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# BUSINESS IN CAMEROON

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Domestic energy

## CAMEROON HITS THE GAS

Interview with  
Elisabeth Medou Badang



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# Cameroon's new government hits the gas

In order to boost economy and improve Cameroon's financial health, President Paul Biya proceeded on March 2, 2018 to a ministerial reshuffle. This aims at, among others, accelerate wealth distribution across local communities, by creating a whole division in charge of decentralization and local development. Also, reshuffling was done at the ministry of finance (MINFI) and the ministry of economy, planning and land development (MINEPAT) to restart the economy and develop key projects. Under the new restructuring, power sector is far from being neglected ; this is as the new hydropower dams of Memve'ele, Lom Pangar and Mekin are about to be completed. They will add no less than 266 MW to the southern interconnected grid.

Another sector that has significantly risen in Cameroon, over the past five years, is the domestic gas industry. Indeed, this is due to the rapid growth of demand and sales of gas bottles. Our readers will be able to see for themselves looking at figures and opportunities presented in this edition.

With the boom recorded by domestic gas' production-import-distribution chain, Government decided to adopt a National Master Plan for Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG). It is attached to this edition. It aims at increasing households' consumption of cooking gas. With bright perspectives, penetration rate for domestic gas in Cameroon is actually 12% while the country's population is estimated at more than 23 million people. With projections for this market to grow to 18 million people in years to come, both small and big marketers, but also major petroleum products distributors, are investing huge sums to manufacture gas bottles with various labels and copyrights. Projections for this market are also sustained by the fact that deforestation which stimulates atmospheric pollution, is greatly sanctioned by most world summits, NGOs for the protection of environment and ozone layer. Demand for cooking gas, which is a very reliable alternative, is expected to stand at 383 tons by 2030. This explains why the government, and private sector (since it is an open market), wish to massively invest in the sector. To meet this demand, an investment of CFA266 billion (about €407 million) is indeed required.



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### Publication Director

Yasmine BAHRI-DOMON

### Contributors

Brice R. MBODIAM, Sylvain ANDZONGO, Idriss LINGE.

### Operator

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Design : Jérémie FLAUX, Web : Christian ZANARDI,

Translation : Schadrac AKINOCHO

### Advertisement

[regiepub@investiraucameroun.com](mailto:regiepub@investiraucameroun.com)

In Cameroon

Albert MASSIMB, [almassimb@yahoo.fr](mailto:almassimb@yahoo.fr)

Tel : 00 237 694 66 94 59

### Printing

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[www.businessincameroon.com](http://www.businessincameroon.com) - [info@businessincameroon.com](mailto:info@businessincameroon.com)

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# THE CAST



**JEREMIAH  
ANDOSEH**

The special criminal court (tribunal criminel spécial -TCS) has condemned Jeremiah Andossey, former Managing Director of MATGENIE to a life Sentence after he was found guilty of looting the state to a tune of CFA12billion. Mr. Andossey who has been hiding since he was relieved of his position at MATGENIE back in 2005 is said to have engaged in so many dubious deals such as bloating the prices of machines, embezzling public funds generated from the rental of the firm's machinery or their sales, etc.



**JOËL NANA  
KONTCHOU**

In 2017, 50% of ENEO's investments were concentrated on the distribution network. This was announced on February 14, 2018, in Kribi, by Joël Nana Kontchou, the managing director of ENEO.

These investments helped establish eight new technical bases that contributed to the reinforcement of repair teams. In addition, visits to power lines were systematized while some of these lines were trimmed. Wooden poles were also replaced.

Let it be noted that power outages resulting from insufficient power supply have significantly decreased. This is attributed to the impounding of the Lom-Pangar dam. However, access to electricity across the country is still impaired by various incidents affecting distribution networks.



**ERNEST  
GBWABOUBOU**

On February 23, 2018, Ernest Gbwaboubou, the minister of industry met with economic operators, in Douala, to present them the national industrialization plan (PDI), adopted by government in 2017.

The PDI focuses on three key sectors namely, agro-industry, energy and digital. These sectors have been tagged Cameroon's industrial "sanctuaries" in view of the impact their development could have on the economy.

According to public authorities, the implementation of the PDI should increase the industrial sector's contribution to GDP by 11% (from 13% to 24%) by 2035.



**AUGUSTE  
MBAPPÉ  
PENDA**

On February 14, 2018, in Kousséri, Cameroon's council for carriers (CNCC) which is led by Auguste Mbappé Penda, has laid the cornerstone of a logistic base in this town which is the main hub of commercial exchanges between Cameroon and Chad.

The infrastructure, which will be delivered in 2022, will cost CFA1.3 billion. It will comprise an administrative block, a 200-trucks parking, a 60-room accommodation centre and a restaurant, official sources revealed. According to CNCC, this logistic base will help improve transporters' working conditions and above all, it will facilitate the transit of goods to the northern region of Cameroon and to Chad.



**FRÉDÉRIC  
DEBORD**

During a board meeting on February 14, 2018, in Douala, Frédéric Debord was appointed as the new managing director of Orange Cameroon. He was previously director of operations at Ooredoo in Kuwait. He officially took office on February 15, 2018.

With 20 years' experience in the telecommunication sector, he had been the managing director of telecommunication companies in North Africa, Eastern Europe and in the Caribbean.

He replaces Elisabeth Medou Badang, the first woman and at the same time first Cameroonian to lead Orange's local subsidiary.

The woman who returned home in 2013 after she had served Orange's subsidiary in Botswana "was appointed in the executive committee of Orange Middle East and Africa as zone director and spokeswoman", an official statement reveals.



**ALEXANDRE  
BELLION**

On February 9, 2018, in a hotel in Yaoundé, the French chocolate maker Alexandre Bellion led a tasting session intended for Cameroonian cocoa producers in order to promote the local consumption of processed beans.

During this session organized by the coffee-cocoa board, participants were able to learn more about the characteristics of the beans produced in the country's various production basin. They also discovered the flavors and the organoleptic properties of cocoa produced in the centers of excellence which have been recently created. Finally, they were able to educate the consumers on Cameroon's cocoa exceptional properties.

# Domestic gas: Let the battle begin!



On December 14, 2016, the ministry of energy and mines officially adopted a national master plan for liquefied petroleum gas (LPG or cooking gas) in Cameroon. With this, the country expects to increase penetration rate of cooking gas from 12% (in 2016) to 58% by 2030, that is about 18 million Cameroonian over 23 million.

