



Government of India  
Ministry of Commerce & Industry  
Department of Commerce

Federation of Indian Chambers of  
Commerce and Industry

## INDIA – CENTRAL AFRICA COMMERCIAL FORUM

### Business Partnerships

PARLIAMENTARY PALACE, BRAZZAVILLE, 30-31 MARCH 2009

### SUMMARY REPORT

At the invitation of the Central African States Development Bank and the Indian Government, through the Ministry of Commerce and Industry and the Indian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, nearly three hundred (300) persons representing the business world, the consular services and departments in charge of commerce and industry of the six CEMAC countries plus the Democratic Republic of the Congo, attended the India – Central Africa Commercial Forum on March 30th in the Parliamentary Palace in Brazzaville. This event was intended to strengthen commercial relations between the two environments

In his welcoming speech, Mr. **Anicet G. DOLOGUELE**, Chief Executive of the CASDB stressed the unique character of the India/Central Africa Forum that has been held for the first time.

After having welcomed such large delegations of the CEMAC countries, the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the Indian delegation, Mr. Anicet G. DOLOGUELE explained that the CASDB intention in organizing this Forum was to fulfil one of its missions – that of promoting the development of the private sector in Central African countries.

He insisted on the fact that private investments play a crucial role in the growth of national economies, in creating employment and reducing poverty. However, the private sector lags desperately behind in Central African countries, even though business opportunities are so abundant.

Among the many reasons that justify this situation, the lack of partnerships may be stressed, which constitutes a significant constraint for the development of private projects.

So it is to contribute to reduce this deficit that the CASDB has sought the support of the Indian Government in organizing this Forum whose primary ambition is to bring Indian investors face to face with those of Central Africa in order to build a win-win business partnership.



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His Excellency Mr. H V S MANRAL, Indian Ambassador to the Democratic Republic of the Congo as well as the Republic of Congo, welcomed the initiative in organizing this Forum, which he considers as a meeting point between Indian and African businessmen. He highlighted the expected partnership opportunities between Indian and Central Africa – particularly at the scientific, technical and technological levels.

Mr. **Pradeep Kumar CHAUDHERY**, who is the General Secretary of the Indian Ministry of Commerce and Head of the Indian Delegation, came back to the history of India's relationship with Africa which dates back prior to their independence. He remembered that India expected so much from the Central African countries, having heard of the historical similarity of the two areas. He welcomed the possibility of future cooperation between India and Central Africa, which he would like to be a driving and effective force. While noting the rising power of India, based on its human as well as social assets, he expressed his wish to have Central Africa profit from this good fortune through a dynamic and fair partnership. Finally, he called for the need for agreement between the developing countries so as to support common positions in negotiations carried out at the World Trade Organization (WTO).

Finally, in her opening speech, Ms. **Jeanne DAMBENZET** – the Congo Republic's Minister of Commerce and Supplies – placed the Forum proceedings in a context dominated by the dysfunctioning regulations of the WTO. Therefore, she called for the solidarity between developing countries if they intend to bring their proposals to a successful conclusion aimed at a fair development of commercial exchanges in the context of globalization.

Madam Minister remembered the particular development of India, revolving mainly around training high-level human resources and accentuating the new technologies of information and communication. She also stressed the large-scale natural resources in Central Africa that need to be exploited. The particular nature of these two entities amply justifies their cooperation.

Addressing the case of the Congo, Madam Minister emphasized the economic, scientific and technical cooperation agreement of May 11, 1985 between the two countries that is worth raising by several degrees by a signature – in the near future – of a commercial agreement as well as one for promoting and protecting investments.

The deliberations revolved around six presentations, namely “Investment Opportunities in Central Africa”, “India – Central Africa: A Win-win Partnership (expectations of the Sub-Region)”, “Lessons from the Indian Experience” and “India-Africa Relations – the viewpoint of Business Leaders”.

### **Investment opportunities in Central Africa**



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Developing this theme, Mr. **Béringar Maïna NDOMNABAYE**, CASDB's Director of Studies and Financing, first briefly presented the CEMAC before elaborating the investment opportunities in terms of growth potential as well as the favourable development of the business environment.

Endowed with a common Central Bank (BEAC), the CEMAC countries utilize the CFA Franc. They are also members of the Economic Community of the Central African States (*CEEAC*) which shares aims similar to those of the CEMAC.

Investment opportunities in CEMAC countries relate first of all to the enormous potential of diversified natural resources, whose exploitation requires large-scale investments. There are also other priority sectors, such as:

- Transportation and telecommunication infrastructures;
- Electrical energy;
- Agriculture and Agro-industry;
- Forestry economy
- Husbandry and fisheries;
- Mines and metallurgy;
- Tourist trade and Housing, etc.

