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Ramsar Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar, Iran, 1971)

INFORMATION PACKAGE

5th Pan-African Regional Preparatory Meeting
For the 10th Conference of the Parties
"Palais des Congrès", Yaoundé, Republic of Cameroon
26-30 November 2007

Hosted by the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP)
Republic of Cameroon

With financial support from UNEP, Biosphere Connections initiative, Cameroon,
Sweden and Switzerland





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Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

The Government of the Republic of Cameroon is honored to host the 5th Pan-African Regional Meeting of the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands, slated for 26-30 November 2007, at the “Palais des Congrès” in Yaoundé, Cameroon . The main purpose of this meeting is the preparation for the 10th Conference of the Parties (COP10) which would take place in Changwon, Republic of Korea from the 28th of October to the 4th of November 2008. The theme of COP10 is “healthy wetlands, healthy people”. This meeting is also dedicated to:

- The evaluation of the progress made in the implementation of the 2005-2008 strategic objectives of the Convention
- The new national reporting format for COP10
- The Convention’s 2009-2014 proposed strategic plan
- A special session to test the module for the training of Ramsar National focal points for francophone Africa

In addition, the United Nations Environmental Program (UNEP) would animate a session on negotiation tools to the benefit of participants at COPs and other statutory meetings of Multilateral Environmental Agreements.

The Governments of Cameroon, Switzerland and Sweden (through Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) alongside the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), “*Atelier Technique des Espaces Naturels*” (ATEN)” of France and the Biosphere Connection initiative (a joint initiative by the Ramsar Convention, IUCN, UNESCO’s Man & Biosphere Programme and the Star Alliance Network of airlines), have contributed financially to the holding of this meeting.

The host institution is the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection (MINEP), the Ramsar Administrative Authority in the Republic of Cameroon, headed by His Excellency, Minister Pierre Hélé.



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Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

General information about Cameroon

The Republic of Cameroon (generally referred to as Cameroon) was created in 1961 by the unification of former French Cameroon and part of British Cameroon.

Cameroon is located in the Gulf of Guinea in Central Africa, at 6°00'N, 12°00'E. It has a surface area of 475 440 km² with a coastline of 320 km on the Atlantic Ocean. It is bordered to the west by Nigeria, to the north by Chad, to the east by Central African Republic and to the south by the Republic of Congo, Gabon and Equatorial Guinea. See the map in annex 1.1.

Cameroon is generally referred to as “Africa in miniature” thanks to its geographical, climatic and cultural diversity; as it spans the Atlantic Coast at the elbow of the Gulf of Guinea, passing through evergreen forests, over rolling mountains with savannah vegetation and gradually fades into sandy lowlands that culminate at Lake Chad at the extreme Northern tip of the Country.

The altitudes range from 0 m above sea level (the Atlantic Ocean) to 4 095 m above sea level (at the peak of Mount Cameroon). The population of Cameroon is estimated at 18 060 382 inhabitants.

Information about Yaoundé and Douala

Yaoundé, the capital city of Cameroon, is located at 3° 52'N 11°31'E at an average of 750 m above sea level and with a population of about 1.7 million inhabitants. On the northwestern part of Yaoundé there are mountain peaks like the Mbam Minkom (1295 m), Nkolodom (1221 m) and Mount Eloumden (1159 m) on the south-eastern part of Yaoundé (leading to the appellation “city of 7 hills”). See annex 1.2 for a general map of Yaoundé central city.

Douala, the capital of the Littoral province of Cameroon, is the largest city in Cameroon and the economic capital of the country. It is located at 04°03'N 9°41'E and has Cameroon’s largest port and major international airport, Douala airport. The city is located on the banks of River Wouri, with its two sides linked by the Bonaberi Bridge.



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Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

Climate

The general climate varies with terrain, from tropical along the coast to semiarid and hot in northern part of the country.

In the case of Yaoundé, the major rainy season which extends from September to November, should be coming to an end by the time of this meeting; however, some rains should be expected at this time of the year. Participants are therefore advised to bring along some warm clothing. The temperatures at this time of the year range from 15°C to 28°C with a relative humidity of about 94%.

