-General and Executive Secretary of ECA – Vera Songwe created a workstream, dually overseen by Cameroon’s Minister of Posts and Telecommunications (MINPOSTEL) and ECA’s Executive Secretary to firm-up Cameroon’s Digital Transformation Strategy and make the digital economy contribute 6.4% to the country’s GDP by 2029.

So far ECA has worked with MINPOSTEL to: revise the country’s telecoms policy and regulatory framework; establish two internet exchange points in Yaounde and Douala to expand internet access in the country; facilitate enable Cameroon to benefit from an Optical Fibre agreement with Liquid Intelligent Technologies; boost support to start-ups and promote hub development, such as the Silicon Mountain Technology Park in Buea, to name but these few.

In July 2021, ECA, in partnership with the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNWOMEN and Cameroon’s Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications, organised a 10-day Connected African Girls’ Coding Camp with over 8000 in attendance in person in Yaounde, Douala and Buea and online. The girls developed more than 70 innovative projects in animation, web development, robotics, artificial intelligence and fashion design, which offer practical solutions to a range of issues from health care to road traffic management within the context of Africa’s expanding and integrating economy.
Buea, Silicon Mountain: Cameroonian girls and young women being introduced to coding, robotics, artificial intelligence by ECA, ITU and UNWOMEN during a Connected African Girls' Coding Camp attended by over 8500 young girls and women in July 2021.

Cameroon’s Minister of Posts and Telecommunications – Minette Libom Li Likeng presiding at African Regional Follow-up and Review Meeting of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) convened by ECA in Yaounde in December 2019.
Cameroonian development policy officials benefit regularly from ECA’s continental, subregional and country-level research/publications including the Economic Report on Africa series, Assessing Regional Integration in Africa (ARIA), African Governance Report and other thematic reports, including at the sub-regional and national levels. These flagship publications track development progress on the continent, undertake sectoral analysis of thematic issues of interest to Africa and articulate pathways to sustainable development in line with Agendas 2030 and 2063.

Cameroon has been featured in several ECA’s Country Profiles and ECA’s STEPS profiles (STEPS stands for: Structural Transformation, Employment, Production and Society). For example, the 2018 Cameroon STEPS profile noted that despite its laudable development plans as well as the rising level of transformation of its local products, the country still had big gaps to plug in terms of the structural transformation of its economy. The message was well received by the government who promised to take appropriate action to address the structural problems compounding the country’s development.
**Figure 6:** Exportations de marchandises selon l’utilisation finale (%).

**Figure 7:** Importations de marchandises selon l’utilisation finale (%).

**Figure 8:** Valeur ajoutée étrangère (% d’exportations)

**Figure 9:** Espace produit (exportations, 2016)

*Source : Division de statistique, 2017a ; Banque mondiale, 2017.*

*Source : Division de statistique, 2017a ; Banque mondiale, 2017.*

*Source : BAD, OCDE et PNUD, 2014.*

*Source : Center for International Development, 2016.*
CA experts have helped sharpen the skills of development planners from Cameroon with a web application which enables African States to align the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and Agenda 2063 so as to simultaneously use them in their development planning and to harmonize planning and reporting for both agendas.

A Cameroon Government official said the exercise equipped them “with formulas and even attitudes that allow us to improve the effectiveness of our development policies, because they will be more evidence-based and backed by up-to-date models which will enable us to stay on course with regards to our goal of becoming an emerging country by …”. A link between this an ECA’s georeferenced, spatial planning and investment decision-making tool is now being made to further enhance development planning in Cameroon.
By February 2020, COVID-19 had hit Africa. In response, ECA was amongst the first institutions to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the socioeconomic impacts of the pandemic on African countries, including Cameroon. The Commission’s situational analysis on the Central African subregion tilted Economic Effects of COVID-19 on Central Africa projected a 4.1 percentage point GDP loss for Cameroon but higher losses for other predominantly oil-exporting countries in the subregion (e.g. an 18.5 percentage point deficit for Equatorial Guinea) due to COVID-19. The study called for rapid policy actions, prescribing economic stimulus packages, the speeding up of economic diversification, and inward-looking investments anchored on the catalytic power of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). ECA’s findings informed policy action and other socioeconomic assessments on the impacts of COVID-19 in the subregion.
March 2020: Facing the press, Antonio Pedro, Director of ECA’s subregional Office for Central Africa discusses ECA’s analysis on the double jeopardy of COVID-19 on the economies and health systems of countries of the sub-region, while advocating response strategies.
Supporting Cameroon on road safety measures

Side-by-side with the UN Secretary-General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety, ECA was the principal partner supporting Cameroon towards accident-free roads in the framework of the UN Decade of Action for Road Safety 2011-2020 and the African Road Safety Action Plan for the Decade.