According to the ministry, the plan is in line with the UN's seventh sustainable development goal to ensure access to modern, affordable, sustainable and reliable energy for all. Cameroon wishes to substitute the use of fossil fuel such as wood

and coal, to reduce deforestation and atmospheric pollution.

In detail, the GPL master plan plans for butane consumption to reach 383,000 tons in 2030. This represents 12 kg per citizen which is about four times volume consumed currently. To achieve this goal, the country plans to supply 6.8 million new gas bottles, open 6,600 new retail stores, boost filling capacity by 277 kilotons, etc. In this framework, financing required is estimated at CFA265 billion, 60% of which will be used to buy the bottles.

Among resulting benefits of the plan, the government expects to preserve

about four million tons of wood yearly (about 15 million trees), reduce carbon emissions by 3.4 million tons yearly and create about 18,000 full-time jobs within a period of 15 years. The master plan, let it be noted, had started being implemented since the first quarter of 2017. Initial measures falling under the strategy seem to be yielding fruits considering the arrivals of many operators in the gas market, previously dominated by Société camerounaise de transformation métallique (SCTM), which was controlling 40% of this market.

**BRM and SA**



# Cameroon imported 90,000 metric tons of domestic gas in 2017

In 2017, Cameroon's oil stabilization fund (CSPH) used CFA22 billion to import 71,070 metric tons of domestic gas. The fund reveals that it did this to ensure the product's availability because the national refinery company SONARA was able to meet only 15-20% of the local demand. It bought the major part of total volumes imported. These were estimated at 90,000 tons that year; marketers imported remaining amount. This coordination between the public authorities and marketers

**Cameroonian State wants to increase the penetration rate of domestic gas from 30% to 40% in urban areas and from 14% to 15% in rural zones.**

helped satisfy an ever-increasing local demand. Indeed, between July and September 2017, monthly local demand increased from 6,700 tons to more than 10,000 tons, according to official figures.

A demand which could rise even further this year. Indeed, in 2018, Cameroonian State wants to increase the penetration rate of domestic gas from 30% to 40% in urban areas and from 14% to 15% in rural zones. This was revealed in November 2017 by Cameroon's Prime Minister while presenting 2018 economic and social programme to parliamentarians. In that regard, back in 2017, the government slashed by 30% duty



on imported empty gas bottle. It also increased local storage capacity by acquiring new equipment at Société camerounaise des dépôts pétroliers (SCDP). For example between 2014 and 2015, the storage capacity of the public company's branches in Douala and Yaoundé has increased by 13,000 metric cubes each.

To meet demands, Cameroon not only counts on the production of SONARA but it also bet on Kribi's natural gas liquefaction project.

In the framework of this project, a floating natural gas liquefaction vessel berthed in the Southern city last December. This project, let's recall, is steered by the State-run oil firm and French firm Perenco.

Hilli Episeyo, the vessel, will start operations this month (March 2018) and will, yearly, liquefy 1.2 million tons of natural gas (for export) and produce 30,000 tons of natural gas, thus more than 33% of the volume imported in 2017.

## 440 000 empty gas bottles imported to renew Cameroon's stock

During the last six months of 2017, Cameroon's marketers imported new 440,000 empty domestic gas bottles. This was revealed by the country's association of petroleum professionals (GPP). The massive imports result

*"70% of the domestic gas bottles circulating in the country are defective", a study reveals.*

from tax alleviation on imported empty bottles. The decision was taken in June 2017.

According to the professionals, the measure taken in June 2017 and effective as of July could acceler-



ate the renewals of the country's domestic gas bottles, which are old and dangerous for users. Truly, a joint study conducted by the oil price stabilization fund and the metrology and consumer protection unit of the commerce ministry revealed that in Cameroon, *"70% of the domestic gas bottles circulating in the country are defective"*. This explains the numer-

ous household accidents caused by an explosion of gas bottle. For the operators, besides guaranteeing users' safety, purchasing new gas bottles will also boost local supply and help reduce consignment prices for domestic gas bottles. In fact, some marketers have already lowered this fee to CFA3000.

## SCTM, leader of the domestic gas market, faces tough competition

Between 2013 and 2015, Société camerounaise de transformation métallique (SCTM) lost 5% of Cameroon's domestic gas market shares, official figures revealed. Indeed, from 38% in 2013, the leader's share slumped to about 33% in 2015. According to authorized sources, this is partly due to the good performanc-

es of new comers such as Tradex but most importantly because of financial difficulties that SCTM has been facing since its owner passed away. SCTM owes the association of Cameroon's petroleum professionals, CFA4 billion for the transfer right on the supply of petroleum products. Despite a recent agreement with

Commercial Bank of Cameroon (CBC) to repay the debt mainly owed to Tradex, SCTM is barely thriving in a market which has become highly competitive.

Between 2013 and 2015, Société camerounaise de transformation métallique (SCTM) lost 5% of Cameroon's domestic gas market shares.





# LA VITRINE DU CAMEROUN SAGO



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# Tradex innovates in the domestic gas sector with metered gas cylinders

In 2013 when it entered Cameroon's domestic gas market, Tradex which is a subsidiary of Société nationale des hydrocarbures has started commercializing gas cylinders with meters to let housewives anticipate their next purchase. Thanks to this innovation, housewives are able to avoid unpleasant surprises.

To make these bottles more known, and also on the sidelines of its launch in the sector (it was then the second operator to enter the domestic gas market), Tradex offered the full gas bottle at CFA23,500 (while its market price was CFA30,000) and the empty gas bottle at CFA17,000.

Très rapidement, la bouteille et le gaz Tradex vont aguicher les consommateurs, de telle sorte que cette entreprise, dont le métier de base est le négoce des produits pétroliers et le soutage maritime, ne cesse, sur la base d'une simple observation empirique, d'accroître ses parts sur le marché local du gaz domestique. Rapidly, Tradex bottles and gas attracted customers, so much that



its market share ceased not growing since. Actually, the company's main activity is petroleum products trading and bunkering.

In May 2015, the company announced that Swiss firm Geogas joined its shareholding to strengthen its position in the market. "Geogas' investment is the result of the compa-

ny's wish to strengthen its presence in Cameroon and partner with an operator with a long-term growth potential with whom it would foster a strong regional presence", Tradex said in the statement announcing that the Swiss company had become one of its shareholders.