Official language

English language and French language are the official languages, Cameroon being a bilingual country. The majority of the inhabitants in Yaoundé speak French. There are, however, 24 major African language groups used in the country.

Major religions

Christianity (40%), Indigenous belief (40%), Islam (20%)

Currency

The official operational currency is the “Communauté Financière Africaine franc” (XAF, also referred to as the CFA franc), with the responsible authority being the Bank of Central African States.

Exchange rates: 1 EUR = 655.957 XAF
 1 USD = 445.557 XAF
 1 CHF = 397.377 XAF

In Yaoundé, Douala and other major towns, there are automated teller machines (ATM) at the disposal of the public. International credit cards can be used to withdraw money at these ATMs.



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

Environmental international agreements

Cameroon is a party to the following:

- Biodiversity
- Climate Change
- Climate Change-Kyoto Protocol,
- Desertification
- Endangered Species
- Hazardous Wastes
- Law of the Sea
- Ozone Layer Protection
- Tropical Timber 83
- Tropical Timber 94
- Wetlands
- Whaling

The Convention on Wetlands (Ramsar Convention, Iran 1971) came into force in Cameroon on 20 July 2006. Cameroon presently has 2 sites designated as Wetlands of International Importance, with a surface area of 600,415 hectares:

Barombi Mbo Crater Lake, a volcanic crater lake in the South-West province, designated on 08 October 2006. This site has a surface area of 415 ha and together with 3 other crater lakes in the SW province of Cameroon, forms the "Afrotropical Cameroon Crater Lakes Ecoregion"

The Waza Logone Floodplain, of the lower Logone River in the extreme north of the country between Nigeria and Chad, found within the Lake Chad basin. This site was designated on 20 March 2006 and includes 2 National Parks and a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve.

Cameroon is also endowed with a wide range of coastal and inland wetlands throughout the country.

Contact information for the organization of the meeting

Government of Cameroon:

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République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

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Pre-registration for the meeting

See the pre registration forms among the meeting documents. The deadline for Ramsar-sponsored delegates is 29th October 2007. Therefore, note that **pre-registration is presently closed!**

The Ramsar Secretariat is sponsoring one (01) delegate from each Contracting Party (CP) to the Convention, and one (01) delegate from each non-Contracting Party (non-CP); these delegates would be henceforth referred to as Ramsar-sponsored delegates.

Participants from International Organizations, other organizations and from other countries, who are not financially sponsored by the Ramsar Secretariat, are encouraged to participate at their own expense. In such cases, they are requested to fill in the pre registration form for International Organizations and others (see the meeting documents), and forward it to the Ramsar Convention Secretariat before the 29th of October 2007.

Each pre-registered delegate should have received an official invitation letter from the Government of Cameroon. This letter would be necessary for the acquisition of an entry visa for Cameroon as well as other administrative formalities. Any pre-registered delegate presently not in possession of this invitation letter should request for one from the Ramsar Convention Secretariat.



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

Dates of the meeting

The meeting proper will start on Monday 26th November at 09:00 hours. The official closing date is set for Friday 30th November at 15:00 hours. An extra session has been planned for the French-speaking Ramsar focal points, on Saturday 1st December 2007. This session aims at testing the training module for Ramsar National focal points for francophone Africa.

Official registration for the meeting starts on Sunday 25 November from 16:00-21:00 hours at Meumi Palace Hotel, Bastos residential area, Yaoundé. Registration continues on Monday 26 November from 08:00 to 09:00 hours. All participants should endeavor to register before 09:00 am of November 26th.

Travel arrangements

Arrangements are presently underway to provide each pre-registered Ramsar-sponsored delegate with a round trip air ticket from their place of residence to the meeting venue. Information on the flight itinerary would be provided to each concerned delegate once they are available.

The Ramsar-sponsored delegates are once more reminded that the Ramsar-Secretariat will not be responsible for any consequences (financial and others) resulting from modifications they make to flight itineraries prepared by the Ramsar Secretariat (as undersigned in the pre-registration engagement).

