



Communes et Villes Unies du Cameroun
United Councils and Cities of Cameroon

jeicom21

COUNCILS INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM “JEICOM21” SYNTHESIS REPORT

YAOUNDE FROM 3RD TO 5TH DECEMBER 2021

JOURNEES ECONOMIQUES
INTERNATIONALES DES COMMUNES
Yaoundé, 3 - 5 Décembre 2021

THE COUNCILS
INTERNATIONAL ECONOMIC FORUM
Yaounde December 3 - 5 2021



**CVUC
UCCC**



**COMMUNES ET VILLES UNIES DU CAMEROUN
UNITED COUNCILS AND CITIES OF CAMEROON**

« Still concerning employment, substantial efforts are made each year to create jobs and thus enable the youth to join the workforce. Hence, thanks to the youth employment promotion policy included in the Priority Action Plan 2030, 600 000 jobs are expected to be created annually, with the involvement of Regional and Local Authorities. »

**His Excellency Paul BIYA,
*President of the Republic of Cameroon***

**Message to his young compatriotes
for the 56th edition of the Youth day.**



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ABBREVIATIONS

AIMF : International Association of Francophone Mayors

AIRF : International Association of Francophone Regions

IPA : Investment Promotion Agency

APME : Small and Medium Size Enterprise Promotion Agency Cameroon

CENAME : National Procurement Centre for Essential Drugs and Medical Devices

UCLGA : United Cities and Local Governments of Africa

RLA : Regional and Local Authorities

UCCC : United Councils and Cities of Cameroon

AICS : African Institute of Computer Sciences

INS : National Institute of Statistics

IITA : International Institute for Agricultural Technology

IRAD : Research Institute for Agricultural Development of Cameroon

SME : Small and Medium size enterprise

SCAC : The Cooperation and Cultural Action Services

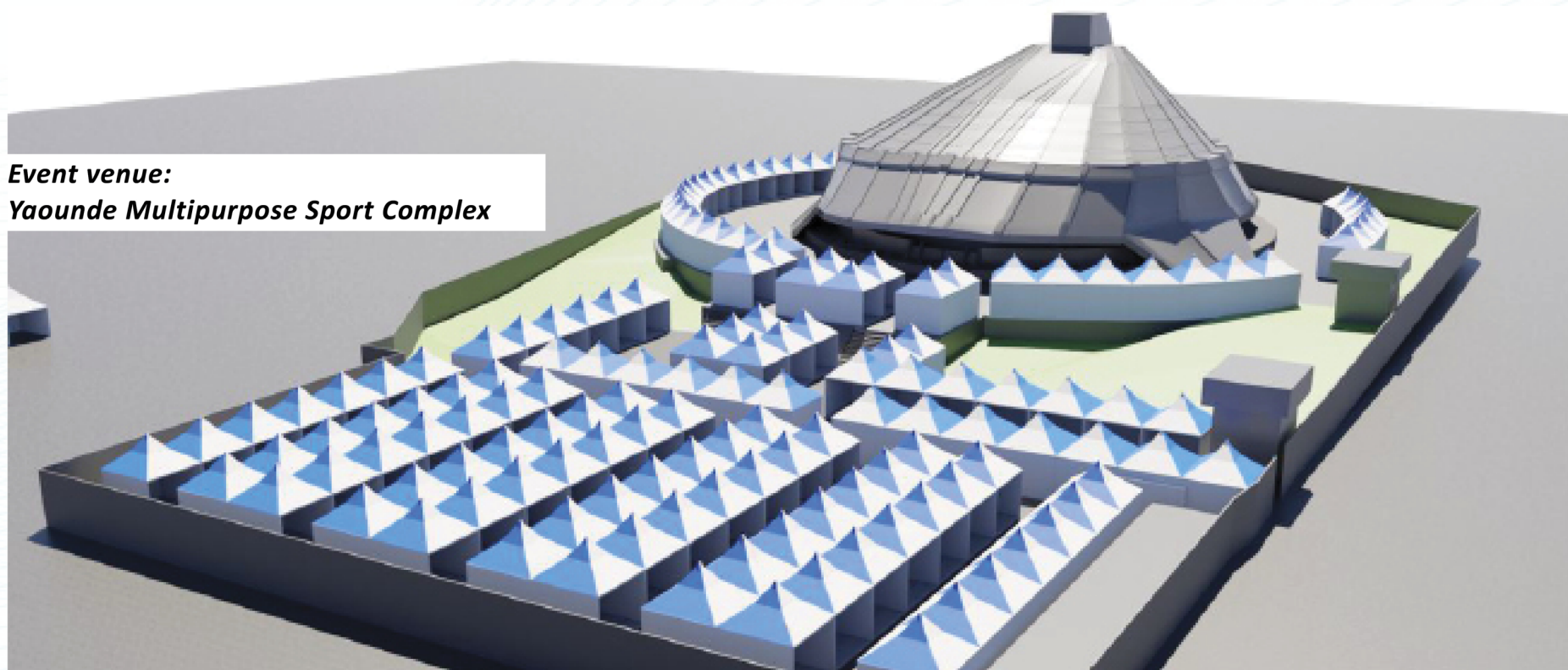
TIC : Information, Communication and Technology