In August 2018, the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy for Road Safety Jean Todt unveiled the Cameroon Road Safety Performance Review Report jointly commissioned by ECA and the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE). The report said about 1,500 persons die from over 16,000 road crashes yearly in Cameroon since the launch of the Decade, providing the reasons for this trend and recommending major actions to reverse it.
Designing an integrated approach to climate, land, water, and energy strategies

With a shrinking fiscal space, the competition for which sector – food, water, energy or climate change – gets priority for governments’ action is rife and even counterproductive. There is need to pre-empt such unproductive model of decision making by transitioning from sectoral to integrated policymaking in Climate, Land, Energy and Water systems (CLEWs). To this effect, in July 2019, ECA, the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs (UNDESA) and UNDP joined efforts in the delivery of a training program in the use of a CLEWs modelling tool to inform sustainable development policies and to build a system that supports institutional arrangements for collaboration and coordination among ministries in the integrated assessment and evaluation of climate, land, energy and water policies and strategies.
Promoting resilience on climate change to avoid a 2-5% GDP loss

Climate change poses an existential threat to Africa and is already severely impacting African countries, including Cameroon. ECA reckons that some of these countries are losing between 2 and 5% of their GDP as a result of climate change, while others are already spending between 2 and 9% of their budgets in unplanned expenditure to address extreme weather events such as flooding, droughts and heatwaves.

ECA is therefore supporting Cameroon’s National Observatory on Climate Change (NOCC) through (i) enhanced seasonal to sub seasonal forecasting to support the production of regular bulletins; (ii) assessment and mapping of national assets at risk from climate change to enhance early warning interventions and measures for employing climate resilience techniques to protect those assets; and (iii) awareness raising and promotion of the importance of integrating climate resilience in national development planning at the sectoral level in Cameroon.

June 2021: Ceremony at which Cameroon’s National Observatory on Climate Change (NOCC) presents results of a study on the identification of national assets threatened by climate disturbances/change in Cameroon, supported by ECA.

"Through this cooperation with UNECA, the technical capacities on advanced climate modelling of NOCC staff were strengthened and adequate technological equipment acquired" said NOCC on its Twitter page.
In October 2019, during one of a series of trainings on accountability in development planning organised by ECA and UN DESA in Yaounde for programme planners, statisticians and other national professionals, officials learnt the dual relationships of accountability in development, viz.: ‘downward’ accountability of higher levels of government in response to the needs of communities, and ‘upward’ accountability of lower levels of government in implementing and monitoring national development visions and targets.

Assisting Cameroonian officials to mainstream accountability measures in development planning
Cameroonian development planners brandish their certificate of completion of UN Development Account Tranche Project aimed at integrating accountability in development planning, on 16 October 2019 in Yaounde.
Preparing Cameroon to deal with a 70% urban sprawl by 2050

Cameroon’s cities will soak up to 70% of the country’s population by 2050. To manage this transition better, ECA has organised a series of trainings for officials of ministries and institutions in charge of national development planning, urban development, housing, industry, finance, agriculture, infrastructure, and statistics of Cameroon and other African countries to transform their burgeoning cities into poles of inclusive and sustainable development.

The series of training in Yaounde held between November 2016 and June 2018 resulted in the development of an action plan defining the main entry points for integrating urbanization into Cameroon’s National Development Plan for 2020-2030.
July 2021: Young ladies follow a lesson on virtual animation during the Connected African Girls Coding Camp, organized in Yaounde, Douala and Buea (face-to-face) and online for more than 8,000 participants.
Tomorrow’s innovative leaders: Happy Cameroonian children in Bonaberi, a popular neighbourhood of the country’s economic capital – Douala.
Mount Cameroon, at the foot of which is located the city of Buea and home to the vibrant start-up community known as Silicon Mountain. ECA is supporting the Ministry of Posts and Telecommunications in further developing the city's tech-hub.