The main airports convenient for entry into Cameroon for the purpose of this meeting are:

Yaoundé Nsimalen International Airport (NSI):

Located about 20 km from Yaoundé central town

Address: BP 13615, Yaoundé

Tel: +237 2223 3602/2223 4521

Fax: +237 2223 4520

Note that there is an airport departure tax of about 16 Euros per person (CFA 10 000 or USD 23) payable in cash at the airport. All participants are reminded to keep this in mind during their departure from Cameroon. In the case of Ramsar-sponsored participants, this tax will be given to them while in Yaoundé.

Douala International Airport (DLA):

Located 10 km from Douala central town and 270 km from Yaoundé town



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

Tel: +237 3 342 3630/3342 3526

Fax: +237 3342 3758

Note that the same conditions for the departure tax apply in the case of Douala.

Local transportation

Upon arrival at the respective airports (Yaoundé and Douala), all delegates will be welcomed by identified Government personnel and would be informed about how to reach Yaoundé (for Douala airport) and conducted to their respective hotels (for both Douala and Yaoundé airports).

All participants are advised to inform the organizers (preferably the Ramsar Secretariat) of the date and time of their arrival in Yaoundé/Douala as well as their complete flight details. This will facilitate the procedure of guiding the delegates upon their arrival and at their time of their departure.

For information purpose, there are intercity buses/coaches from Douala to Yaoundé and the trip lasts about 3 hours. The average standard fare for this journey is 6 Euros (3500-4000 CFA) and the VIP fare (for a more comfortable trip) is 16-18 Euros (8000-10 000 CFA). The most reliable and comfortable services are offered by "Central Voyage", "Garantie Express" and "Bucca Voyage" travel agencies.

➤ Central voyage:

- Douala office; Akwa district, Tel: +237 3342 0316/3342 2669
- Yaoundé office; Brasserie district, Tel: +237 2230 3994/2230 3904

➤ Garantie Express:

- Douala office; Avenue de la Douche, Deux Eglise district, Tel: +237 3342 6191/9911 8164
- Yaoundé; opposite Nsam Shell petrol station, Tel: +237 2230 2883/7708 4108

Buses would be available for the Ramsar-sponsored delegates for shuttling between hotel Azur and the meeting hall at allocated time periods (in the morning and evening). Specific time schedules will be provided in Yaoundé. Displacements made out of the allocated hours would be the responsibility of each delegate. Non-sponsored delegates will be responsible for their transportation from their respective hotels to the meeting venue, as well as other displacements.



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

The cheapest and easiest means of transportation within Yaoundé town is by taxi services. The standard taxi fare for a distance of 3-5 km is 40-50 Euro cents (about 200 CFA). Hiring a taxi within the city for a period of about 1 hour costs about between 4-8 Euros (2500-5000 CFA), depending on individual bargaining skills. Some hotels offer taxi services and other local transportation services (shuttle buses, etc.) which are more convenient and reliable; participants are advised to inquire about such services at their respective hotels.

Accommodation

The Ramsar Secretariat and the host Ministry in Cameroon are in charge of coordinating the hotel reservations for the Ramsar-sponsored delegates. The hotel reservations will include the provision of breakfast. All Ramsar-sponsored delegates will be lodged at Hotel Azur, located in Bastos residential area in Yaoundé.

All other participants must make their own reservations. See annex 2.1 for details on convenient hotels in the vicinity of the meeting venue and annex 2.2 for views of some of these hotels.

Meals

Lunch and coffee breaks will be provided for all participants. Lunch vouchers will be distributed to Ramsar-sponsored delegates but will be sold to the non-sponsored delegates.

A daily subsistence allowance (per diem) to cover other expenses will be provided strictly for the Ramsar-sponsored participants. Arrangement would be made for this upon arrival in Yaoundé.

Visas

Citizens of member countries of the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS) generally do not require an entry visa for Cameroon. These countries are Angola, Burundi, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Republic of the Congo, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Rwanda and Sao Tome and Principe. Citizens of other countries need an



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

entry visa for Cameroon. This can be obtained from the Cameroon embassy, Consulate or High Commission in their respective countries.