INTRODUCTION

This report synthetically outlines aspects of the organisation of the first Councils International Economic Forum (**Jeicom21**) that took place from **3rd to 5th December 2021** under the distinguished patronage of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, starting from the context of the project **(I)**, the organisation of Jeicom21 to the mobilisation of participants **(II)**, the exchanges in plenary sessions, the panels and various thematic discussions **(III)**.

Event venue:

Yaounde Multipurpose Sport Complex



1. CONTEXT

With an estimated population of 25 million, part of its coastline lying on the Gulf of Guinea, Cameroon is bordered by Chad, the Central African Republic, Congo, Gabon, Equatorial Guinea and Nigeria. English and French are the two official languages. Under the leadership of the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, the country has been engaged for several years in a vast project to provide itself with quality infrastructure.

Various structuring projects have resulted in the construction of roads, bridges, hospitals, stadiums, and schools, as well as several other investments, financed and/or accompanied by international partners. As a result of these investments, there is a growing improvement in the business climate, which is being driven by an incentive investment code.

Cameroon is a country of peace and stability that ranks among the most attractive in Africa. Richly endowed with natural resources of the soil and subsoil, vast forests and a steadily modernising agriculture, all in an outstanding diversity spread all over the country. Renowned as Africa in miniature, the country is positioning itself as a land of opportunity for investors from all over the world while guaranteeing a better future for its inhabitants.

With all these assets, Cameroon relies on its youthful and dynamic population to meet up with the emerging challenges by 2035. It is within this framework that Councils, who are in charge of managing local development for the benefit of the population, are expected to play a central and critical role in promoting the territory's rich human and material potential.

1.1 Background of the Jeicom21

As a historiographical reminder, the idea of organising the Councils International Economic Forum (Jeicom21) for the development of territories by the United Councils and Cities of Cameroon (UCCC), the umbrella association of local authorities in Cameroon created in 2003, and made up of 360 local councils and 14 city councils, was inspired by the address to the nation from the President of the Republic, His Excellency Paul Biya, who declared ***“ Decentralization is underway and the youths in Cameroon will soon be able to participate more directly in the management of public affairs. Thus, as long as a part of our population suffers from poverty, if equal opportunities are not guaranteed for all, and the future of our youth is uncertain, our task will not be complete...”***

On the one hand, this idea was further strengthened by the provisions of the Law the bill to institute the General Code of Regional and Local Authorities of 24th December 2019 which reinforces the autonomy of Local Authorities. While on the other hand, it was further consolidated by the electoral campaign of the current leadership team of UCCC. It is within this framework that, Augustin TAMBA, the National President float the idea of organising a forum aiming at presenting to investors, investment funds, entrepreneurs, institutions and development partners, an added-value project to be implemented in the Regional and Local Authorities in Cameroon.