## Green Oil and Bocom enter the domestic gas market

In 2017, two new companies entered the domestic gas market where are present multinational oil companies such as Total, MRS and Lybia Oil. These are Green Oil and Bocom. Before it entered this competitive, yet promising, market and in view of increasing demand for cooking gas (+8% annually according to official figures), Bocom group built a refilling plant in Douala. So did the Cameroonian Green Oil which inau-

gurated its refilling plant, located in Afanoyoa, January 25, 2017. The latter can refill 5,000 gas bottles daily and it cost CFA3.5 billion.

"The plant actually employs 50 Cameroonians and has an ultramod-

ern equipment. 40,000 gas bottles are already available. This will increase to 100,000 bottles", the firm's owner, Guillaume Mbakam Chougha, said during the inauguration ceremony.

The demand for cooking gas is increasing by 8% annually according to official figures.



# Elisabeth Medou Badang, former MD Orange Cameroon:

*“Global added value of this sector (mobile) is decreasing, and this should be a cause of concern”*

At the eve of her departure from Orange's subsidiary in Cameroon, the first native to have ever led the firm had an interview with us, Business in Cameroon. On this occasion, she provided a review of the time she spent as Managing Director of the country's second largest mobile operator, and also reviewed telecoms' sector, globally, in Cameroon.

**Business in Cameroon: Your first major task as MD of Orange Cameroon was to lead talks with government regarding the renewal of the operator's license. How did you achieve that and how did you get the government to let you launch both 3G and 4G?**

*Elisabeth Medou Badang:* When we started talks, Cameroon was one of the few nations in Orange's Africa and Middle East Zone without 3G.

We therefore produced arguments to show why we should adopt, not only 3G, but 4G also. We also talked about ways to rapidly modernize the industry. In this framework, we conducted some studies to determine resources needed and then argued on the importance of our demands.

We have worked both with the ministry of post and telecommuni-

cations and the sector's regulator. At times even, we collaborated with the Prime Minister. These various exchanges would provide us with the drive to move forward, and that is how we were able to find common ground. Our shared vision -modernizing Cameroon's telecom sector- also helped greatly in the process. What we just had to do was decide together on the pace and framework of intervention.



*"However, we were among the first to have launched 4G. This in line with our objective to promote digital transformation and boost access to broadband."*

These talks were crucial since the concession agreement resulting from them constitute reference framework for the firm's operations.

**BC: Cameroonian press recently revealed that despite the fact that two of the country's mobile market leaders (Orange included) got permission to renew their licence since March 2015, the licenses have not been provided up till now, for multiple reasons. How is that possible?**

*EMB:* I would like to precise that concession agreements were indeed signed by competent authorities, and also that Orange Cameroon (MTN as well) kept its part of the bargain by paying CFA75 billion requested for the renewal.

However, there are issues with some aspects of the concession agreement which are yet to be settled. These concern the allocation of frequencies agreed upon under the agreement.

Government decided to review some parts of the convention. This was possible under the terms of the

agreement. I would like to emphasize that these talks in no way call into question the convention which since it was signed has produced various results. Truly, it is in its framework that we are operating, and launched 3G and 4G.

**BC: You said government is reviewing some of the agreement's terms. Which ones?**

*EMB:* Mainly, it concerns spectrum allocation in some bands. Also, when we signed the concession agreement, specifications for 4G was not defined. Though we took the initiative to deploy 4G, government cannot just sit on the good will of operators.

Today, we have to agree on performance indicators and coverage obligations for 4G. We are currently working on this with associated parties. We should conclude our works soon.

**BC: Now that you are leaving the head of Orange Cameroon, what is your analysis of deployment of 3G and 4G by the firm?**

*EMB:* My time at the head of Orange Cameroon was quite enriching. It was not easy every day, but it was an amazing experience still. I am honored to have been trusted this responsibility. I would like to thank the administration board, direction committee and the staff, for standing by my side throughout this adventure.

As for 3G and 4G, I am really satisfied with them. Like I said previously, when we started talks to renew our license, Cameroon was, in the Africa-Middle East zone, one of the few nations not to have access to 3G. However, we were among the first to have launched 4G. This in line with our objective to promote digital transformation and boost access to broadband.

Today, more than 60% of our sites are covered by 3G while 36% by 4G. The firm wishes to pursue the deployment of these technologies. We believe that in order to develop digital economy, one of the most important factors is internet access, with a speed that facilitates data transfer.

**BC: According to the company's financial report for 2015-2016, Orange Cameroon's turnover grew after stagnating for years. Is it only to be attributed to the launch of 3G and 4G, respectively in March and December 2015, or were other levers pulled? If yes, which ones?**

*EMB:* Revenues of mobile operators in Cameroon-and elsewhere- have significantly increased over the past years. Three years ago, traditional segments (voice and SMS for pure mobile operators like us) represented more than 95% of turnover. By 2020-2021, this figure is projected below 70%. This results from a change in consumers' habits. Nowadays, less SMS are sent and less mobile calls are made. People prefer texting via Whatsapp or similar social networks, they share and communicate differently. Obviously,



*"Let's take for example China where 67% of the population uses Mobile Money on a daily basis! It's a major lever to improve efficiency."*

this would have an impact on our traditional activities.

In this context, operators have to renew themselves to better tap into the opportunities provided by consumers' new habits. That is why we deployed 3G and 4G. Our goal is to diversify sources of revenues, and produce value-added services. We have bet on these media from the beginning and developing them has proven it can palliate the inevitable drop in earnings generated by traditional segments (voice and SMS).

**BC: Talking about Whatsapp, what do you think about the rapid expansion of social networks. Do you believe it to be a threat to mobile operators?**

*EMB:* It is a social phenomenon. It has many benefits, such as the ease to share specific content, with dynamics that spur its viral propagation. However, it also has issues. We found out that (in our studies) WhatsApp calls generates far less (about 1/100 as much as) than traditional calls. Unlike traditional calls, from other local and foreign operators, calls via WhatsApp and other

social networks have no termination rates. This forces operators to renew their operating model, leveraging on all possible assets.

**BC: Regarding renewal, after you were placed at the head of Orange Cameroon, Orange Money results exploded. Why were you so interested in this service and how did you proceed to maximize its advantages in terms of financial inclusion?**

*EMB:* The boom or "explosion" you refer to resulted from the need to find new growth paths, to expand



"Today, more than 60% of our sites are covered by 3G while 36% by 4G. The firm wishes to pursue the deployment of these technologies."

our market. Actually, we wondered on which assets we could capitalize to satisfy our customers in a different way, providing them useful services while creating added value. And that is how we came up with Orange Money.

