

Progress, Challenges and Prospects for Climate Policy in Cameroon

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Introduction

Cameroon is at a turning point in its environmental policies. Significant progress has been made in tackling the problem of climate change. Indeed, conventions have been ratified, laws enacted, strategies and action plans implemented, and so on ([Nchofoung et al, 2023](#)). However, persistent challenges remain, highlighting the need for bold, innovative approaches to ensure a greener future for generations to come. In this article, we will examine the progress of green policies in Cameroon, highlighting the measures taken by the government, the growing role of the private sector, and future prospects for a transition to sustainable development.

1. Government action on climate change and green growth.

Cameroon ratified the United Nations Framework on Climate Change (1992), the Kyoto Convention (2002) and the Paris Climate Agreement (2016), which supported the preparation of several national policy documents. These included the first and second national communications, the PNACC and the NDCS ([NDC, 2021](#)). Legal and regulatory provisions were issued for the energy, water, forestry and environment sectors, providing an initial basis for stakeholders to tackle climate change ([Kompas et al, 2018](#); [Norrington-Davies, 2011](#)).

The government has strengthened the legal foundations of the Ministry of the Environment, Natural Protection and Sustainable Development (MINEPDED) and its agency, the National Climate Change Observatory (ONACC), as well as the coordination mechanisms responsible for climate change. At sub-national level, the 2019 decentralization defines the government's capacity to manage risks and includes provisions for climate risk and vulnerability assessment ([World Bank, 2022](#); [World Bank 2023b](#)).

Cameroon lacks a comprehensive regulatory framework for achieving adaptation and decarbonization objectives. No law obliges public institutions to include climate change in their instruments or budgets. The NDC and the PNACC are not legally binding, and the former does not emphasize climate change adaptation and mitigation. Finally, there are gaps in knowledge, modelling tools and the difficulty of promoting and defending adaptation within companies and the population ([Kouam, 2019](#); [Nzouankeu, 2021](#)).

Disaster prevention, mitigation and management are not regulated, but are entrusted to the Directorate of Civil Protection (DCP) under the Ministry of Territorial Administration (MINAT) ([Décret 2005/104](#)). However, they tend to intervene after a disaster has occurred and are not guided by explicit legislation ([Bang, 2021](#)).

Functional responsibilities are strengthened at MINEPDED, but not in the other ministries that support NDC implementation. Coordination, implementation and monitoring of a country's NDCs are determined by MINEPDED and its agency (the National Observatory on Climate Change), and their mandate has been strengthened in recent years. In 2012, Decree 2012/431 set out the Ministry's organic structure, and a subdivision in charge of climate change reporting to the Natural Resources Conservation and Management Directorate was created in 2012. The ONACC decree was amended in 2019, giving it powers to monitor and assess the socio-economic impacts of climate change and propose preventive measures ([Order 025/PM, February 17, 2017](#)). Effective coordination prevents overlapping mandates and conflicting roles between sectoral ministries and agencies (ONACC, 2019).

The decrees creating MINEPDED, ONACC and the Comité interministériel de suivi et de coordination de l'Accord de Paris are useful, but that there are no specific roles for other institutions competent in climate change ([Grijzen, 2022](#), [World Bank, 2023](#)). Nor does MINEPDED have direct authority to implement climate policy, and the fragmentation of responsibilities between several institutions and different parts of government makes coordination difficult.

2. Government measures to combat environmental damage.

Cameroon's previous budgets did not include funding or fine mechanisms to encourage less environmentally damaging investments. The amounts of fines stipulated below are set according to the severity of the actions that harm the environment. Fines in the maritime sector are governed by Ordinance n°62- OF-30 of March 31, 1962, the Cameroon Merchant Marine Code.

However, the provisions relating to fines in the civil aviation sector are those set out in Law no. 2013/010 of July 24, 2013 governing civil aviation in Cameroon (Article 36, Finance Law, 2024). The provisions relating to fines in the rail sector are those set out in Law no.

2023/10 of July 25, 2023 governing the rail sector in Cameroon (Article 37, Finance Law, 2024).

