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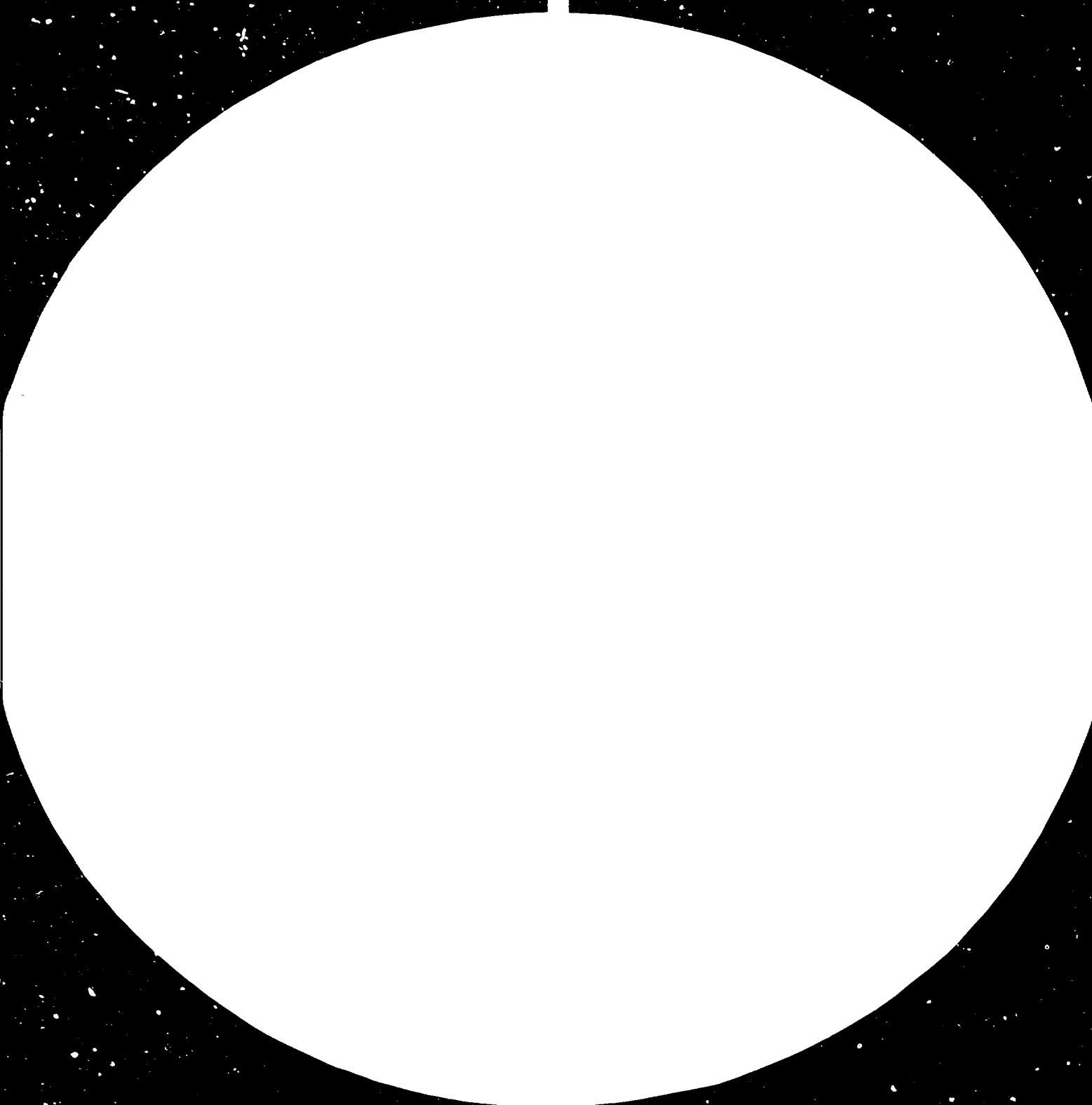
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Distr.
LIMITED

ID/WG. 248/8
7 September 1981

ENGLISH

United Nations Industrial Development Organization

Seminar on the Furniture and Joinery Industries,
Lahti, Finland, 2 to 23 August 1981

THE FURNITURE AND JOINERY INDUSTRIES IN CAMEROON *

by

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1. Introduction

For many years, joinery in general has been considered a job for the inefficient. Only those who couldn't do anything else became joiners. The result of this has been that joinery in Cameroon has remained a part of the traditional crafts, in spite of the forest-gearred economy of our country.

Cameroon possesses one of the largest remaining untouched tropical forest areas in Africa, apart from Zaire. About 20 million hectares (42 per cent of the country's land area) of tropical forest belong to our country, in fact. Eight million hectares of this forest are actually open to logging operations and produce some 1.6 million m³ of logs per year, 49 per cent of this production being sawn in 76 units among which four integrated wood industry complexes produce veneer and/or plywood as well as sawwood with a total combined capacity of about 80,000 m³ of veneer, 30,000 m³ of plywood and 40,000 m³ of sawwood.

In addition to those sawmills, there are many furniture manufacturers, three or four of which capable of supporting a small-scale industrial production and hundreds of artisan workshops in addition to these.

2. Problems Faced by the Furniture and Joinery Industries in Cameroon

2.1 Professional Qualifications

Cameroonian joiners are generally unskilled workers. There is no high level training in joinery. The CAP (Certificat d'aptitude Professionnelle) is actually the highest training grade in joinery. This grade is obtained after four years in a technical college.

Some years ago, a post CAP training in joinery had been tested by the UNDP in the Wood Promotion Centre and it is to be regretted that this training was discontinued in 1976.

2.2 Technical Problems

Our technical problems feature the following:

- Poor surface finishing;
- Less developed tools and plants;
- Unavailability of good hardware and metal fittings.

3. Future Prospects for Development

With the creation of CENADEFOR (Centre National de Développement des Forêts) which include the former Wood Promotion Centre activities, we think that the furniture and joinery industries will be assisted in their development.

Furthermore, we are conscious in Cameroon that the maximum utilization of the maximum number of species available in the forest (more than 300 species) will depend to a great extent on the existence of a large secondary forest industries sector (joinery, furniture, prefabricated housing, etc.) supplying both the domestic and export markets.

The establishment of secondary woodworking industries, which are also highly labour intensive, will therefore be particularly encouraged, through special tax and other incentives.

And a particular emphasis should be given to higher professional training.