We had the mobile network and the platform needed to launch our Mobile Money service. We also had a widespread distribution network and the capacity to expand further even. Last, we could learn from some successful experiences of our group. We then analyzed the market and found out that in our economy, bancarization level is still weak, compared to other nations; this despite it having improved over the past few years (Ed note: at about 20%). Yet, advantages of financial inclusion are well-known. We have in this framework determined that Mobile Money could be an efficient lever to boost financial inclusion, as a major growth axis for our firm, as a way to ease lives of our customers.

We are happy of how far we have reached, happy that Orange Money has exploded as you say, and for all that was achieved in this segment, be it in terms of innovation, distribution, market education, and partnerships built (Ed note : more than 13,000 sales points across the country, launch of Orange Money visa card, bank to wallet, etc).

Looking at the needs of the market, we believe potential for growth is huge. Just look at how much many financial transactions, in cash, are still proceeded currently! Let's take for example China where 67% of the population uses Mobile Money on a daily basis! It's a major lever to improve efficiency. It constitutes a major evolution for operators, customers, businesses, the State and the economy itself.

**BC: You finished building Orange Cameroon's data centre and**

**inaugurated it in May 2017. How far have you advanced with its use recalling that it was said to be the most modern data centre of sub-Saharan Africa?**

*EMB:* The data centre's inauguration was also one of the strong moments of my adventure. We also built Orange Cameroon's headquarters. Through these two achievements, Orange has proven, to those that needed proving, that it was truly installed in Cameroon.

The headquarters hosted our staff in a modern space that eases exchanges. Nowadays, the term digital economy has propagated. It involves multiplication of data volumes, virtualization, etc. We thus thought we could, with our data centre, play a major role in this rising economy. Even before thinking about consumers' needs, we, as an operator, needed to better secure our data and equipment, to boost their availability.



In this framework, the first objective of our data centre is to host our core network and data system, in the most modern and safe manner, while making sure they were optimally available. This is being done at the moment. Moreover, some of our clients and prospects showed interest in using the facility. Some going even farther than just showing interest. We are confident that operations at this data centre will boom in the future.

**BC: On June 8, 2015, you signed with Cameroon's government a convention to join the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) consortium. A move that would allow you to build a landing point for the eponymous submarine cable, in Kribi, Southern Cameroon. Since then, not much was heard about this project. So how far is it advanced?**

**EMB:** Adhesion to the ACE consortium and construction of the landing point are very important to the government which has actually

**to build the landing point for the submarine cable in Kribi, in the South...**

**EMB:** It's true. Orange Cameroon has to build the landing point. But before doing that, the State must be a full member of the consortium and construction of the cable's segment joining Cameroon's coasts must be started. Once these two steps are completed, Orange Cameroon will move on with the landing station's construction. Truth is, we are ready to start works as soon as possible.

**BC: Well, regarding submarine fiber optic cable, what is your evaluation of how fiber optic is managed in Cameroon, especially looking at the recent conflict that opposed Orange Cameroon and Camtel which is entitled to fully handle the infrastructure in the country?**

**EMB:** I'm glad that many, of whom Orange Cameroon is part, are discussing this subject at the moment. I would like to highlight that fiber

*"Three years ago, traditional segments (voice and SMS for pure mobile operators like us) represented more than 95% of turnover. By 2020- 2021, this figure is projected below 70%."*

done well in regards to the commitments it had with the consortium, to finalize these two projects. Regarding the ACE cable, its importance for the country is undebatable as it will secure its access to the rest of the world. The project is yet to be completed and is still on the table according to recent talks with the authorities in charge.

**BC: What is blocking it ? Funding ?**

**EMB:** I believe I am not the right person to answer this question.

**BC: How? We thought it was Orange Cameroon's responsibility**

optic is a key infrastructure. Before internet's penetration rate expanded, to transmit our signal and data from a town to another, we did not really need optical fiber since we had our own transmission infrastructures. Now, due to the size of data to transmit and their progression, we absolutely need the fiber. It is necessary to provide services of quality to our customers, to sustain the rising size of data processed by our networks.

However, fiber optic is quite costly, especially terrestrial fiber which requires important construction works for its installation. Therefore, funding



*"In our economy, bancarization level is still weak, compared to other nations; this despite it having improved over the past few years (Ed note: at about 20%)."*

mechanisms have to be found, mechanisms that would facilitate its deployment while making sure it is as economically efficient as possible. And this brings us to the sharing of the infrastructure. And this means fair rules profiting every operator.

**BC: Do you believe fiber optic's liberalization in Cameroon would significantly contribute to the development of digital economy?**

**EMB:** This may surprise you but I am not sure that creating some kind of jungle while deploying the infrastructure is the best thing to do. As MD of Orange Cameroon, I would have preferred deploying at my own convenience. Is that the best and most pertinent approach? The risk here is that everyone will focus on areas that are most likely to generate profits.

This could of course be unfair to areas lacking what it takes to profit from such an infrastructure. Yet, digital economy's development has to be as inclusive as possible. In sight of this, it would be better to find mechanisms that would allow fiber optic to be deployed in a coherent manner by taking into consideration operators' needs, while insuring flexibility in the process and creating adequate conditions to facilitate the infrastructure's sharing.

**BC: Last October 27, Cameroon's government released results of the first audit on quality of services**



*"Based on our actual benchmarks, I can assure you that our rates for all services in Cameroon, be it voice or internet, are very competitive, compared to most African nations."*

**provided by mobile operators. The audit stated that this quality was "progressively deteriorating". What is your opinion of this assessment, are you satisfied with the quality of services that Orange Cameroon had provided under your leadership?**

**EMB:** At Orange Cameroon, satisfying our customers is our main objective, daylily. It is our job to provide them the best possible quality. Studies show that the number one criterion of preference of a customer for one operator or the other is network quality. If we want to grow, and we surely do, we must provide our customers the best possible quality. Orange, in most of the countries where it operates, is reputed for the good quality of its network. However, the goal is for this reputation to spread to all nations where the group is present, Cameroon included.

In the case of Orange Cameroon, it has modernized significantly recently. Indeed, over the past three to four years, we have renewed our equipment twice. This is not without impact. There are always some on the quality of service, which we try to mitigate as much as possible, periodic but they do not last over time. These changes often require

amending some settings or even fully redesigning the network. We are currently going through a transition after which customer's experience should be improved. Things should get back to normal shortly.

