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GEF COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION: CAMEROON (1992-2007)

THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENT CONTAINS TWO SECTIONS:

- 1) Key conclusions and recommendations from the Country Portfolio Evaluation conducted by the GEF Evaluation Office, including a small introduction describing the GEF support to Cameroon and the methodology. This summary is Chapter 1 of the full report of the Country Evaluation which will be available in the GEF Evaluation Office web site.
- 2) Response of the Government of Cameroon to the evaluation

Main Conclusions and Recommendations

1.1. Background

Cameroon's participation in the GEF started in the pilot phase, in 1992 with the preparation of the Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project. Since then, Cameroon has been involved in a further nine national projects (valued at \$25.55 million). As table 1.1 indicates, about 71 percent of the GEF funding has gone to support projects in the biodiversity focal area, 25 percent to land degradation, and 1 percent and 2 percent to climate change and persistent organic pollutants (POPs). There are 19 regional and global projects in which Cameroon participates, addressing international waters, biodiversity, and climate change.

Table 1.1: GEF Total Support to National Projects in Cameroon, by Focal Area

Focal area national projects	\$ millions	% of total
Biodiversity	18.24	71.35
Multi-Focal Areas (MFA)	0.20	0.75
Climate change	0.27	1.00
Land degradation	6.35	25.00
POPs	0.49	1.90
Total	25.55	100.00

Based on the overall purpose of the GEF country portfolio evaluations (CPEs) and their terms of reference, the evaluation of the GEF support to Cameroon has the following specific objectives:

- Independently evaluate the relevance and efficiency of GEF support in a country from several points of view: national environmental frameworks and decision-making processes, the GEF mandate and achievement of global environmental benefits, and GEF policies and procedures
- Assess the effectiveness and results of completed and ongoing projects in each relevant focal area
- Provide feedback and knowledge sharing to (1) the GEF Council in its decision-making process to allocate resources and develop policies and strategies, (2) the country on its participation in the GEF, and (3) the different agencies and organizations involved in the preparation and implementation of GEF support.

Among several considerations, Cameroon was selected based on its significant biodiversity portfolio relating to forest conservation, its budgetary support approach (for example, the Forest and Environment Development Policy Grant), its allocation for biodiversity under the Resource Allocation Framework (RAF), and its importance as a global biodiversity hotspot.

1.2 Evaluation Methodology

The Cameroon CPE was conducted between September 2007 and April 2008 by staff of the GEF Evaluation Office and two consultants who possessed extensive knowledge of the

Cameroon environment sector: the evaluation team. The methodology included a series of components using a combination of qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and standardized analytical tools. Several sources of information were considered the basis for the evaluation from different levels (project, government, civil society, GEF Agencies [Executing and Implementing Agencies], and so on). The quality of these documents was reviewed before they were included. The quantitative analysis used indicators to assess the efficiency of GEF support using projects as the unit of analysis (that is, time and cost of preparing and implementing projects, and so forth). The evaluation team used standardized tools and protocols for the CPEs and adapted these to the Cameroonian context. Projects were selected for visits based on whether they have been completed or are near completion, project and/or project component approaches, accessibility, and time/resource constraints.

The main focus of the evaluation is projects implemented within the boundaries of Cameroon: “national projects.” In addition, 11 regional projects in which Cameroon participates were reviewed, selected because they had significant in-country involvement, including five international waters projects. A full assessment of the regional projects’ aggregate relevance, results, and efficiency was beyond the scope of this CPE, given that only the Cameroon components were assessed. National and regional project proposals under preparation are not part of the evaluation.

