

# CAMEROON-OIC COOPERATION: THE RESULTS OF THE FOREIGN AFFAIRS BETWEEN CAMEROONIAN AND THE ARAB STATES 1974-2018

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## ABSTRACT

*The Organization of the Islamic Cooperation (OIC) – Called Organisation of Islamic Conference is an international organization founded in 1969, consisting of 57 member states, with a collective population of over 1.8 billion, with 53 countries being Muslim-majority. Is the second largest Intergovernmental Organization after the United Nation. On August 1969 a fire was started in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem. Amin al-Husseini, the former Mufti of Jerusalem, called the arson a "Jewish crime" and called for all Muslim heads of state to convene a summit. OIC was created on décision of the Summit Islamic view in Rabat to the Kingdom of the Morocco, the 25 September 1969, after the Criminal situation of al-Aqsa in Jérusalem occupied by Israel. While the al-Aqsa fire is regarded as one of the catalysts for the formation of the OIC, many Muslims have aspired to a pan-islamic institution that would serve the common political, economic, and social interests of the ummah (Muslim community) since the 19th century. According to its charter, the OIC aims to preserve Islamic social and economic values; promote solidarity amongst member states; increase cooperation in social, economic, cultural, scientific, and political areas; uphold international peace and security in Cameroon.*

**Keywords :** *OIC, Cameroonian, Coopération, BID, BAD. Al Aqsa.*

## INTRODUCTION

Afro-Arab cooperation seems to accelerate the establishment of an economic and religious policy in the Lac Chad Basin which the Gulf Cooperation Council has lacked during its two

decades. Indeed, the Arab states after the Arab-Israeli conflict decided to create an Arab Organization in Rabah to attract the states of sub-Saharan Africa. This (OIC), otherwise known as the Organization of the Islamic Conference, is the second largest Intergovernmental Organization after the United Nations with fifty-seven (57) member states. It wants to be the voice of the Muslim world, of which it ensures the safeguard and the protection of the interests. It also participates in safeguarding international peace by promoting harmony between different peoples. The OIC was created by decision of the Islamic Summit held in Rabat, Kingdom of Morocco, on September 25, 1969, following the arson of the al-Aqsa Mosque in occupied Jerusalem (Rabat Islamic Summit 1969). In 1970, the first Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CMAE) held in Jeddah, by this way, Saudi Arabia, decided to create a General Secretariat headquartered in this Saudi city, Yousef Ahmed Al Othaimen is the eleventh Secretary General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference since November 17, 2017, a post he holds following the resignation of his compatriot Iyad Amine Madani. The current charter, adopted by the 11th Islamic Summit held in Dakar on March 13 and 14, 2008, sets the objectives of the Organization as well as the means aimed at strengthening solidarity and cooperation between the Member States of which Cameroon is part (11th Dakar Islamic Summit, March 2008). Cameroon joined the OIC in June 1974, during the 5th Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers (CFM) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from June 21 to 25, 1974. The OIC Intervention in Cameroon, conducted under the Saudi leadership, is a joint force action of the Arab States in Cameroon, because the Saudis have always shown themselves to be servile with other OIC member states by their current of hegemonic thoughts, both on religious and economic issues and the Afro-Arab diplomacy. This is what justifies the expression of its diplomacy with regard to Cameroon (5th Islamic Conference (CMAE) in Kuala Lumpur in Malaysia, June 1974).

## **THE NEEDS FOR SAUDI ARABIA TO GET CLOSER TO AFRICA**

This Saudi position with the African states is almost in line with the threat of the Arab Spring because the Arab Spring to give the opportunity to this oil emirate to be at the helm of this movement of Islamic solidarity within the community. Arab, a solidarity whose objective is to preserve the Arab-Islamic culture in Africa left by the departure of the Libyan Guide Colonel

Gaddafi with the action of NATO and President Mubarak, released by the Obama Administration. After the loss of these Arab allies, the Saudi Kingdom immediately resumed its financial support for Cameroon's development projects in the early 2000s. We also remember that at the Dakar Islamic Summit in December 1991, Saudi Arabia have immediately canceled Cameroon's debt (Dakar Islamic Summit, December 1991). If it is clear that among the member states of the OIC, only Saudi Arabia remains at the center of Arab geopolitical concerns, which state is held by religion and its oil? David Rigoulet Rose, analyzes the radical change in the image of Saudi Arabia following the attacks of September 11, 2011, when the image of Saudi Arabia has radically changed in the eyes of the Western world. From then on, the Kingdom suddenly appeared as the incarnation of an obscurantist nation (that of Osama bin Laden), cradle of Islamic fanaticism and Jihad (D. Rigoulet Rose, 2005: pp312). Yet according to the author, the Saud clan was once considered an ally of the West after having been seen as a moderate and an oil ally of the free world during the Cold War and had also attributed in 1991 an international force deployed against Saddam Hussein. But since the attacks of September 11, 2001, Saudi Arabia has isolated itself on the international scene. Faced with this situation, the country has therefore decided to reactivate its diplomacy towards other countries, particularly those of Africa in general and Cameroon in particular. The September 11, 2001 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon prompted Saudi Arabia to review its alliances with Africa. This is what justifies this Saudi diplomatic in Cameroon in order to finance the projects brought to the OIC, which is headquartered in Saudi Arabia. This financial support is also materialized through the Saudi Development Fund (SDF), which is the Saudi agency responsible for administering financial assistance and providing funding for projects brought to the attention of Saudi Arabia.