However, there are external factors, things that are not under operators' control, things that greatly affect quality and availability of services. This is the case of fiber optic cuts, which are quite frequent in the northern part of the country. The latter is connected to the rest of the country via a linear cable which extends to Yaoundé. Truth is, cutting of optic fiber happens everywhere but for customers not to notice, safety loops have to be built as it had been done between Yaoundé and Douala. For example, if fiber is cut between these two cities, traffic can be redirected through Bafoussam toward Yaoundé, etc. This way, customers do not feel anything. Service is impacted only in the rare cases where there are simultaneous cases of cuts on the Douala-Yaoundé and Yaoundé-Bafoussam axes.

Besides these safety loops, allowing many operators to access optical fiber would make networks more resilient. Once again, we are back to the necessity of sharing this

infrastructure.

Finally, among factors that are external to operators and impact the quality of services, there is power insufficiency, even if in this case alternatives can be found, and also unavailability of frequencies.

**BC: What do you have to tell those who affirm that compared to other African countries as developed as, our rates for mobile and internet are too high?**

**EMB:** Well, I would tell them that this shows that we have a communication deficit that needs to be bridged. I believe your question calls us to better inform about our offers. We must find a way to make these offers more known and better understood.

Based on our actual benchmarks, I can assure you that our rates for all services in Cameroon, be it voice or internet, are very competitive, compared to most African nations.

**BC: What is your vision of mobile telephony in Cameroon in the next 10 years?**

**EMB:** Ten years, that's a lot. Let's just start with five years instead. I believe this sector has a huge potential and it is actually going through a major transformation, driven by habits mentioned earlier on but also by competition. This, in a context of rising investment spurred by the expansion of networks' data. To tap into this potential and contribute to the country's digital transformation, the right questions must be asked and we must take advantage of every opportunity. Subsequently, regulation must be adapted.

Also, there are some misconceptions that must be gotten rid of. One of those being the sector's high profitability, which is more of a myth now. Actually, global added value of this sector is decreasing, and this should be a cause of concern. What cannot be denied however is that the sector has a huge development potential.

**Interview with  
Brice R. Mbodiam**

# PUBLIC MANAGEMENT

## A joint roadmap to be elaborated by GICAM and the ministry of economy

Louis Paul Motazé, the minister of economy, launched the economic year with a two-day event with the country's business organizations, today February 21, 2018.

During the event, which took place at the headquarters of GICAM, a joint

roadmap between the ministry of economy and the private sector was adopted, official sources revealed.

To elaborate this joint roadmap, the two parties discussed "the results of the second business census carried out in 2016, government's process to select

and support national champions, the 2018 economic program, SMEs funding window, access to the European Union's market and the Business Climate Survey 2017".

## Cameroon ends privatization of water production and distribution

On February 20, 2018, Paul Biya officially ended the privatization of water production and distribution in Cameroon.

That day, a presidential decree was signed to reorganize Cameroon Water Utilities (CAMWATER) which was till then in charge of drinking water management. The company is now in charge of the production and distribution in urban and semi-urban areas. Indeed, for ten years now, Camerounaise des eaux (CDE), a private consortium of ONEP, MEDZ, DELTA Holding and INGEMA, has been in charge of the production and distribution. After these years of privatization, the result was not that bright (the water service interruptions have been more frequent in Yaoundé in the past few months). The government then decided to end the privatization and return the water sector to a public company as had been the case for decades.

For the record, water production and distribution service was taken care of by Société Nationale des eaux du Cameroun (Snec), before it was privatized in the 2000s.



## CEMAC plans a system for the diligent payment of VAT refunds



The committee of CEMAC informs that it has sent task forces in the community's member countries to investigate on the issue of VAT refund. Once the investigations are completed, the results will be shared and capitalized during the regional workshop which will be held in Libreville from March 5 to 7, 2018. During the workshop, the communi-

ty's high officials will come to the rescue of the private sector by seeking solutions to the issue of VAT refund. *"It is crucial to recreate a climate of trust in business and stop limiting the sub-region's companies' ability to invest if we want national economies to renew with sustainable and balanced growth"*, CEMAC indicates.

The committee reveals that in 2016,

it set a new multilateral surveillance procedure to hasten the payments of part of VAT refund arrears. However, due to the unfavorable international economic situation, its member countries experience cash-flow difficulties and are thus unable to pay the VAT refunds.

## Public companies' managing directors and deputy directors will fly in business class during official trips, Philemon Yang says

On February 23, 2018, Philemon Yang, the prime minister signed a circular to redefine the way some high-ranking officials travel for official missions abroad. In the circular, the minister informs that for their official trips, board presidents, managing directors and deputy managing directors of

public companies will now travel in business class.

He also asks the officials to choose direct and cheaper itineraries for their flights during each official trip. Philemon Yang explains that this measure is subsequent to a decision from the president' whose attention was continually called on many of

the officials' excesses during their official trips.

*"Apart from being organized without prior authorization from the competent supervisory authorities, the plus-value of these trips for the company is not always perceived"*, he writes.



## Jeremiah Andosseh sentenced for life imprisonment

The special criminal court (tribunal criminel spécial -TCS) has condemned Jeremiah Andosseh, former Managing Director of MATGENIE to a life Sentence after he was found guilty of looting the state to a tune of CFA12billion.

Mr Andosseh who has been hiding since he was relieved of his position

at MATGENIE back in 2005 is said to have engaged in so many dubious deals such as bloating the prices of machines, keeping funds from sales made through rent or outright sale etc.

The bubble busted when the National Agency for Financial Investigation (ANIF) denounced him. The agency

indeed found the Managing Director of illegally transferring important volumes of money abroad.

A commission of the Superior State Audit investigated MATGENIE in 2005 and he was charged based on the committees report though he never appeared before court.

## In 2017, Cameroon's oil revenues was CFA349 billion, an improvement by CFA57.8 billion on a year-to-year basis

SNH reveals that it sold 27.7 million barrels of crude oil in 2017. With this, the oil revenues stood at CFA349 billion against CFA291, 244 billion in 2016. This represents an increase by CFA57.8 billion. The company revealed that this is due to the improvement in oil prices on the international market during the year under review. Indeed, in 2017, the price per barrel was between \$52.3 and \$61 while in 2016, it was between \$29.8 and \$45. However, despite this revenue increase, the oil revenues generated by SNH in 2017 are below the CFA378.5 billion generated in 2015, shortly before the price on crude oil decreased on the international market. For the record, it is revealed in the 2018 finance bill that Cameroon expects to produce a little more than 26 million barrel of crude oil this year. The average price per barrel being \$41, the country expects CFA362 billion from oil.



