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MISSION REPORT
MISSION TO CAMEROON TO FINALIZE PROJECT DOCUMENTS^{1/}

by

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Purpose of the Mission

The undersigned, Antoine V. Bassili, Industrial Development Officer, Agro-Industries Section, Industrial Operations Division, was in Cameroon from 19-25 September and from 16 to 21 October 1977 to assist the Senior Industrial Development Field Adviser stationed in Yaoundé, in his negotiations with the Government and in finalizing the project documents for two projects included in the Country Programme for Cameroon for 1977-1981. These are:

- (i) Development and Production of Timber Engineered Wooden Prefabricated Bridges and other Wooden Structures (Project CMR/77/026/A/01/37)..
- (ii) Global Study on the Potential and Development of the Utilization of Charcoal in Cameroon (Project CMR/77/027/A/01/37).

During his second stay, he also discussed the possibility of UNIDO providing - possibly from the Belgian Voluntary Contribution - assistance in the creation of a pilot woodworking plant to help introduce modern production planning and control procedures in the country's small native-owned woodworking plants.

(During the period from 25 September to 16 October 1977, he was seconded to the World Bank to undertake a sectoral study of Zaire's wood processing industries).

I. Development and Production of Timber Engineered Wooden Prefabricated Bridges and Other Wooden Structures (CMR/77/026/A/01/37).

A preliminary draft for this project had been prepared by Mr. Van Doosselaere and commented upon by the author from Vienna prior to the mission. At the time of his visit, these comments had been incorporated in the document. During his first stay, the project was discussed in depth with the Director of the Roads Department, Ministry of Equipment (Ministère de l'Équipement et de l'Habitat) and his deputy. A slide show was also arranged at which selected slides of

the manual and the bridges produced and erected in Kenya were shown and the system explained. This show was attended by about 15 persons from that Ministry and the project forestier - an FAO sponsored project and slides were also shown of the prefabricated wood housing system developed by UNIDO for Laos. Both raised considerable interest.

During his second stay, he met Mr. Item, a Director at the Ministry and Mr. Nanga, the official in charge of the request, and discussed in depth the government's contribution. A total of some 12,21 meter bridges was used for forecasting the lumber to be purchased by the government for the project.

The basic characteristics of this project document were highlighted at a general meeting held at the Ministry of Economy and Plan before the author's first departure from the country, and the project document as drafted was approved in principle. These remained to define the government's contribution in detail.

This was prepared during the author's second stay in Cameroon, and a meeting was arranged at the same Ministry to discuss specifically the government's contribution. It appeared during this meeting that the Department of Roads does not have the vehicles that the project needs (two 5 ton lorries, one heavy duty 4 wheel drive vehicle with winch and a project car); all other inputs being assured.

It was left for the Chairman of the meeting (Mr. R. Ebakissé, Director of Manpower Resources at the Ministry of Economy and Plan) to finalize with the Resident Representative and the SIDFA whether the UNDP could finance these. The author is of the opinion that UNDP should provide the project vehicle - a 4 wheel drive car - and the special vehicle with winch - used to drive wooden piles for the abutments of the bridges - while the Ministry was left to supply the two general purpose 5 ton lorries. At that meeting, it was also agreed to postpone the starting date of the project from November 1977 - foreseen in the draft project document - to February 1978, since all concerned felt that the latter date was more realistic.

A copy of the draft project document prepared is attached to the copy of this report filed in the UNIDO Registry. It was agreed that the Project Evaluation Section should study it and cable its approval to the SIDFA so that the project document could be signed without further delays.

II. Global Study on the Potential and Development of the Utilization of Charcoal in Cameroon (CMR/77/027/A/01/37).

This project was discussed in depth by the author and Mr. Van Doosselaere with the Director, Department of Energy, Ministry of Mines and Energy, and based on this discussion, a project document was drafted by the author and approved in principle at the meeting referred to above.

During the author's second visit, he again met with the Director, Department of Energy, in the presence of Mr. Van Doosselaere and the budget of the government's contribution was finalized. This was discussed at a meeting chaired by Mr. Ebakissé referred to above, and approved in principle.