## **THE ARAB POSITION AFTER THE SIX-DAY WAR OF 1967 AND THAT OF YOM KIPPUR 1973**

This Arab position after the six-day war of 1967 and that of Yom Kippur 1973 and especially with the world oil shock that accompanied it, ended up causing a unilateral rupture between Cameroon and the State of Israel (Leon Cesar Dogo, 2016: pp50- 68). This break is verified through promises of cheap oil and Arab financial aid, as well as alignment with a resolution of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) under the Gamal Abdel Nasser era, calling for a

break with Israel. This rupture with Israel is also the result of a manifestation of solidarity with Egypt because the resumption of these relations testifies to the breathlessness of Arab-Cameroonian relations of which the United Arab Republic of Egypt is the first Arab state. with which Cameroon maintains diplomatic relations as a sovereign state (Kerdum, 1987: p.13). These relations then extend to all Arab States as far as the Gulf. It then developed over time with the creation in September 1973 of the Islamic Development Bank ( Bitar and Madiès, p293-310) and of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) in 1969 including the headquarters are in Jeddah (Islamic Summit in Rabat, September 1969). This financial support also materializes through the Arab Solidarity Fund (ASF) which are Arab agencies responsible for administering financial assistance and granting funding for projects brought to the attention of the founding Arab States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. This Arab initiative also obeys a politico-ideological and confessional logic. The OIC intends to assert itself, on the one hand, as an agency responsible for administering financial assistance and on the other hand, to provide funding for projects. This desire to integrate African actors into the geographical framework of the Arab Gulf States and the Middle East as member states of the OIC also seems directly linked to concerns raised by the foreign policy of post-Mubarak Egypt. The Saudi initiative backed by the United Arab States falls far short of the officially declared consensus. Following the Gulf War of 1991, they entered into cooperation agreements with the states of Sub-Saharan Africa. Unlike the opposite countries (the West), Cameroon in its march towards emergence should in principle capitalize its relations with the classic States with which it maintains diplomatic relations so that it can compete with the countries such as: France, the United Kingdom, the United States, China (Salem,1986: p.133). However, it emerges that the challenge of revitalizing it rests in the first place on the Islamic community (ummah), which the writings of Hamadou Adama mentioned. This cooperation signed in Rabah in the Egyptian capital with the bilateral cooperation agreement which had been initialed on the Cameroonian side by Ahmadou Ahidjo and on the Saudi side by his majesty Sultan Faysal Bin Abdul Aziz Al Saoud was an old idea of Saud diplomacy and Ahmadou Ahidjo who subsequently extended these cultural and Islamic relations to a wide range of Gulf states, Maghreb countries and Sub-Saharan Africa under the leadership of Saudi Arabia and in especially of his strong man Faysal



## **THE CAMEROON'S MEMBERSHIP IN THE OIC AND THE ISLAMIC COMMUNITY**

Cameroon joined the OIC in June 1974, during the 5th Islamic Conference of Ministers of Foreign Affairs (CFM) held in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, from June 21 to 25, 1974. This position of Cameroon to the OIC and to the Islamic Community the (ummah) has given rise to debates within the scientific community. Some authors believe that Cameroon would be attracted by the wealth of the Arab states. In addition, Hamadou Adama estimates that “long before the arrival of the first Europeans in the Lac Chad Basin at the end of the 19th century, relations were established between the Lac Chad Basin and the Arabian Peninsula and the roads to Mecca”. Charbel recalls on this subject that the Afro-Arab cooperation project was already developed during the sixties by Egypt and the black continent with the oil revolution of the 1970s which made it (Arab world) a supplier of important help with Sub-Saharan Africa (Zarour, 1989: p133). Contrary to the classic binding help from the West, Zarour presents the Afro-Arab at the Cairo Summit in 1977 as the catalyst for this cooperation insofar as it developed the principles of this cooperation (OIC). A summit which comes at a time when Africa was faced with a particularly difficult economic and security situation linked to the inadequacy of the development models inspired by these northern development agencies and revisits its reflection on a possible extension of the cooperation between Arabs and Africans. On the other hand, on this subject that international news and the geopolitics of international relations in the Middle East since the end of the cold war is the result of analysis of the different views of the reformulation of membership modes ideological and changes in forms of Islamic expansion relating to the Saudi people. Likewise, since the Arab Spring, Le Pautremat has shown that ethnic and confessional antagonisms are particularly intense, while the strategic logics of lobbying persist and adapt to the Arab-African situation. This is marked by a cross-cutting jihadism, the base of which was built on a Syrian-Iraqi axis (Pascal Le Pautremat, 2011). It is therefore after the Arab Spring that the Arab States, aware of their coveted energy asset, were able - despite their differences - to organize themselves within the Organization of the Islamic Conference created in 1969 whose headquarters are in this region Saudi city, birthplace of Islam.