1.2 Endorsement by the State and Key Partners

All convinced by its campaign project, Mayors invested this team at the head of the association's National Executive Bureau. Once on duty in November 2020, the first preparation meeting for the Jeicom21 was launched. These meetings were regularly attended by members of the National Executive Bureau, the representatives of the Ministry of Decentralization and Local Development, and the Embassy of France to Cameroon represented by His Excellency Christophe GUILHOU. He joined the project in April 2020 during an audience granted to him by the National President of UCCC. Thus, France undertook to support this project, which it deemed will give an important impetus to the implementation of decentralisation in Cameroon.

Various national and international experts (UCLGA, AIMF, and AIRF among others) equally mobilised within different fields to support the organisation of this event led by the National President of UCCC. The President of the Republic, whose Very High Patronage has been requested, was sensitive to this initiative. It is in this vein that several meetings were being held at the Presidency of the Republic and the Prime Minister's office, under the personal supervision of the Prime Minister and Head of Government. Other meetings were equally held at the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development (the supervisory authority of RLA) under the coordination of the Minister, and the permanent follow-up of his Secretary General. Several other sectoral ministries followed this same pattern. These include:



- The Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development.
- The Ministry of Fisheries and Animal Industries;
- The Ministry of Water and Energy;
- The Ministry of Forestry and Wildlife;
- The Ministry of Economy, Planning and Regional Development;
- The Ministry of Finance, among others.

Different consultations were equally held with specialised institutions such as:

- The National Institute of Statistics (INS);
- The Investment Promotion Agency (IPA);
- Small and Medium Size Enterprise Promotion Agency (APME);
- Agricultural Practical School of BINGUELA;
- Agricultural Research Institute for the Development of Cameroon (IRAD);
- International Institute for Agricultural Technology (IITA);
- African Institute of Computer Sciences (AICS).



*an exhibition of the know-how
of some councils*



1.3 Official presentation ceremony of Jeicom21

This event was organized on 16th October 2021 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde, with the participation of a dozen members of the Government, Secretaries General of ministries, Directors of public and semi-public establishments, Ambassadors as well as other members of the Diplomatic Corps, technical development partners, Presidents of Regional Councils, members of the National Executive Bureau of UCCC and over thirty Mayors.

In his opening remarks, the National President of UCCC insisted on the context and background of the project. For, this was contained in his profession of faith and figured among his campaign promises when he run for the post of National President of UCCC in September 2020.

According to him, this represents an exceptional and unprecedented event which constitutes “a fundamental moment for the acceleration in Cameroon of the decentralisation process with an unprecedented impact on the development of the territories”.

For the National President of UCCC, the objective of Jeicom21 is to accompany the Government in the implementation of its decentralisation policy and to create a framework to enhance the resources and wealth in territories to accelerate the empowerment of RLA.

The stakes for these RLA lie in laying the groundwork for a major transition from the state of “*consumption councils*” to becoming “*productive councils*”.

Célestin Bedzigui, a consultant and member of the steering committee that coordinated the studies on the economic potential of the councils, presented the technical aspect of Jeicom21, in particular the process of setting up a project bank based on the monographic profile of all the municipalities in Cameroon, with project ideas put forward by the mayors or companies established in their territories.

For the production of these monographic profiles, UCCC worked with two expert firms as well as **the National Institute of Statistics, APME, IPA, the Institute of Higher Studies on Local Development, CENAME, IRAD and IITA.**

Speaking on behalf of the French Embassy in Cameroon, Mathieu SETTE drew the audience's attention to the stakes of such an event concerning the favourable temporal dynamics and France's interest in supporting this promising initiative for the development of the territories and the fulfilment of its citizens. He further announced the organisation of the "France-Cameroon Decentralised Cooperation Day", scheduled for 2nd December 2021 at the French Institute in Yaounde.

The main highlights of this day were structured around two round tables on the problems of decentralisation in Cameroon and France.

Participants included:

The Secretary General of the Ministry of Decentralisation and Local Development, representatives of the regions of France and Cameroon, municipalities from France and Cameroon, AIRF, AIMF and investors from France.

Alain Blaise Batongue, a member of the Jeicom21 steering committee, presented the national strategy for the mobilisation of funding and the involvement of companies based in Cameroon. It appears from this

presentation that a month before the Jeicom21 took place, mobile phone and ICT companies, breweries, waste treatment companies and many others had already agreed to participate.

