

The Cameroon Business Forum

By

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1- Context and Peculiarities of the Partnership

The Cameroon Business Forum is a public-private sector dialogue mechanism put in place to strive for the improvement of the business climate and support Private Sector development.

Created by the Cameroonian Government with the support of the IFC in 2006, the CBF became operational in 2009 with the signature of the MOU between IFC, the government and the Private sector represented by the Chamber of Commerce and GICAM (the latter being more representative as a business association).

IFC, a member of the World Bank Group, provides technical assistance to the State for a proper ownership of this consultation platform in the long-term. Meant to assist the Government in its efforts aimed at increasing economic growth, this platform owes its existence to the common desire of stakeholders to improve the regulatory framework through a proper implementation of reforms.

Chaired by the Prime Minister, Head of Government, the Cameroon Business Forum is a powerful tool for speeding up and promoting reforms aimed at improving the business environment. Thus, it replaces the Private Sector Enlarged Inter-ministerial Committee (CIESP), the former dialogue mechanism which was not sufficiently performant.

2- Objectives

The objectives of the CBF are as follows:

- Promoting an efficient public-private dialogue ;
- Removing obstacles to the business environment by implementing adopted reforms with a view to promoting the productive sector;
- Speeding up the drafting of reforms that will improve on the investment climate and the position of Cameroon in the ranking of the Doing Business report or other rating agencies;
- Promoting the development of both local and foreign investments in Cameroon.

Besides these objectives, the CBF upholds values that are applicable to both its functioning and its activities:

- Fairness and accountability
- Integrity and impartiality
- Efficiency and professionalism
- Team and sharing spirit

3- Status of Partnership to Date

- After 6 years, the CBF is on a transition phase. The main goal at this stage is to transfer the secretariat, actually managed by IFC, to the local stakeholders in 18 months.
- A Steering Committee chaired by the Secretary General of the Prime Minister's Office has been put in place by GoC for the close monitoring of CBF activities. This is evidence of ownership of the CBF;
- A Private Sector platform was established in March 2014, with 12 business associations including the Chamber of Commerce and GICAM. This platform is key to making sure that the private sector address their problem trough the same channel and are well structured to perform for their lobbying and advocacy,
- The next forum, which is at its 6th edition, chaired by the prime Minister will be holding on March 10th 2015.

4- Structure, Process and Milestones

Structured to ensure efficiency in the implementation of adopted reforms, the CBF comprises a twofold organization:

The Annual Forum

It is the supreme organ of the CBF. It convenes once a year; at the beginning of the fiscal year.

Presided at by the Prime Minister, Head of Government, it is the supreme arbitration and validation body for proposals on the improvement of the business environment, set out by actors of the public and private sectors.

The participants to the forum are representatives from the private sector and ministers concerned with the items on the agenda. Representatives of non-governmental organizations, diplomatic missions as well as development partners are also invited to this forum as observers.

The Permanent Secretariat

Headed by a Permanent Secretary, it ensures the overall management and coordination of the monitoring of the implementation of recommendations.

The permanent secretariat is also in charge of the organization of training and other activities related to the building of capacities, preparing annual action plans, meetings, studies and economic research, monographs and draft bills or regulations.

The Permanent Secretary collaborates with the public-private sector coordination organs, the donors, the parliament, the civil society, the media and diplomatic representatives as well as any other third party.

Working Groups

At the organizational level, the permanent secretariat relies on working groups in charge of thematic issues or those related to the relevant sectors.

Thus, in 2010, the following thematic groups were created: Cross-border Trade, Business Entry, Facilitation and Justice, and Payment of taxes. Two working groups were added in 2011: Promotion of investments and Access to Property, and in 2012 a Building Permit group. Each group handles a specific programme of reforms.

The working groups are made up of representatives of the public-private sector and convene regularly to determine their annual working plan.

Monitoring and Evaluation Committee

Created by order No.031 PM of 12 February 2012, in order to ensure the efficiency of the CBF, the Monitoring and Evaluation Committee (MEC) is in charge of the following missions:

- Drafting of the Forum's preparatory technical file
- Co-ordinating sectorial activities that involve the improvement of the business climate
- Facilitating the implementation of adopted resolutions and recommendations
- Drafting of the periodic report on the implementation of recommendations by all parties
- Recommending measures aimed at strengthening public-private partnership

The MEC is made-up of members from the public and private sectors; it is chaired by the Secretary-General of the Prime Minister's office and the Minister of Economy, Planning and Regional Development is the deputy chair.

5- Results

The table below is a synthesis of the results since the beginning of the platform activities.

Session	Number of recommendations Adopted (including renewal)	Number of recommendations enacted	Renewal	Retrains or Cancelled
CBF 1	27	21	6	
CBF 2	48	35	13	6
CBF 3	40	28	12	5
CBF 4	49	20	21	8
CBF 5	38	19	14	5

To date, 123 out of 198 recommendations have been enacted (62%)

6- Challenges

Concerning the challenges, we have 4 keys milestones, described as follow:

- The successful transfer within 18 months requested by the government. That means:
 - To recruit new staff
 - To remove and relocated the secretariat out of IFC
 - To equip the secretariat
- of the speeding up the implementation of enacted recommendations
- The establishment of a strong mechanism of monitoring and control to ensure that the implemented recommendations are effectively working in the field
- The warranty of sustainability of the platform, especially at the level of financial resources to cover the operational cost by the local stakeholders



7- Details of the author

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