A copy of the draft project document prepared is attached to the copy of this report filed in the UNIDO Registry.

It was also agreed with the SIDFA that the Projects Evaluation Section in UNIDO should cable, as soon as possible, their approval of the project document so that it may be signed and implementation started.

III. Proposal for the Establishment of a Pilot Woodworking Plant

The SIDFA had been corresponding with the Training Section and the author on the possibility of creating pilot woodworking plant in the Cameroons - possibly financed from the Belgian Voluntary Contribution to UNIDO. (Originally, mention was made of a training centre in the North of the country for the production of boats for the Lake Chad area and the training boat builders; but this idea was subsequently shelved as being unrealistic).

During his second stay in Cameroon, the author discussed the matter with Mr. Georges Mueller. (UNDP/ILO expert attached to CAPME (Centre National d'Assistance aux Petites et Moyennes Entreprises). They both agreed that such a pilot (or demonstration) plant was needed to train the management of the small woodworking plants so as to assure sound production planning and control procedures and improving their technology to enable them eventually to produce, industrially, furniture components or even knocked down furniture, for export and that a captive market for a mass produced product - such as, but not necessarily limited to school furniture - was needed to assure production of large enough series to help train the local entrepreneurs in this field. The possibility of involving CAPME in this plant (to organize production planning and control, and a sound costing policy) was discussed with Mr. Mueller, who notified the author of CAPME's interest in principle in such collaboration. In that case, it would be advantageous if the plant were located in Douala so as to benefit from the support of both CAPME's Headquarters staff as well as their technicians in the pilot metal working shop in Bassa, a suburb of Douala. Problems as to whether the plant will be run directly by CAPME or given to be managed by a local entrepreneur with direct CAPME supervision remain to be settled. In that case, the methodology used to select the entrepreneur remains to be determined. These discussions should only be treated as an indication of interest at this stage.

The author then attempted to obtain information on the size of the market for school furniture, and learnt from the UNESCO Regional Representative stationed in Yaounde that it is of the order of some 150 new classrooms per year, i.e. about 6000 to 7500 school desks. Although this is not sufficient to justify an industrial plant producing exclusively school furniture, it is a good starting point for such a plant.

However, it appears that the actual purchasing of school furniture is not centralized but left to the various regions (and even communes), so before such a plant is installed, assurances should be given by the authorities that prices being equal, preference will be given to it for all the country's school furniture needs, and a captive market

thus assured. This possibility was further discussed with Mr. Ebakissé, who was very interested in such a proposal, and the author impressed on him the need to have standardized products and a captive market to start such a demonstration plant, as well as the potential of it helping create export oriented furniture industries in Cameroon.

In that case, the UNIDO Voluntary Contribution funds should be used to finance not only equipment, but also a man/year of expert services in the field of furniture production; a 2-3 month assignment of a furniture designer to design the knock-down school furniture to be produced, and perhaps a 3 month fellowship for training in the field of tool maintenance.

It appears from the above that many problems remain to be solved before this assistance can materialize.

On the other hand, CAPME would be willing to sponsor a service centre for tool maintenance and another for wood drying but does not have the funds to purchase the equipment. If UNIDO could supply such equipment, they would be willing to assure the managements of these centres.

It was agreed that if UNIDO would be willing to finance these two centres, the author would write to Mr. Van Doosselaere a personal letter, copied to Mr. Mueller so that they may discuss this proposal formally with Mr. Mueller's counterparts and, if agreeable to them, submit a formal request to UNIDO through the official channels.

IV. Other matters

During his stay, the author also participated in discussions with various authorities relating to the projects for the development of the pharmaceutical industry and the cell for the industrial development.