# FINANCE

## Government to close public administrations' bank accounts at commercial banks

This year, the general directorate of treasury, monetary and financial cooperation of Cameroon's ministry of finance will continue the identification and closure of public administrations' bank accounts opened in commercial banks.

This measure mentioned in the general report of the central and external services of the ministry of finance's

annual conference, held in Yaoundé, will contribute to the single treasury account's consolidation. According to public authorities, this account will allow transparency and an efficient management of public revenues by centralizing them. At the ministry of finance, it is said that this account will also help end the bad practices of some public officials.

Indeed, it is said that these public officials do not hesitate to invest with the public funds in commercial bank accounts.

Incidentally, this measure will once again weaken those financial institutions, large fund providers for government and its institutions, which have been confronted with liquidity issues for some time now.

## *“CNPS is ready to invest about CFA100 billion to finance the development of Cameroon”, CNPS' managing director says*



In the framework of the cooperation Cameroon-UNDP, Alain Noël Olivier Mekulu Mvondo Akame, managing director of the national social insurance fund (CNPS) met with the

delegation of UNDP and the minister of economy, Loïc Chedjou. During the meeting which took place on February 8, 2018, in Yaoundé, they discussed the different investment

strategies of CNPS' funds to finance the development of Cameroon. The fund's managing director declared that for the 2018-2022 strategic plan, *“CNPS is ready to invest about CFA100 billion to finance the development of Cameroon”*. Compared to the 2013-2017 strategic investment fund, this is a substantial increase by about CFA60 billion. According to him, the executive board of CNPS finances promising, profitable, and socially beneficial projects. To do so, it acquires shares in some companies, both existing and being created. It also makes fixed direct deposits, invest in bonds and in real estate. As far as the companies it invests in are concerned, they must meet some criteria. Their gross return must be greater than or equal to 8%. Also, female staff must be at least 20% of the whole staff and that company must regularly pay its taxes and social contributions.

# AGRIBUSINESS

## 32 tons of millet seized in the far-north haunted by famine

On February 8, 2018, agents of the regional delegation of the ministry of commerce in the Far-North seized 32 tons of millet a truck was about to smuggle in Douala while the region is haunted by famine. According to the regional tri-weekly *L'œil du Sahel*, all the load has been sold by the regional delegation at CFA18,000 per bag of 100 kg, while the actual market value is CFA25,000. This was a real opportunity for the population which is now unable to buy cereals because their staple foods production has been decreasing for at least two years now. Officially, the decrease is due to the unfavorable climatic conditions and Boko Haram whose exactions forced many people to flee their villages and abandon the millet, corn and sorghum fields.



## Germany disburses €15 million to fight malnourishment in Cameroon

On this day February 28, Germany and UNICEF have launched the second phase of the project named *"S'attaquer à la malnutrition chez les enfants de moins de cinq ans dans les régions de l'Extrême-Nord, du Nord, de l'Adamaoua et de l'Est"*, in Yaoundé. Germany which had provided €8 million (CFA5.24 billion) during the first phase which started in 2016 will disburse another €15 million

(CFA9.8 billion) this year to support the project till 2020.

*"This contribution will help extend the activities to 68 health districts, 31 more than those covered during the first phase, to reach all the regions targeted by the project"*, Germany explains.

UNICEF explains that chronic malnutrition is a structural problem which has persisted for the last two

decades in Cameroon. This form of malnutrition is often ignored because it is hardly noticeable. Among children aged 5, it is characterized by low height during growth. According to the UNICEF, this problem is as a result of mothers been poorly nourished during pregnancy coupled with malnourishment during the development of the foetus and during early childhood.



## Chinese buyers ignore woods from Cameroon due to an increase in its price



Since this year started, Chinese importers are reticent to buy wood from Cameroon. This is revealed by a sectoral report published by the international tropical timber association.

According to the association, this reticence is due to the increase in the price of wood. This follows the decision of Cameroon's authorities, in 2018 finance law, to increase the tax on the export of sawn wood.

With the increase of their exports' duties (between 2016 and 2018, the duties on exports of sawn wood has increased from 17.5% to 30%), the local timber growers also increased their prices. What Chinese importers are not pleased with.

The increase of export duties could have a boomerang effect if the Chinese continue to ignore Cameroon's woods. Indeed, according to *Forêt et com-*

*munauté*, a group of NGOs involved in forest management, China has become the first destination for Cameroon's wood (wood being the first non-oil product exported). This is because exporters have decided to ship to China to avoid APV-FLEGT restrictions. This restriction is a rigorous measure to ensure that wood and its derived products exported to the European Union are legal.



# ENERGY

## Elsewedy Electric should soon restart the construction of electric grids in 48 regions

On February 28, 2018, followed by the ambassador of Egypt to Cameroon, Ameer Abou Mansour, project manager for Elsewedy Electric informed the minister of energy and mines that the project for the electrification of 48 regions in the Northern part should restart soon. During the audience, he revealed that Elsewedy Electric, in charge of the construction, stopped the works because the necessary funds were not provided. He also reminded that according to the contract signed with Cameroon, Elsewedy Electric would only design, supply, install and commission medium and low-level voltage grids to supply electricity to the 48 regions.



## World Bank plans to set a CFA160 billion guarantee to mobilize funds for the construction of Nachtigal dam

World Bank plans to provide a guarantee of \$300 million (about CFA160 billion) to reassure potential investors and also ease the mobilization of CFA656 billion necessary for the construction of Nachtigal dam, official sources revealed. The 400MW dam which will be

Cameroon's largest hydroelectric plant should officially be commissioned in 2021. However, the project faces financial constraints. To justify World Bank's interest in the project, Elisabeth Huybens, sectoral manager of social development for World Bank in Cameroon, had this

to say *"Nachtigal Dam is an incredibly useful project. It is a significant project which will help increase the electricity generating capacity by 30% at low production cost: 7 cents per kWh (a little more than CFA35). Presently, the average production cost is 14 cents (about CFA70)"*.

## Mékin dam (15MW) should start production in April, Hydro Mékin says

The preliminary commissioning of Mékin dam (15MW) will take place on March 28, 2018. This was revealed on February 23, 2018, by Hydro Mékin in charge of the infrastructure's exploitation.