Several limitations were taken into account while conducting the evaluation:

- Country portfolio evaluations are challenging, as the GEF does not operate by establishing country programs that specify expected achievement through programmatic objectives, indicators, and targets.
- Attribution is another area of complexity. The evaluation does not attempt to provide a direct attribution of development and even environmental results to the GEF, but assesses the contribution of GEF support to overall achievements.
- The assessment of results is focused, where possible, at the level of outcomes and impact, rather than outputs.
- Evaluating the impacts of GEF-funded initiatives is not straightforward. Many projects do not clearly or appropriately specify the expected impact and sometimes even the outcomes of projects. As this evaluation was restricted to secondary sources, there was no scope in the evaluation to conduct primary research to supplement project reports or identify impact and outcomes.
- Results reported come from various sources: some have been established through external evaluation and others are drawn from internal project reports and interviews.
- The evaluation team has struggled to establish a clear reliable set of data on projects and project documentation. The available data, including the list of projects in the GEF portfolio, contained inconsistencies, gaps, and discrepancies.

Stakeholder comments on a draft of this report, made in writing and at a consultation workshop held on February 15, 2008, have been taken into account in the finalization of the conclusions and recommendations, as well as the findings presented in chapters 5, 6, and 7, on which they are based.

1.3 Conclusions

Relevance of GEF Support

Conclusion 1: GEF support is relevant to the national and international environmental agenda.

Since the early 1990s, Cameroon has developed a set of national environmental laws and policies to improve protection of its significant biodiversity. For example, the development of forestry conservation policies has drawn on experiences relating to community forest management and stakeholder involvement in conservation. GEF biodiversity projects have been developed within this framework; they have continued to advance policy and strategic development in areas, such as biosafety and climate change adaptation and land degradation, that have responded to national needs, as well as assist Cameroon in fulfilling its obligation to the international environmental conventions.

Cameroon's current Forest and Environment Sector Program (FESP), which is supported by the GEF, World Bank, and other bilateral donors, is further advancing both conservation and sustainable resource extraction of forest resources, which has the potential to serve as a model for donor-harmonized environmental assistance in other countries in the Congo Basin. The National Program for Participatory Development's (PNDP's) Sustainable Land Management Project, which is linked to the nationwide participatory development program builds relevant synergies between local livelihood incentives, community development, and improved environmental management, which reflects national priorities and international emphasis on community-driven development.

Conclusion 2: Although the GEF portfolio is relevant for national and international priorities, project identification and preparation are externally driven and enhancing country ownership is a challenge

Project concepts tend not originate from in-country stakeholders. At a practical level, the project proponents have tended to be GEF Implementing Agencies and international nongovernmental organizations; the government has taken a more passive role, receiving ideas and proposals for approval, albeit ones with which it agrees. In the case of the Forest and Environment Sector Program, government ownership of the program is increasing as implementation continues.

As the process of elaborating and implementing national laws, strategies, and action plans has drawn heavily on external experiences, technical support, and financial assistance, the government ownership of the reform agenda provides opportunities for enhancement during RAF programming and beyond.

Results and Effectiveness of the Portfolio

Conclusion 3: The GEF portfolio has the potential to generate global environmental benefits in biodiversity conservation. Although local benefits are visible, these are not yet able to provide substantial incentives to support conservation activities

GEF support was instrumental for the initial planning, expansion, and management of the Cameroon protected area system, including providing for improved stakeholder consultation and knowledge generation and management in the biodiversity conservation sector. With GEF support, local communities were sensitized on biodiversity conservation issues; however, there is still ground for improvement, particularly in relation to community forestry as a tool for enhancing community conservation and ensuring sharing of the economic and noneconomic benefits of conservation.

Notably, GEF support provided the foundation for an enhanced recognition of biodiversity conservation and the creation of protected areas with a surface area of 24,300 km², among them, five national parks, 44 community-based natural resource management units, and 39 community forests. This approach has been replicated at national and regional levels and could enhance the conservation status of a 300,000 km² area. The evaluation recognizes that the FESP supported by the World Bank, bilateral donors, and the GEF has the potential to secure and sustain global environmental benefits as well as enhance the development incentives for conservation through improvements in the logging industry.

The Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project played a catalytic role in terms of laying the foundation for the Forest and Environment Sector Program including further development of the protected area system. In the case of the SGP, two of the first projects funded in the mid-1990s introduced apiculture and the domestication of indigenous nontimber forest products (NTFPs) in the Bamenda Highlands to enhance incentives for forest conservation and enable local actors to establish best practices, which have been replicated in hundreds of communities. Furthermore, lessons from the NTFP experience have been shared by the NGO (Heifer International) across its international network.

Completed GEF-supported biodiversity conservation projects have put in place some local incentives, such as community forest management, with opportunities for legal extraction of resources, such as timber, Prunus bark; commercial hunting (in the northern savannah parks) and subsistence hunting (for example, in Campo Ma'an and Lobeke); small-scale ecotourism opportunities; and other activities such as honey collection and production. In doing so, GEF-supported projects have attempted to deliver an approach that balances restricting access to resources and compensatory measures for livelihoods; however, many of the incentives, such as community forestry and ecotourism, are not working effectively and, hence, are not yet able to provide sufficient incentives to support biodiversity conservation. Furthermore, the evaluation identified the potential for significant economic displacement risks associated with improved enforcement of environmental laws as capacities to manage the protected area system are improved.

Conclusion 4: GEF is enabling Cameroon to address other environmental issues, particularly international waters and land degradation

GEF financing for international waters has enhanced intergovernmental coordination in the Gulf of Guinea, Lake Chad Basin, and Niger River Basin; enhanced the capacity of various actors; and produced a good number of baseline assessments, while strategic action plans are pending. The implementation of pilot activities in demonstration sites are welcomed by rural populations, but the relevance of some of the microprojects for the protection of international waters is unclear, and it is presently uncertain whether all microprojects are sustainable or can be scaled up, as local ownership is weak.

GEF support to combat land degradation should result in the identification and dissemination of best practices on sustainable land management, local-level capacity enhancement, and a more effective and efficient land tenure system. This might provide Cameroon with an effective tool to combat land degradation and desertification, but field-level implementation has not yet started.

GEF financing for climate change played a catalytic role in terms of generating new knowledge on forest margin benchmarks and transformed the way that decision makers think about the factors shaping land use at forest-agriculture interfaces (for example, slash and burn) in the humid tropics. GEF support enabled Cameroon to fulfill all its reporting requirements from all conventions, which are eligible for GEF finances, but some of the enabling activities are ongoing and reports are pending (for example, POPs).

Conclusion 5: The results of the GEF portfolio are at risk, because of weak financial, institutional, and socioeconomic sustainability.

The Forest and Environment Sector Program (based on a multidonor long-term, budgetary support approach) provides the opportunity to engage with the government of Cameroon, civil society, the private sector, and communities to address environmental governance and underinvestment in the sector. This approach could potentially provide solutions for financial, institutional, and socioeconomic sustainability risks. However, it is too early to assess the results, given that the program has yet to build implementation momentum.

The evaluation found room for improved financial management and a need to promote more assiduous capacity development to ensure financial sustainability. Problems in financial management are often linked to insufficient management capacity and oversight, which are reported from several GEF-funded projects and the Cameroon Mountains Conservation Foundation (CAMCOF) trust fund. Some improvements have already been implemented: the Forest and Environment Sector Program has in place a monitoring and financial management system that mitigates financial risk and the GEF Small Grants Programme (SGP) was also relaunched with enhanced emphasis on financial sustainability and accountability.

The initial investments in capacity development through the Biodiversity Conservation and Management project and enabling activities have tended to focus on national-level institutions. In contrast, the evaluation found that the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP) and Ministry of Forests and Fauna (MINFOF) capacities at the regional and local levels were weak, but MINEP were notably more underresourced than MINFOF

staff. Consequently, little opportunity existed for staff to support important initiatives, such as community forestry in and around the protected areas. This finding confirms those from the World Bank's Technical Audit of the Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project (World Bank 2003a). Furthermore, the evaluation noted that some of the capacity development achieved under the Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project has been eroded due to lack of follow on donor support and government funding (for example, the Botanical Garden at Limbe) illustrating the link between institutional and financial sustainability.