As for MINDDEVEL's speech, it was preceded by the broadcasting of a 13-minute film, in which investors and political authorities such as **André Flahaut** (Belgian Minister of State), **Arnaud Ngatcha** (Deputy Mayor of Paris in charge of International Cooperation and Francophonie), **Pierre Baillet** (Secretary General of AIMF), affirmed their commitment to support Jeicom21.

Minister **Georges Elanga Obam**, who presided over the ceremony, recalled that this event has obtained the Very High Patronage of the President of the Republic. He stated that *"The Councils International Economic Forum provide a space for dialogue between the territories bearers of projects with high economic and social added value, the decision-makers, the entrepreneurs as well as the investors."*

The format chosen for the exhibitions and panel discussions will allow each RLA to present its potential, but also to better capture the opportunities".



Presentation ceremony of Jeicom21 at the Hilton Hotel in Yaounde on 16th October 2021

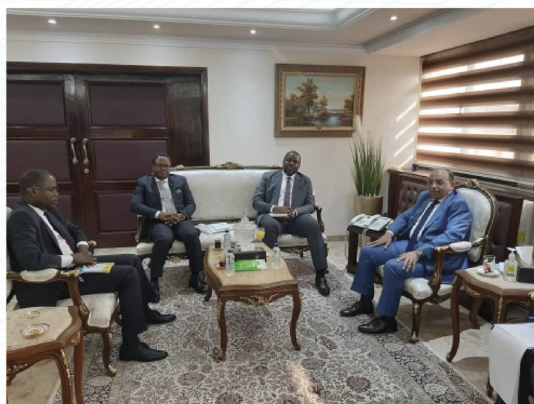


2 THE MOBILISATION OF INVESTORS AND PARTICIPANTS

As part of the organisation of Jeicom21, exploratory missions were organised in the following locations:

- In **Europe** (France, Belgium, Switzerland and Luxembourg);
- In **West Africa** (Benin, Ivory Coast and Rwanda);
- In **North Africa** (Egypt, Tunisia and Morocco);
- In **South Africa** (The Republic of South Africa);
- In **the Near and Middle East** (Turkey, China, Saudi Arabia and Vietnam);
- In **Latin America** (Brazil);
- In **Northern America** (the USA and Canada).

Various delegations of mayors travelled to nearly nineteen (19) countries to attract investment funds, investors, project leaders, local authorities, elected officials, administrations, and even the diaspora to the first Councils International Economic Forum.



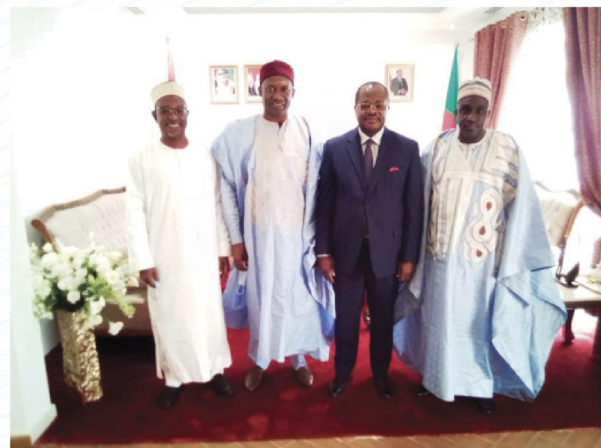
Missions for the mobilisation of partners and foreign investors (Egypt- Italy-France)

While the organisation committee led the mobilisation of national participants. The President of UCCC and mayors were deployed within ministries and the general directorates of public enterprises, to present this concept and highlight how important it is for administrations to be involved in this event. Teams were set up within UCCC to provide information to mayors and to assist them in registering.



Mobilisation in Ivory Coast

Preparatory meeting of Jeicom21



Mobilisation mission in the Republic of Turkey

Audience granted to Mr Armand Claude ABANDA, the representative-resident of AICS Cameroon



In addition, Alain Blaise Batongué, who was representing Scope, and Willy Ngassa, acting on behalf of Easy Event, were responsible for mobilising enterprises based in Cameroon. In the end, nearly twenty enterprises took part in this event, especially by taking booths and registering for the thematic discussions. These enterprises included: Camtel, Camtech, Société Générale, Afriland first Bank, Hysacam and more. (The list of participants is appended hereto).