Nkwawir Charles, the project's technical director, added that should things go well, the dam will launch in April. The three turbines have already been installed and the production tests have been successfully complet-

ed. All the electromechanical and hydro-mechanical equipment have already been installed on a 110-KV line. The administrative, technical, legal and contractual formalities for the sales and injection of the energy generated in the southern interconnected system are underway with the regulator (ARSEL), the minister of energy and water as well as the strategic partner ENEO.

For the record, Cameroon con-

tracted the China national electric engineering Corp (CNEEC) to build Mékin dam on October 20, 2010. For now, 90% of the contract's amount (CFA23.19 billion pre-tax value) has been paid to the company. According to Hydro Mékin, the remaining 10% should be paid by Cameroon because it did not respect the contractual payment schedule, between 2010 and 2014, set by Exim Bank China.

## VOITH plans to fund the renovation and extension of Lagdo dam



Voith plans to disburse CFA100 billion to renovate Lagdo dam (72MW) and extend its capacity to 80MW. The company which has expressed its interest some months ago revealed this at the end of an audience with

the minister of energy and water on February 20, 2018.

*"We have visited the site and have submitted our bid to the government. We visited Lagdo two times to align our technical offer to the country's*

*need",* revealed François Trudeau, vice-president of business development at Voith.

For the record, Lagdo dam generates electricity for the three northern regions in Cameroon.

# PUBLIC WORKS

## The construction of Mora-Dabanga-Kousséri road starts after 4 years interruption



On March 1, 2018, in Kousséri, Emmanuel Nganou Djoumessi, the minister of public works launched the resumption of the construction of the more than 200 kilometers long Mora-Dabanga-Kousséri. The works which started with the construction of Mora-Dabanga was interrupted on May 16, 2014, following an assault on the base camp of Sinohydro which was in charge of the works. During the attacks, 10 Chinese

employees of the company were kidnapped. They were however released after tough negotiations conducted by Cameroon. This time, for security purposes, government has commissioned the military engineering unit to conduct the works, this after the World Bank authorized the construction. They will deliver the works in 24 months. Mora-Dabanga-Kousséri road, which World Bank supported with CFA70 billion, is a key infrastructure in the

commercial exchanges between Cameroon, Nigeria, and Chad. It is the main transit axis for goods from Borno, Nigeria, to the Far-North region of Cameroon and to Ndjamena, the Chadian capital, sources close to the project revealed. Moreover, it is a section of Douala-Ndjamena corridor on which about CFA340 billion Chadian goods transit, according to figures from Cameroon's customs dating back to 2013.



## The 800 social housings could be completed this year, Jean-Claude Mbwentchou thinks



The 800 social housing being built by government should be completed this year. This is one of the positive news announced during the cabinet council held on March 1, 2018,

presided by Philemon Yang. During the council, Jean-Claude Mbwentchou, the minister of housing announced that the study phase has been completed in every region

taken into account in the project, and works have started. He also revealed that presently, the works were 92% completed in Ebolowa and at the seven remaining sites it is completed at 35% on average. There are however some challenges such as some sites' morphology and the security climate in the Northern region, that affect the seamless execution of works.

For the record, this project is the housing facets of the 3-year urgency plan (Plan d'urgence triennal -Planut) launched by Cameroon a little more than two years ago. In the framework of this project, social housings will be built in 8 regional capitals (100 in each capital) except in Douala and Yaoundé. A little more than CFA40 billion is set for this project.

## Actis contracts Raubex to build Douala Grand Mall & Business Park

Since February 2018, Raubex group has been working at the site of "Douala Grand Mall & Business Park", a large 18,000 m<sup>2</sup> commercial center whose construction is funded by Actis, official sources reveal. The sources did not reveal the amount of this contract awarded to the South African company specialized in the development of infrastructures. It should however be reminded that the commercial center would cost about CFA80 billion, according to estimates. According to the sponsors, during the first phase, a multiplex of five cinemas, a supermarket and shops will be built at "Douala Grand Mall & Business Park". During the second phase, a 5-star hotel and an office park will also be built.





# INDUSTRY

## Cameroon promotes its national industrialization plan to economic operators

On February 23, 2018, Ernest Gbwaboubou, the minister of industry met with economic operators, in Douala, to present to them the national industrialization plan (PDI), adopted by government in 2017. The PDI focuses on three key sectors namely, agro-industry, energy and digital. These sectors have been tagged Cameroon's industrial "sanctuaries" in view of the impact their development could have on the economy. According to public authorities, the implementation of the PDI should increase the industrial sector's contribution to GDP by 11% (from 13% to 24%) by 2035. Moreover, the government wants to transform Cameroon into the "new industrial Africa's factory" by 2050, thanks to the industrialization plan.



## Pack Industry to increase its production thanks to government's incentives

On February 21, 2018, in Yaoundé, the SMEs promotion Agency (Agence de promotion des PME- APME) and Pack Industry signed an investment incentive agreement. Thanks to this agreement, Pack Industry will increase its yearly production of carton packs from 10,000 tons to 12,000 tons.

*"As far as taxes are concerned, as it is an old company, it is eligible for the incentives set by the 2013 Investments incentives law for its extension notably. It will also be granted a reduction on customs duties etc... When we add up the incentives, taxes as well as customs duties, it receives 30% of public subsidies", explained Jean*

Marie Louis Badga, APME's managing director.

Concretely, with government's support, Pack Industry will be able to import new equipment for its factory and create 40 direct jobs, Gabriel Kondo, Pack Industry's manager, reveals.

## Will & Brothers plans to launch a fundraising campaign for its expansion abroad

Will & Brothers plans to launch a fundraising campaign to try to mobilize \$2 million (a little more than CFA1 billion). The Cameroonian startup which presented the first drones made in Cameroon on February 2, 2018, in Yaoundé did not reveal the terms of this campaign or when it will take place, William Elong, the promoter, revealed that they will use the funds to launch two subsidiaries in France and in the United States and enter those markets.

*"We want to enter the American and European markets. Locally, thanks to the first fundraising campaign, we accomplished what we all know: rented a headquarters, recruited Cameroonian engineers, bought materials to assemble our drones in Douala, etc. Now, we think that we can quickly enter the international market. Honestly, I think that we can become the world's best" the young Cameroonian says.*

*"During a fair abroad, I saw the drones manufactured by western companies. I can assure you that some large manufacturers use the same ma-*



*terials we use in our assembly factory in Douala. The only difference between those companies and us is that they have access to funding for research,*

*development, and marketing. This is exactly what we went to seek abroad, to compete on equal terms with our competitors", he adds.*

## Cameroon to build an ice production unit in Manoka

On February 22, 2018, Louis Paul Motaze, the economy minister presided over the ceremony for the presentation and validation of Manoka's economic and social development strategy.