See the meeting documents for a list of possible requirements for the visa application and an exemplary visa application form. Note however that you would need to obtain these documents from the Cameroon embassy in your home country as information required may vary in some cases. For the purpose of visa applications, participants are advised to use the contact information for the Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection when asked for contact details in the host country (see contact details above).

For citizens of countries which do not have a competent Cameroonian authority, the entry visa can be obtained upon their arrival at an airport in Cameroon. The Ministry of Environment and Nature Protection will make arrangements to facilitate the acquisition of the entry visa upon their arrival at the respective airports (Yaoundé and Douala International Airports). This applies to all pre-registered delegates who have reported their need to obtain the entry visa upon arrival in Cameroon. Delegates yet to pass on this information are urged to do so urgently.

Meeting Documents

Documents would be made available to pre-registered delegates and observers (both Ramsar-sponsored and self-sponsored delegates). Participants are strongly recommended to bring along the documents sent to them by the Ramsar Secretariat as there will be a limited number of documents available at the meeting venue. For more information regarding the documents for this meeting, please visit the meeting webpage on the Ramsar Convention website.

Insurance

All delegates should please ensure that they have adequate individual health, accident and travel risk insurance cover before they leave their home country.

Vaccinations

Entry into Cameroon officially requires the yellow fever vaccination certificate as a prerequisite. This certificate has to be presented to the airport authorities upon arrival. Every meeting participant is strongly advised to have this vaccination beforehand.



République du Cameroun
Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland

Beware of Malaria! All participants are strongly advised to take a malaria prophylaxis 2 weeks before their departure to Cameroon.

Field trip:

On Wednesday 28 November 2007, there will be a field trip to the Ebogo tourist site, situated at about 60 km to the South of Yaoundé.

For this field trip, departure from Azur hotel is programmed for 07:00 am. The host country will organize for buses to transport participants to the site. The non-sponsored delegates will have to pay a token participation fee for this field visit; the exact amount will be communicated in Yaoundé.

Ebogo tourist site is a fabulous eco-tourist destination located along the majestic and tranquil River Nyong and good for a calm relaxing canoe ride in the heart of nature. It's remarkable for the large variety of bird species, the tropical forest and the interesting culture of the inhabitants.