Type of environmental infringement	Category	Amount (FCFA)
Inability to carry out a control, inspection or monitoring of environmental and social management plans	Project subject to an environmental and social impact notice	500, 000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a summary environmental and social audit	5, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a detailed environmental and social audit	15, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a detailed environmental and social audit	30, 000,000
	Project subject to a strategic environmental assessment	30, 000,000
Not restoring or rehabilitating polluted or degraded sites	Project subject to an environmental and social impact notice	30, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a summary environmental and social audit	15, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a summary environmental and social audit	50, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social	100, 000,000

	<p>impact assessment or a detailed environmental and social audit</p> <p>Project subject to a strategic environmental assessment</p>	
Waste dumping		10 000 000
Creation of illegal or spontaneous dumps		2 000 000
Oil spills on land		10 000 000
Oil spills in maritime areas under Cameroonian jurisdiction		500 000 000
Dumping of waste in maritime areas under Cameroonian jurisdiction		250 000 000
Ballast water discharge in waters under Cameroonian jurisdiction		50 000 000
Odor emissions beyond tolerated thresholds	Project subject to an environmental and social impact notice	500,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a summary environmental and social audit	3, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a	10, 000,000
	Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a	20, 000,000

	<p>detailed environmental and social audit</p> <p>Project subject to a strategic environmental assessment</p>	
<p>Failure to submit half-yearly follow-up reports on environmental and social management plans over a one-year period</p>	<p>Project subject to an environmental and social impact notice</p>	300,000
	<p>Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a summary environmental and social audit</p>	2, 000,000
	<p>Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a detailed environmental and social audit</p>	5, 000,000
	<p>Project subject to an environmental and social impact assessment or a detailed environmental and social audit</p>	10, 000,000
	<p>Project subject to a strategic environmental assessment</p>	
<p>Noise and odor nuisances beyond standards in residential and industrial areas</p>		1, 000,000
<p>Failure to submit half-yearly waste management reports over a one-year period</p>		2, 000,000
<p>Marketing and importing chemical substances without prior authorization or consent</p>		5, 000,000
		5, 000,000

<p>Possession of obsolete, banned hazardous and/or toxic chemical substances</p>		<p>100,000</p>
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Source : [Finance Law 2024](#)

These measures, a first for the government, will improve corporate responsibility and reduce the negative impact on the environment. Nevertheless, these measures need to be implemented with approaches that are conducive to business operations, in order to achieve a healthier environment and strengthen compliance with environmental standards in Cameroon.

The role of the private sector in climate financing and green growth.

Climate and green financing in Cameroon is heavily dominated by public-sector players. The private sector contributes very little. According to the [African Development Bank Group \(2023\)](#), around 97.4% of climate financing comes from public resources. Most of this funding comes from multilateral development institutions (around 77.2%), followed by the government (17.7%). Only 2.6% comes from the private sector (Ibid). Yet the private sector can play a decisive role in high-impact climate action. In this context, and given the limited budgetary room for maneuver of public authorities, it is fundamental to support and strengthen private sector participation, through integrated policies and adapted financing choices ([Ngum et al, 2019](#)).

However, some Cameroonian companies are obtaining financing from international lenders to fund green projects, including the African Development Bank and the European Union; and [local lenders](#) such as Société Générale Cameroun (SGC), Standard Chartered Bank Cameroun (SCB), Attijari-SCB Cameroun, and Banque Internationale du Cameroun pour L'Epargne et le Crédit (BICEC) ([Ndueh, 2024](#)).

There are several reasons why the private sector's involvement or participation in meeting the financial needs of climate and green growth is lagging behind ([ADB, 2023](#); [Asongu & Odhiambo, 2021](#)). On the one hand, the complexity of the regulatory and administrative framework and the lack of infrastructure limit private sector involvement ([Kouam, 2021](#)). On the other hand, limited access to financing and low levels of professional training and technical expertise are major obstacles. As a result, major steps need to be taken to break down these barriers in order to boost private sector participation and encourage it to play a more decisive role.

Recommendations.

Cameroon's national report on climate and development identifies four priorities for addressing climate risks and providing opportunities for a green, resilient and inclusive future:

- Build a climate-resilient agriculture, forestry and land-use system to integrate adaptation and mitigation measures and advance sustainable development in all agricultural and ecological zones of the country.
- Integrate the impacts and risks of climate change into the design, greening, planning and financing of cities to improve the resilience and well-being of people in urban areas. A regional, parliamentary and local committee should be formed to assess the implications of climate change and ensure that policies are adopted to integrate climate considerations into every public sector ministry and office.
- Invest in sustainable, adaptive infrastructure to bridge the large infrastructure deficit and improve the quality of life of every Cameroonian ([Kouam & Kouam, 2022](#)). A more favorable business environment and fiscal space gives authorities more options to finance climate action through means other than borrowing, limiting the loss of GDP and enabling slightly faster growth.
- Adopt a holistic approach where resilience and adaptation will involve community-based approaches, strong commitment from citizens and local levels of government, and synergies with all relevant systems and sectors.

Conclusion.

Cameroon has made significant progress in terms of green policies. However, the urgency and magnitude of the climate and environmental problem require these policies to be improved and strengthened for a greener future. Enacted laws need to be further implemented with incentives for the private sector.

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