The socioeconomic sustainability issues relating to biodiversity conservation have yet to be comprehensively addressed; at present, the level of local benefits and/or incentives for communities to support conservation and environmental protection is in general not sufficient to provide conservation incentives to the majority of the populations surrounding protected areas. Many untapped opportunities presently exist particularly with regard to tourism and empowerment of communities to effectively manage and benefit from forest resources which could contribute to poverty reduction and global environmental benefits. Furthermore, the potential for negative socioeconomic trade-offs vis-à-vis improvement in management and expansion of the protected area system is high.

Efficiency

Conclusion 6: The findings of the Joint GEF Activity Cycle evaluation were confirmed in Cameroon: the complexity and inefficiency of the GEF project activity cycle have presented barriers to project development.

The majority of stakeholders (Government of Cameroon, Implementing Agencies, and NGOs) expressed negative views on the activity cycle for previous projects, in terms of long periods taken for processing, associated high transaction costs in terms of financial and human resource inputs, and lack of clarity and information relating to delays. National full-size projects needed an average of 3.6 years to get from program entry to implementation and 5.2 years for implementation; that is, they took 1.5 years longer than planned. The costs of project preparation are estimated at around \$1 million for full-size projects, about three times the amount officially available under the previous project activity cycle. These issues confirm the findings of the Joint Evaluation of the GEF Joint Activity Cycle.

Conclusion 7: Knowledge management and lesson learning is weak and offers opportunities for enhancement.

GEF projects, such as the Biodiversity Conservation and Management Project and the Regional Environment Information Project, have generated a considerable body of knowledge, which has been well managed in the course of project implementation. The ex post situation, however, has revealed some weaknesses, such as lack of institutional and financial support structures to continue knowledge generation and dissemination.¹ The evaluation also observed that important mechanisms, such as the biodiversity clearinghouse mechanism, currently do not function because of a lack of government and/or donor funding. This touches on a larger issue relating to sustainability of institutions and availability of government funding for knowledge management to inform environmental management.

In terms of lesson learning, sharing of experiences has tended to emphasize success more than learning from failure. The evaluation found that there is some reticence to confront and learn from problems and failures such as with community forestry and CAMCOF. As noted elsewhere, the Operational Focal Point lacks the resources to be adequately involved in project development, monitoring, supervision and knowledge sharing, thus also decreasing country ownership on lessons learned.

1.4 Recommendations

Recommendations to the GEF Council

Recommendation 1: The GEF should continue to monitor the results of the Forest and Environment Sector Program budgetary support approach to see whether this approach could be followed in other countries.

The FESP is still not sufficiently mature to enable clear judgment on its results. The evaluation recognizes that the program offers a potentially beneficial alternative to the short time horizons of traditional project approaches in terms of providing greater flexibility for financial, institutional and individual capacity development, catalytic changes in behavior, and harmonization of donor efforts in the long term.

The GEF Evaluation Office will continue to monitor the progress of the Forest and Environment Sector Program and will report on this modality in the Fourth Overall Performance Study of the GEF in 2009.

Recommendation 2: The GEF should develop a strategy to improve the capacities to address global environmental issues in Sub-Saharan Africa.

This approach could include several elements:

- Strengthening of GEF focal point mechanisms to function effectively, improve country ownership, and help develop an effective integrated strategic coordination approach for partnership funding. The GEF must play a more active role in enabling a proper and effective functionality of the focal point mechanism.
- Facilitate the creation of partnerships to increase the mobilization of resources for implementation of the global conventions related to the GEF.
- Facilitate effective and strategic integration, coordination, and dialogue among environmental actors on the country level, in particular, participation of global conventions focal points.
- Reduction of transaction costs for the recipient countries (adoption of country-based procedures when these meet the GEF (or GEF Agencies) requirement.
- The GEF should review the effectiveness of the current focal point mechanism and consider alternative modus operandi that are more suitable for countries in Africa.