- **The outcome of the mobilisation**

More than nineteen (19) countries were visited to mobilise investment funds, development partners, local authorities and experts for the brainstorming session, which will be together with the projects presentation and the deployment of the local authorities' booth, one of the highlights of the Councils International Economic Forum (Jeicom21) for the development of the territories.

Twenty-two (22) nationalities were able to take part in Jeicom21 in Yaounde.



Countries present during Jeicom21

3 THE ORGANISATION OF JEICOM21

The organisation of this unprecedented event was placed under the responsibility of a Steering Committee chaired by Augustin Tamba, the Mayor of Yaounde VII and National President of UCCC. A strategic group made up of experts in each project field, with some being put to the organisation steering committee by sectoral administrations and others by firms associated with the organisation, set up under the coordination of Mr Célestin BEDZIGUI.

Two (02) marketing and research firms worked in collaboration with this strategic group to study the economic potential of the Councils. Experts from the ministries and other institutions assisted in the drafting of the project forms. At the same time, the Implementation Unit worked with service providers for the development of the site, reception, accommodation, transport, communication, marketing, and mobilisation of national partners.

A scientific committee for conferences, headed by Dr Richard Makona, was set up. Marketing consultants (Alain Blaise Batongue, Thierry Ndong) were associated with agencies specialising in events and lobbying (Easy Group), Africa Circle Entertainment, Eric Golf Medias, Africa Mutandi, Emya Vision, and Scoop Vision.



His Majesty Celestin BEDZIGUI

Expert consultant in charge of the elaboration of THE project bank



Alain Blaise BATONGUE

Expert Consultant in charge of the national mobilisation



Dr. Richard MAKON

Expert Consultant in charge of organising the scientific symposium



The steering committee was extended several times to members of the National Executive Bureau and mayors who spontaneously joined the work (Anicet Akoa, Roger Tafam, Garba Soulé, Anthony Mvo, Aboubakar Wakili, Jacquis Kemleu, Gregory Mewanu, HamadouAhiwa, among others).

After the mobilisation of the above-mentioned partners, the presentation of the concept and the implementation of project ideas in Councils, Jeicom21 have effectively been organised around three (03) main axes:

- **The first:** an international symposium on the challenges of decentralization in Cameroon (panels and thematic discussions);
- **The second:** discussions on the setting up and financing of value-added projects in RLA in Cameroon, punctuated by the signing of several memoranda of understanding;



- **The Decentralized Cooperation Day**

This event was launched on 2nd December 2022, at the French Institute in Yaounde (150-seat auditorium), with the arrival of about a hundred students, politicians and especially French elected officials who came to participate in Jeicom21. This is a high-level meeting beforehand, organised by the Cooperation and Cultural Actions Services (**SCAC**), which brought together primarily stakeholders from French territories on a mission (or present) in Cameroon, as well as partners of these territories.

Two (02) discussion panels were set up, followed by exchanges (2x1h30).

The first panel focused on the new dynamics of decentralization in Cameroon as a potential for cooperation between territories. The President of UCCC with the General Secretary of MINDDEVEL took part in this panel.

The second panel dealt more specifically with the Region and Cameroon's new local order. Presidents of the Regional Councils (**notably the President of the Regional Council for the West Region, Dr Hilaire Focka**), mayors, central authorities and local as well as French development partners greatly contributed to this panel. A reception at the French residence (from 6.30 pm) closed this bilateral sequence.



France-Cameroon Decentralised Cooperation Days - on 2nd December 2021 at the French Institute in Cameroon

4 THE HOLDING OF JEICOM21

The opening ceremony was attended by a wide range of participants, including a dozen ministers, members of the diplomatic corps, international organisations, special guests, more than 250 mayors from Cameroon and abroad, as well as more than 1000 guests. This ceremony was marked by several interventions, whose highlight was the opening speech of the Minister of Decentralisation and Local Development, Georges Elanga Obam, the personal representative of the President of the Republic.