Then Mr. NDOMNABAYE brought out the evolving business environment in CEMAC, which is moving in the direction of a greater security for private investments, particularly for direct foreign investments.

### **India – Central Africa: A Win-win partnership (expectations of the Sub-Region)**

Ms. **Béatrice EPAYE**, Central African Republic's Minister of Commerce and Industry intervened in first position on this theme. In her speech, Madam Minister first welcomed the initiative of the CASDB and the Indian Federation of Chambers of Commerce. She then brought out how important a business climate is in facilitating the emergence of a dynamic, competitive, and job producing private sector, one that contributes to poverty reduction. Aware of that need, the Central African Republic's political authorities have set up a number of reform measures, namely:

- Organizing a inclusive political Dialogue that has enabled the reconciliation between the sons and daughters of their country;
- Setting up and single window for business formalities, facilitating the creation of businesses in terms of cost and time savings;



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- Establishing a consultatory framework between the private sector and the State;
- Organizing elections to the Chamber of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Craft industries with executive members elected in conformity with the statutes of the chamber;
- The National Investments Charter, modelled on the community charter, is being revised, aimed at encouraging the development of Small and Medium Enterprises;
- Developing a draft Business Code and bringing national texts into compliance with OHADA and WTO regulations;
- Organizing a Round Table on business, the private sector, regional integration and employment.

In relation to the expectations of the Sub-Region, Ms. Minister stressed the need to organize a genuine spirit of solidarity and an exchange of experiences around the India/Central Africa partnership.

In turn, and speaking on the same theme, Mr. **Philippe André FUTA**, Minister of the Economy and Commerce of the Democratic Republic of the Congo reminded the participants of the draft agreement between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and India in 1973 which not only allowed the establishment of an assembly line for buses in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, but especially to enable the country to profit from credit lines in the area of urban transport, of commerce and in the agricultural domain. He noted that his country profited from a credit line of 750 million USD in 2008. India has activities in the mining, foundries, pharmaceutical and general business sectors in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. DRC expectations currently focus on implementing an assembly line for tractors and agricultural equipment.

Finally, on the same theme, Mr. **Yaya MOUSSA**, resident representative of the IMF in the Congo insisted on the necessity of giving particular importance on human resources in the Sub-Region through Education and Training. He seized the occasion of the Forum to present his project to create a Business School.

### **Lessons of the Indian Experience**

During his speech, Mr. **Muykund CHOUDHARY**, General Director of the Spentex Industries, presented the Indian Federation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, which was founded in 1997 in order to sustain the development of the private sector in India. He stressed that there are roughly 220,000 businesses in India for an active population of 20 million. In general, he reiterated the points that constitute the strength of Indian businessmen, namely: respect for commitments undertaken,



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respect for laws and regulations in force, training human resources according to the highest standards. Finally, he insisted on the importance of training.

Following the speech of Mr. Mukund CHOUDHARY, the members of the Indian delegation presented one after another their areas of activity and the opportunities for investment in Africa, particularly in agriculture, industry and infrastructures, etc..

### **India/Africa relations, seen by business leaders**

After their Indian counterparts, Central African business leaders intervened to communicate their viewpoints concerning India/Central African relations. So Mr. **Serge SINGA**, a Central African Republic businessman, insisted that the India/Central African partnership be considered as a win-win and not win-buy relationship.

Mr. **Paul OBAMBI**, Head of the Brazzaville Chamber of Commerce, returned to the subject of Central African potential, not only in terms of natural resources, but also business opportunities links to the existence of investment charters, international agreements (APE, AGOA), duty-free zones, etc.. The Head of Brazzaville's Chamber of Commerce perceives in the assets of these Central African countries and the current potential of India as reasons for the two entities to maintain a driving and mutually beneficial partnership.

Lastly, Mr. **DODO BALU** of the Democratic Republic of the Congo requested that the intervention area of the CASDB be expanded to the CEEAC so as to allow it to support productive investments in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

### **Recommendations**

Coordinate the various commercial agreements that have been signed by the Central African States with India so as to reach a global India/Central Africa agreement.

Set up an India/Central Africa fund to accompany Small and Medium size businesses.

Open the owner equity of the CASDB to India - following the example of the *BOAD* - in order to consolidate the development financing resources of Central African States.

Establish Indo-African industries in the sectors where India possesses proven know-how.



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Create a large bilingual business school in Central Africa whose purpose is to train business promoters and human resource managers, sponsored by India.

Maintain systematic agreement among developing countries so as to support common positions in the negotiations within the WTO framework.