Recommendation 3: The GEF should consider further supporting trust funds as an approach to improve the sustainability of global environmental benefits.

Weaknesses in financial sustainability are a common issue associated with project-based interventions. In the 1990s the GEF supported trusts funds as an approach to secure sustainability for protected areas, beyond the life of projects. The recent impact evaluation of Bwindi–Mgahinga Trust Fund confirmed the effectiveness of this approach for the augmentation and maintenance of management capacities, recurring costs as well as provision of incentives for local communities. The Council should consider placing a renewed emphasis on trust funds to sustain global environmental gains.

Recommendations to the Government of Cameroon

Recommendation 4: Compliance with environmental policies and regulations requires urgent attention.

The National Capacity Self-Assessment provides a starting point for the Government of Cameroon to consider providing increased budgetary resources to the environment sector to address some of the key environmental problems, such as land degradation and climate change adaptation. The main challenge to be faced is that of compliance to the environmental laws and regulations that have been put in place, especially in the country's system of protected areas. The government is taking steps to develop and implement anticorruption policies as well as to improve the effectiveness and management of public agencies. The emerging experiences regarding the FESP and the relaunch of the SGP provide inspiration for new interventions.

Recommendation 5: Local communities need to be provided with appropriate livelihood incentives and compensation to offset the social costs of protected areas.

The government of Cameroon should continue to work with the Implementing Agencies, and other partners to ensure that social sustainability of protected areas is addressed more assiduously. In the tropical forest ecosystems of Cameroon, this will mean that the government will need to take further action to improve community forestry concession systems, access to NTFPs to ensure that benefits of conservation can be demonstrated to communities.

In addition, Cameroon has significant underexploited ecotourism potential, which with appropriate involvement and incentive structures (for example, tax incentives) for the private sector and community stakeholders and national policy (visa and customs changes) and infrastructure improvements (air and road links) could provide increased livelihood benefits and incentives for conservation in and around many of the protected areas, through employment and community concessions. In this regard, Cameroon could learn from the experiences in East and Southern Africa.²

Recommendations to the Implementing Agencies

Recommendation 6: The Implementing Agencies need to work more closely with the Government of Cameroon and other stakeholders to enhance country ownership.

The weakness in country ownership is a significant finding of the evaluation. Ownership could be strengthened in the following ways:

- Provide assistance to the operational focal point and members of the GEF national committee to strengthen their role through involvement in project design, supervision/monitoring missions, and formalized sharing of information.
- Support the government of Cameroon–led project and program concepts under the RAF in order to build ownership.

Recommendation 7: The Implementing Agencies should consider regular auditing of and capacity enhancement measures to improve financial management of projects.

The Cameroon portfolio and associated project experiences demonstrate that financial management and administration is an area that presents opportunities for improvements in efficiency and effectiveness. The Implementing Agencies have a key role to play in terms of the following:

- Providing capacity development for stakeholders to improve financial management and demonstrate its relationship to efficiency, effectiveness, and sustainability of outcomes
- Link environmental governance to ongoing national efforts to combat corruption and civil service reforms
- Provide resources for regular auditing to ensure an appropriate balance is struck between expenditures and results and also to make the audits results public.

1.5 Emerging Issues Relating to the RAF

As the Evaluation Office is presently conducting a review of the RAF at its midterm point of implementation, it was not considered appropriate to make final conclusions and recommendations. Nevertheless, the RAF is a current issue for Cameroon. The following summarizes the main points raised:

- The RAF indexes broadly reflect Cameroon’s potential to deliver global environmental benefits related to biodiversity conservation. The performance indices also reflect the challenges relating to environmental governance and transparency
- The RAF was received by the few stakeholders who were sufficiently aware of it as a positive step toward enhanced ownership and participation in the identification, elaboration, and implementation of projects that reflect national and the GEF’s global priorities. Recent discussions with the GEF Secretariat on RAF programming however, were perceived as one sided, and government and civil society stakeholders

commented that the process used for discussions (teleconferencing) was not an effective means for detailed and transparent discussion.