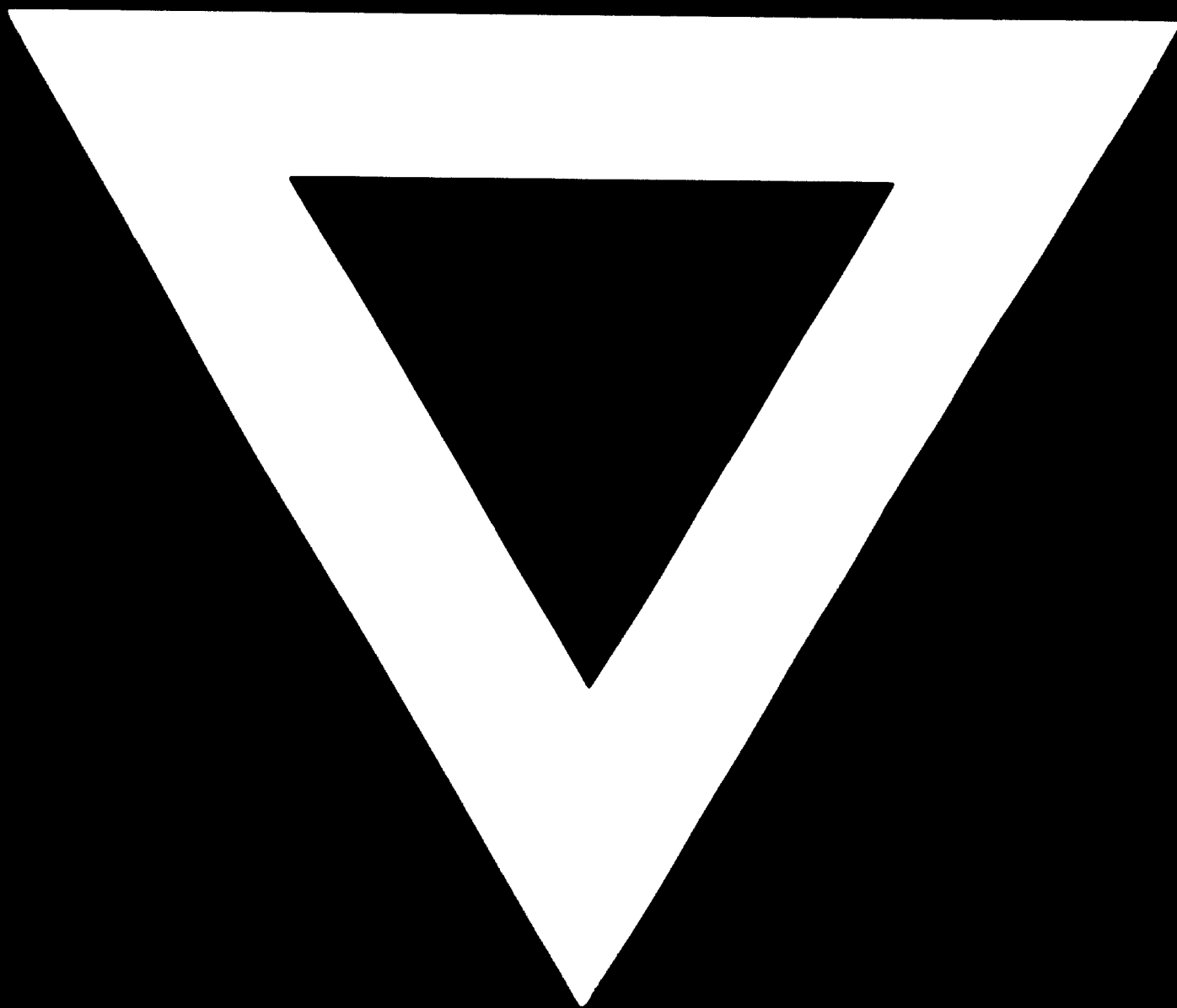
Copies of the drafts of the project documents of these two projects have been attached to the copy of this Report filed in the UNIDO Registry.

V. Acknowledgements

The author wishes to thank Mr. Guy Van Doosselaere, Senior Industrial Development Field Adviser, and Mr. Paul Matthews, Resident Representative a.i. for the assistance given in undertaking his task.

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