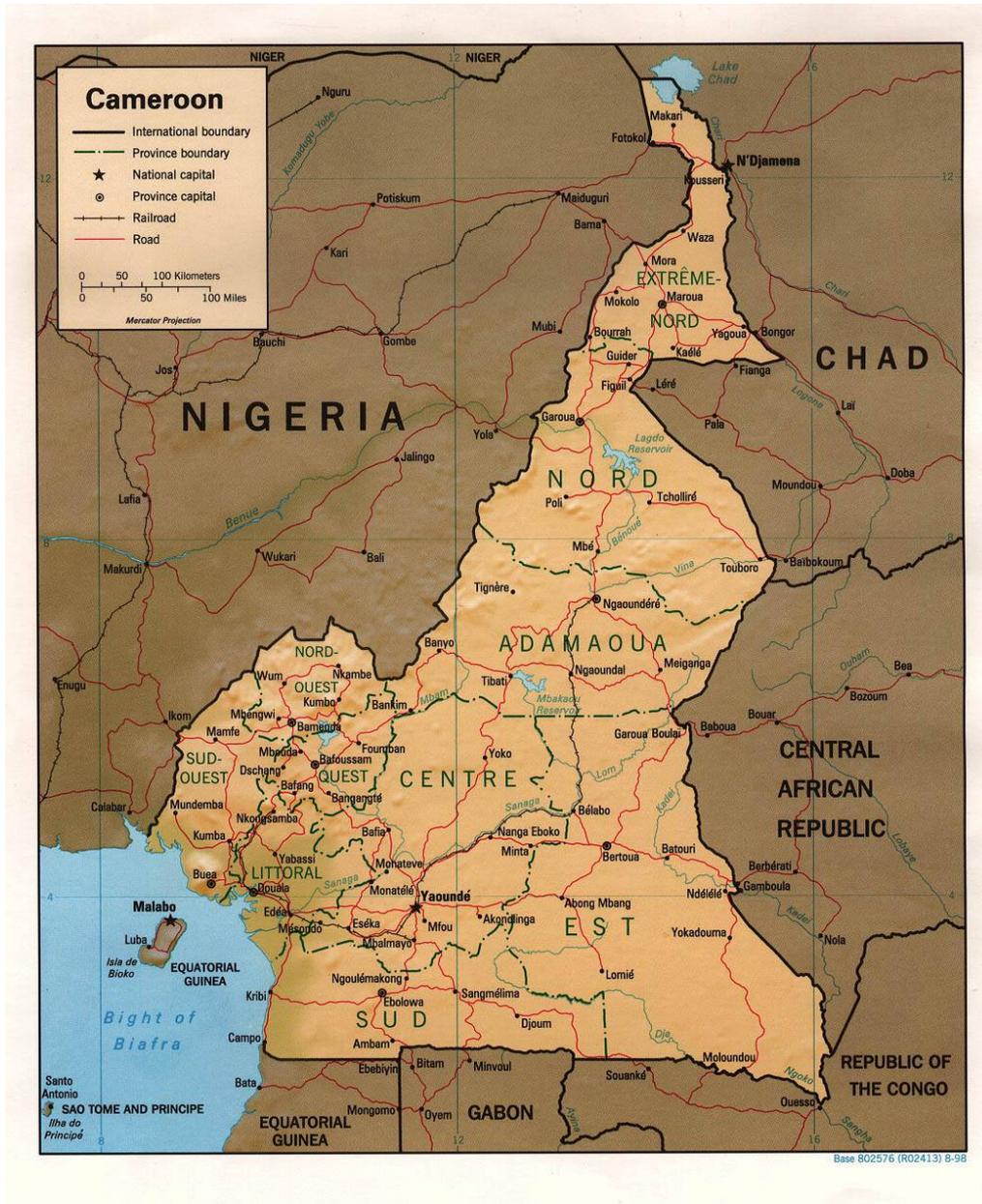
River Nyong, the second biggest river in Cameroon and main attraction point in Ebogo, rises in the east of Cameroon and flows across all of the Central and South provinces covering a 640 km course before emptying into the Gulf of Guinea of the Atlantic Ocean, at Petit Batanga. This river is noted for its black color which is characteristic of alluvials deposits, with a surface layer rich in humus. The vegetation, made of secondary forest, contains valuable forest species such as Ayous, Moabi, Iroko, Sappelli, Dibetu, Bibunga, etc. You may also get the chance to visit Ebogo village and see the famous "bantou huts" (constructed from raw produce of Mother Nature). See annex 4 for pictures on Ebogo tourist site.

Other information

The Electricity supply is 220 volts, European standard 2 headed plugs.