Notes

1. This finding confirms those of the World Bank (2004) and its Independent Evaluation Group (World Bank IEG 2005).
2. See GEF EO (2006b) and IFC (2006).

**Government of Cameroon Response to
COUNTRY PORTFOLIO EVALUATION – CAMEROON (1992 – 2007)**
(prepared by the Government of Cameroon)

REPUBLIQUE DU CAMEROON
Paix – Travail – Patrie

MINISTRE DE L'ENVIRONNEMENT
ET DE LA PROTECTION DE LA NATURE

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

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REPUBLIC OF CAMEROON
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MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT
AND NATURE PROTECTION

SECRETARIAT GENERAL

Division of Studies, Projects and Cooperation

GEF Operational Focal Point

Yaoundé, le 25 AOUT 2008

LE MINISTRE
Point Focal Politique du FEM

**À Madame la Présidente/Directrice
Exécutive du FEM.**
Fax : 202 522 3240/3245

Washington-USA

Objet : Evaluation du portefeuille
du FEM au Cameroun : 1992-2007

Madame la Présidente,

J'accuse réception de la version finale du rapport de l'évaluation du portefeuille pays du Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial (période 1992-2007), réalisée au Cameroun d'octobre 2007 à juin 2008.

Y faisant suite, je voudrais tout d'abord, au nom du Gouvernement camerounais, vous exprimer notre profonde gratitude pour avoir bien voulu associer notre pays à cette riche expérience. Rassurez vous, le Cameroun a été très heureux de participer à ce processus d'évaluation et d'aider ainsi les membres du Conseil du FEM à atteindre leurs objectifs.

Les conclusions et les recommandations de ce rapport nous conviennent globalement, puisqu'elles visent dans l'ensemble, à démontrer l'impérieuse nécessité d'une coopération plus efficiente entre le Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial et le Cameroun.

D'après ce rapport d'évaluation, le Cameroun a bénéficié d'importants investissements financiers dans divers domaines d'intervention, ce qui a permis d'atteindre les résultats encourageants que nous connaissons tous aujourd'hui à travers l'évaluation que vient d'entreprendre le Bureau d'Evaluation du Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial. Nos efforts se doivent d'être renforcés non seulement pour capitaliser les acquis mais encore, pour faire face aux grands enjeux qui se posent aujourd'hui à l'environnement mondial.

En décidant de discuter de ce rapport lors du dialogue national que nous avons récemment organisé à Yaoundé grâce au soutien du FEM, et dont

l'objectif principal était de renforcer l'intégration et l'impact des activités du FEM dans les politiques nationales de développement durable et de réduction de la pauvreté, notre souci principal était de disposer lors des travaux, d'une solide base de travail qui puisse nous renseigner sur les succès et échecs du passé, surtout que nous étions dans un processus d'identification de nos priorités nationales et d'élaboration de notre stratégie nationale pour le FEM4 et FEM5.

Conformément au plan de mise en œuvre et de suivi des résolutions de ce dialogue national, le Comité national du FEM élargi à d'autres parties prenantes nationales, se réunira dans les prochains mois pour adopter notre document de stratégie nationale du FEM pour la période 2006-2010 et 2011-2015. Il est prévu qu'au cours de cette rencontre, une restitution des résultats de cette évaluation sera faite pour assurer une meilleure appropriation au niveau national.

Malgré le soutien constant du FEM, nous savons que l'avenir ne sera pas du tout facile tant les obstacles à nos efforts communs demeurent nombreux et liés pour la plupart au nouveau Dispositif d'Allocations des Ressources (DAR) : malgré les capacités acquises, la mobilisation des cofinancements demeure encore un véritable défi. De plus, probablement à cause des contraintes du DAR, les Agences d'exécution du FEM et les Organisations Non Gouvernementales internationales sont désormais très timides dans leur coopération avec les pays, surtout lorsqu'il faut solliciter leur appui technique pour développer un projet qui n'est pas leur initiative.