Après cette phrase protocolaire, le colloque s'est ouvert sur la thématique générale « Collectivités Territoriales Décentralisées Camerounaises : territoires d'opportunités économiques ».

During three (03) days, the main themes discussed were: "Regional and Local Authorities: territories of economic opportunities" and "Challenges and opportunities of decentralization: sharing experiences". At the operational level, the International Colloquium allowed multiple speakers and experts to take the floor and share their experiences in two (02) plenary sessions, fourteen (14) panels and twenty-three (23) thematic discussion sessions. Alongside the technical discussions in the panels and thematic sessions, interactions between participants and guests continued in the 104 booths and country pavilions set up on the premises of the Yaounde multi-purpose Sports Complex, which were occupied by development partners,



panoramic views of the jeicom21 panel room



donors, international organisations, companies and local authorities.

From these two plenary sessions, it is obvious that the territorial policy must be co-constructed by the State and RLA in Africa to be more relevant. The fourteen panels made it possible to observe, on the one hand, the lack of appropriation by RLA of state economic mechanisms, digital and social economy, as well as international and decentralised cooperation mechanisms.

And on the other hand, the need to train actors around RLA on modern issues of sustainable development and a green transition, digitisation of civil status, agricultural and industrial production, and development of cultural and tourist industries.



Visit of the French boot by the Minister of Decentralization and Local Development and the Ambassador of France to Cameroon



The Jeicom21 village

4.1 The main outcomes

The twenty-three (23) thematic sessions enabled the different actors and partners of RLA to exchange technical and specific points to improve the setting up of projects, the preparation of economic files, and information on procedures and administrative mechanisms with institutional and international partners.

In a nutshell, the following key outcomes have already been achieved by Jeicom21;

4.2 An international symposium structured around

- 14 high-level expert panels;
- 23 specific discussions with foreign enterprises supporting innovative projects, investments funds and development partners;
- 74 panellists and facilitators;
- 36 recommendations and proposals.



Panels and discussions





Panels and discussions



4.3 Developing a dozen partnership platforms

- Establishment of a multi-sectoral partnership platform with Italian SMEs under the supervision of the Italian Ambassador to Cameroon;
- The creation of a cooperation platform between cities and regions from Cameroon and Belgium, under the leadership of the Belgian Minister of State, André Flahaut and the Belgian Ambassador to Cameroon;
- The set-up of a cooperation platform between cities and regions in Cameroon with French enterprises;
- Setting up a multi-sectoral cooperation platform between municipalities and the private sectors in Cameroon with large Brazilian industrial groups;
- A commitment by the Belgian government to support education and training in councils in Cameroon;
- 08 partnerships with Cameroonian SMEs and multinationals present at Jeicom21;
- 14 framework agreements signed between UCCC and various stakeholders present at Jeicom21;
- Signature of a framework agreement between UCCC and a Vietnamese company for the production of rice.

More than a thousand Memoranda of Understanding signed on project maturation, training, technical and financial support formulated as follows:

- **300** Memoranda in the agribusiness/livestock sector (processing and marketing) with multinationals present;
- **275** in the waste management sector (waste recovery and promotion of the green economy) with French and Belgian companies;
- **250** in the water and energy sector with French companies;
- **13** in the construction of basic social services infrastructure with Belgian and Chinese companies;
- **320** in the digital sector with French and Cameroonian companies.

Expressions of interest:

150 in the wood industry and development of social and solidarity economy sectors with Egypt and Italy.



Memoranda signing room



The participants, exhibitors, experts and partners appreciated the cordial and fraternal atmosphere that prevailed throughout the work, specific discussions and partnership negotiations. They agreed on the need to inscribe Jeicom in an institutional tradition and sustain the major achievements of this first historic edition. They also invited UCCC to take part in the effective implementation of these key achievements by obtaining a concrete commitment from councils and the State.

Finally, they invite the president of UCCC to start preparing immediately start preparing for the next edition in 2023.

Jeicom21 could not have been held without the unstinting commitment of His Excellency Mr Paul Biya, Head of State and President of the Republic of Cameroon, who is a relentless promoter of Decentralisation and who agreed to patronise this first edition.









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