During the ceremony, the minister indicated that 50 projects, among which an ice production unit and a cold chamber, are necessary to boost the area's development.

He also revealed that the ice production unit and the cold chamber

are essential to preserve the fishery products and reduce losses which is estimated at 60% because there is no storage facility.

In that regard, Louis Paul Motaze signed a memorandum of understanding for the construction of the ice producing unit. The government will then disburse CFA780 million for its construction.

During the same ceremony, local authorities explained that due to its geophysical specificities, their

locality has been facing numerous challenges. These challenges such as the reduction of living spaces and destruction of public constructions (due to marine erosion), the intensive and uncontrolled exploitation of the mangrove for fish smoking, the high number of foreigners in the fishing activities (60% of the fishers are foreigners) have been hindering the locality's development.

## Only 10% of the drugs Cameroon needs is produced locally



Every year, Cameroon imports about 90% of the drugs it needs while local producers supply the remaining 10% of a market estimated at CFA100 billion. The figures were revealed by

Philémon Yang during the solemn inauguration of a drug production unit of Africure Pharmaceuticals, in Douala, on February 21, 2018. This unit was set by the Cameroonian Prospère Hiag, in partnership with

Indian investors. According to its promoters who invested CFA5 billion for it, Africure Pharmaceuticals has the capacity to produce 1 billion tablets.



# TRANSPORTS

## BDEAC revives the Central African Consensual Master Plan on Transport (PDCT-AC)

On February 14-15, 2018, the steering committee of the Central African Consensual Master Plan on Transport (PDCT-AC), met in Brazzaville, Congo to elaborate the 2018-2019 roadmap. The experts were summoned by Fortunato Ofa Mbo Nchama, president of BDEAC and the meeting took place at the bank's headquarters.

Let's note that the last meeting of this committee was in April 2016.

During the said meeting, the experts discussed the organizations of PDCT-AC's upcoming meetings and the roundtable for investors. They also studied the redeployment of the geographic information system, conducted studies for updating prioritization of the master plan's projects and dynamization of the institution's website.

It should be reminded that PDCT-AC, which is the only consensual

transport infrastructure development program in the sub-region, was adopted by ECCAS's heads of states during the summit held in January 2004 in Brazzaville.

BDEAC contributed in PDCT-AC by funding the construction of Route Transsaharienne in Chad (CFA3 billion for 940 Km), PK5-PK12 in Gabon (CFA45 billion), Yaoundé-Brazzaville (120 km CFA104 billion for the construction of 120 km).

## Operations to effectively start at Kribi deep water port soon

*"We've come to Kribi for a large concertation between actors of external trade and to take initial steps towards the effective start of operations at Kribi deep-water port".* These were the words of Edgar Alain Mebe Ngo'o, minister of transport, at the end of a meeting organized in the city from February 15-16, 2018. It was organized to install the actors of the future port community.

Behind the scenes, during this meeting, it was revealed that the first commercial boat to sail at the port has already left for Kribi.

Earlier in January 2018, Lionel Odeyer, the managing director of CMA-CGM Cameroon, announced that this commercial boat would sail by March 1, 2018, latest. The managing director of the French shipping company, which is part of the consortium which won the contract to build the container terminal section



of Kribi port, announced this at the end of a meeting with the minister of transport.

*"There will be many weekly stops. There will be a stop which will come directly from Asia and we will also have two weekly services which will come directly from Europe ; Italy, and*

*Spain",* He said.

Let's note that the commissioning of Kribi deep-water port had been announced many times. Every time, however, it was postponed due to prolonged administrative formalities, officials explained.

# TIC & TELECOM

## Microsoft will support startups coached by OIC

The technopole Ocean Innovation Center (OIC) has signed a convention agreement with Microsoft. This was announced on February 28, 2018 by Jacques Bonjawo, a former Microsoft worker and creator of the technopole which was set up with the support of Cameroon's government in Kribi.

In the framework of this convention, *"the two institutions will work together to identify the best ways for Microsoft to collaborate with the partner on technologies and strategies to help OIC-Kribi's young entrepreneurs make better use of latest technologies and accelerate the digital transformation of African economies"*.

Moreover, Microsoft commits to support the startups and offer various services such as access to BizSpark, resources for technical support, the organization of technical training and financial support to companies in the acceleration phase. For the record, the goal of OIC, inaugurated on July 11, 2017, by Louis Paul Motazé, minister of economy, is to develop the creative potential of the youth by facilitating their socio-economic insertion via the creation of high growth companies.



## LEADER OF THE MONTH

# Ex-footballer Roger Milla to open another plastic waste-based pavement plant in Douala this year



A little more than two years after opening, the first plant in Yaoundé employs 20 people permanently (and contributed to the creation of more than 300 indirect jobs in waste collection chain) and has processed about 51 tons of plastic waste since its creation.

“Coeur d’Afrique”, the association of ex-football star Roger Milla, plans to open this year in Douala (Cameroon’s economic capital) another recycled plastic waste-based pavement production plant. This is a little more than two years after opening the first plant, in Yaoundé.

The Yaoundé plant employs 20 people permanently (and contributed to the creation of more than 300 indirect jobs in waste collection chain) and has processed about 51 tons of plastic waste since its creation. This volume was used to produce nearly 1,300 cubic meters of ecologic pavements which are said to be more resistant than those made with cement.

After establishing its second plant in the country, Milla intends to expand his footprint across Africa, targeting countries like Burkina Faso and Benin.

Oldest man to have played a world cup (he was 42 when he played 1994 FIFA World Cup), and nominated as the presidency’s goodwill ambassador, Roger Milla is thus starting a new career in entrepreneurship after a successful football career. Cameroon’s football hero was a professional football player in France. He played with clubs such as AS Monaco, Saint Etienne, Montpellier, and Bastia. Renowned and dreaded by African players, he shined during the 1990 FIFA World Cup. During

the competition, Roger Milla helped Cameroon reach quarter finals with four great goals.

Cameroon then became the first African nation to have ever reached quarter finals during a World Cup. Apart from the four goals, fans still remember him for his peculiar dances near the corner flag. He executed the move every time he scored a goal during the final stage of this world cup. For the record, during the opening match, Cameroon had defeated Argentina, Diego Maradona’s team, which was then the reigning champion.

**Brice R. Mbodiam**



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