Tout cela, conjugué à d'autres problèmes tels les conflits institutionnels, les capacités insuffisantes des pays dans l'identification et le montage de projets pertinents, la rigidité des critères d'éligibilité du FEM, et bien d'autres encore, contribue à compromettre sérieusement l'accès de nos pays aux fonds du DAR.

Mais, si à cause de ces problèmes, on n'était pas à mesure de mettre à profit les nombreux résultats enrichissants que le processus d'évaluation nous permet aujourd'hui d'atteindre, ce serait un sérieux dommage pour l'environnement mondial.

Le Cameroun reste tout à fait disposé, comme par le passé, à collaborer étroitement avec le Fonds pour l'Environnement Mondial pour la mise en œuvre des conclusions et recommandations de ce rapport d'évaluation. Et nous comptons participer à cet effet activement dans le programme de financement des écosystèmes forestiers du Bassin du Congo qui est pour nous une initiative à encourager.

Veillez agréer, Madame la Présidente, l'assurance de ma parfaite considération.

Copie : Bureau d'évaluation du FEM



HELE Pierre
HELE Pierre

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TRANSLATION IN ENGLISH

Yaoundé, 25 August 2008

From: The Minister, GEF Political Focal Point

To: M. Barbut, CEO and Chair Person of the GEF

Ref. Country Portfolio Evaluation: Cameroon 1992-2007

Dear Ms. Chairperson:

I acknowledge receipt of the final report of the evaluation conducted in Cameroon from October 2007 to June 2008.

As a follow up, on behalf of the Cameroonian Government I would like to express our deep gratitude for having involved our country in this rich experience. In fact, Cameroon was very happy to participate in the evaluation process and to help members of the GEF Council achieve their goals.

We globally agree with the conclusions and recommendations of this report because in general they show the urgent need of a more efficient cooperation between the GEF and Cameroon.

After having received this evaluation report, Cameroon has benefited from important financial investments in all focal areas, which has permitted us to achieve encouraging results that we all know through the assessment carried out by the GEF Evaluation Office. Our efforts must be strengthened not only to capitalize the achievements, but also to address the major issues that affect the global environment today.

When we decided to discuss this report after the national dialogue that we recently organized in Yaoundé with support from the GEF, and where the principal objective was to strengthen the integration and impact of the GEF activities within the national sustainable development policies, our major concern was to obtain a solid base to work from that could give us the lessons about the successes and failures of the past, especially now that we are in a process to identify our national priorities and to develop our national strategy for GEF 4 and GEF5.

In accordance to the implementation plan and as a follow up to the national dialogue, the National GEF Committee and other major stakeholders will meet in the next months to discuss the adoption of the GEF national strategy for 2006-2010 and 2011-2015. It is expected that during this meeting the results of the evaluation will be shared in order to ensure a better country ownership.

In spite of the constant support of the GEF, we are aware that the future will not be completely easy given the obstacles that the RAF puts in the way of our efforts: in spite of the capacity acquired, resource mobilization still is a true challenge. In addition, probably because of the constraints of the RAF, the GEF Executing Agencies and the international Non

Governmental Organizations are now shy in their cooperation with the countries, most notably when they are requested for their technical support to develop a project that has not been their initiative.

All of the above, in addition to other problems such as the institutional conflicts, insufficient capacities to identify and propose relevant projects; the rigidity of the eligibility criteria of the GEF, and others contribute to seriously compromise the access of our country to the RAF finances.

But if because of these problems, we were not capable of taking advantage of the many enriching results that the evaluation process has permitted to obtain, that would be even more terrible for the global environment.

Cameroon is fully prepared, as in the past, to work closely with the GEF for the implementation of the conclusions and recommendations of the evaluation report. We intend to actively participate in future programs of financing for forest ecosystems of the Congo Basin , which for us constitutes an initiative to be encouraged.

With my most sincere regards and highest consideration.

Hele Pierre