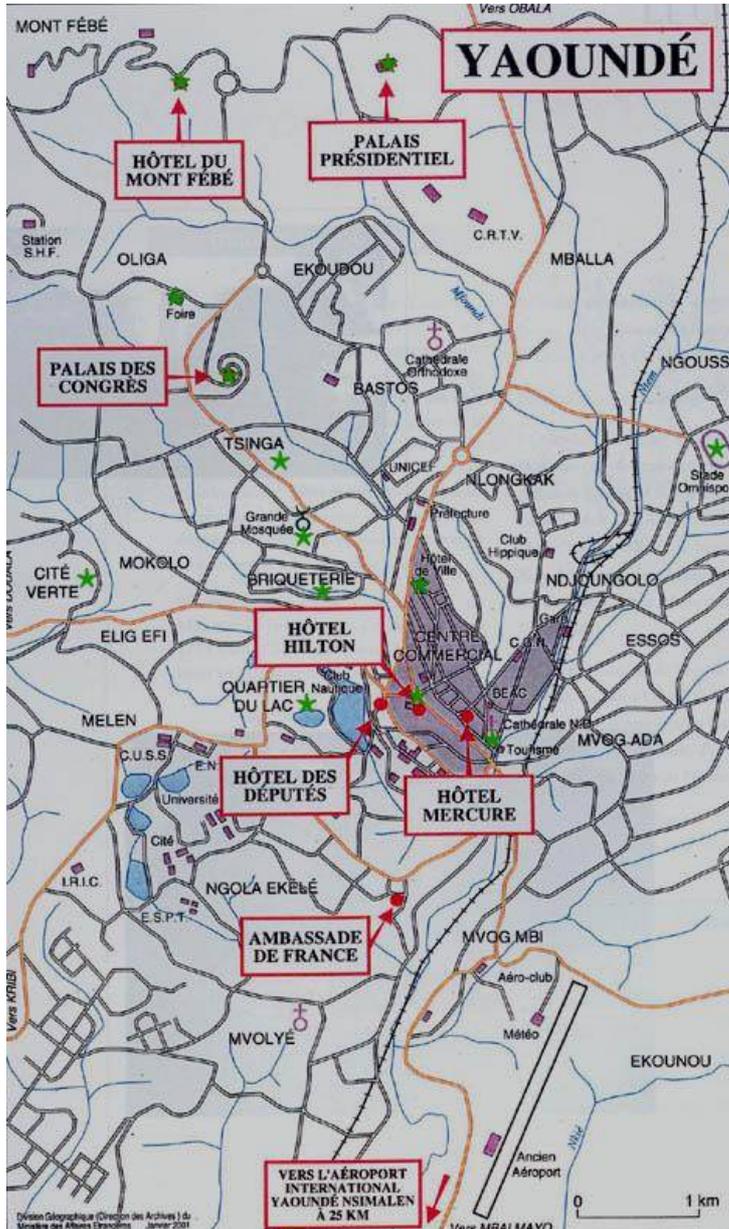
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 Republic of Cameroon
 Peace- Work - Fatherland



Annex 1.1: Map of Cameroon



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Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland



Annex 1.2: Yaoundé City



Annex 2.1: Convenient hotels in the vicinity of the meeting venue

No	Name	Category	Address	Cost Estimate *	Phone number	Fax	Email/web site	Distance **
1	Meumi Palace Hotel	**	B.P. 1225, Bastos residential area, Yaoundé	54 (35 000)	+237 2221 1607 /2220 9211	+237 2220 6746 / 2221 1622	meumi/palace@yahoo.fr	4 km
2	Hotel Azur	***	B.P. 2169, Bastos, Yaoundé	54 (35 000)	+237 2221 1639 /2221 1640/	2221 1641	hotafric@iccnet.cm	3 km
3	Mont Febe	****	BP 711, Yaoundé	129 (84 000)	+237 2221 4002	+237 2221 6070	info@hotelmontfebe.com www.hotelmontfebe.com	5 km
4	Djeuga Palace	****	BP 2659	110 (72 000)	+237 2222 4646	+237 2222 4700	djeugapalace@camnet.cm www.djeuga-palace.com	5 km
5	Hilton hotel	*****	Boulevard du 20 mai, BP 11852, Yaoundé	134 (88 000)	+237 2223 3646	+237 2222 3210	reservations.yaounde@hilton.com www.hilton.com	6 km
6	Hotel Mecure	***	Avenue El Hadi Ahmadou Ahidjo, Yaoundé	74 (48 000)	+237 2221 2131	+237 2221 2162	H3268@accor-hotels.com	6 km

NB: * These are the cost estimates for single rooms and the amounts in brackets are in CFA francs.

** Estimated distance from the hotel to the conference center





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Paix - Travail - Patrie
Republic of Cameroon
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Hotel Azur, Yaoundé



Djeuga Palace Hotel, Yaoundé



Mecure Hotel, Yaoundé

Hilton Hotel, Yaoundé

Mont Febe Hotel, Yaoundé

Annex 2.2: View of some of the listed hotels





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Annex 3.1: Palais des Congrès - outside view



Annex 3.2 :Palais des Congrès - inside view



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Republic of Cameroon
Peace- Work - Fatherland



Annex 4.1: Ebogo tourist site



Annex 4.2: Tourism at Ebogo: Canoe trip in River Nyong