## **THE RELIGIOUS AND COMMERCIAL FOUNDATIONS IN THE RAPPROCHEMENTS OF CAMEROON-OIC COOPERATION**

The expansion of Islam in Sub-Saharan Africa has often been equated with the spread of Sufi brotherhoods (tariqa). Nevertheless, such an observation must be qualified because the existence of the highlands of Christian Ethiopia functioned as a dam, unlike the Sahara, as shown in the text of Emmanuel Grégoire and Jean Schmitz (Grégoire and Schmitz, 2000: pp5). Indeed, this Saudi desire to use Islam for political ends is as old as the very birth of the Kingdom. In 1956, Prince and future King Faisal declared that “Islam should be at the center of the kingdom's foreign policy. The search for Islamic unity materialized to the relief of the Saudi Kingdom with the creation in Rabat for the Organization of the Islamic Conference (O.C.I). We can say that the foundations of relations between Cameroonian and the OIC are almost identical to those of Afro-Arab relations. This cooperation between Cameroonian and the Organization of the Islamic Conference also has similarities to the so-called asymmetric one observed between Arabs and Africans, for which several reasons were mentioned, in particular the introduction of the camel which dates back to before the Christian era, will allow the development of Trans-Saharan exchanges between the Cameroon and its Arab OIC Member States (Grégoire and Schmitz 2000: pp7). These camels, well adapted to the climatic context, are not only used for the movement of people and goods but also for warlike purposes. Over the centuries, a series of empires in the Sahel have followed one another that owed their power to the Trans-Saharan trade and more particularly to the gold brought back to the Arabs by African merchants (Grégoire,2000, pp87). Jean Schmitz recalls that in the 18th and 19th centuries, a whole series of more territorialized Muslim States appeared at the end of the meridian corridors of trans-Saharan trade from the years 1968 and developed by becoming stages or points of convergence of commercial networks and flows linked the Lac Chad Basin (Schmitz, 2000, pp117). It must be said that the pilgrimage to Mecca and the trans-Saharan trade have, in fact, been the most determining factor in the rapprochement between Cameroon and the Arab member states of the OIC. Caravan routes were established long before the arrival of Islam. According to Grégoire, the camel was introduced shortly before the Christian era and it was this introduction that facilitated the development of trans-Saharan trade between Cameroonian and these Arab Emirates members of the OIC. It should be noted that thanks to

this trans-Saharan trade, other African cities, namely Timbuktu, Gao and Djenné, have acquired a cultural and Islamic reputation (Grégoire and Schmitz, 2000, pp12). Cameroon should align itself in this direction with these so-called Arab organizations because these Arab organizations have financed considerable projects in Cameroon. Let's note in the early 1970s that thanks to the resources of these Emirates, Cameroon will have benefited from exchanges and would have become a real ally of the countries of the Arab Gulf because their relations have been limited until recently to the pilgrimage to Mecca only: nationals of Cameroon, went on foot to make the pilgrimage to the holy places of Islam. This cooperation is also based on the religious factor of which Islam is the bearer. Islam appeared in Africa seven years after the death of the prophet Mohammad in 639, but its penetration into the land of Africa was latent, because it took two paths, one passing through Egypt and the Maghreb and the other by West Africa or the Arabs founded trading posts (Grégoire and Schmitz, 2000, pp12). While knowing that it is difficult to conclude a subject as rich as that of the presence of Islam in Cameroon, we can nevertheless make a few remarks: the pilgrimage to Mecca becomes the oldest network of communication between Cameroon and the Gulf States because the Islamic religion was the first contact between Cameroon and the Arab States given that Islam is the second religion in Cameroon after Christianity. From this religious factor was born a complex but beneficial cooperation between Cameroon and the OIC. The country will thus have benefited from the assistance of the Arab Funds in various fields. This justifies Cameroon's membership in the Organization of the Islamic Conference. From the 1950s onwards, the use of the plane made it possible to organize pilgrimages, particularly on the occasion of the Hajj or the Umrah (ibid). It was during this period that relations between Cameroon and these Arab peoples, however very distant and without previous close contact, began to be woven. They intensified after the accession to independence of Cameroon and with the oil shocks of the seventies which increased them very significantly, so that countries like Saudi Arabia ended up taking an interest in Cameroon and opened up their diplomatic representation. The main objective was to increase the influence of Islam in Cameroon, especially the Wahhabi current of thought of which Saudi Arabia is the cradle, but also to spread Islamic culture and the Arabic language in Africa. In this way, these Emirates undertook some development operations among which, Kuwait, also strong of its oil revenues, adopted a similar attitude, as well as a sign of recognition. Finally, Abu Dhabi also has the Abu Dhabi Development Fund (ADDF), and countries such as Qatar and the United Arab Emirates have created joint bilateral commissions

with Cameroon. This cooperation is the result of a centuries-old dimension of which Islam and the trans-Saharan trade remain the main vectors. Nevertheless, since the 1980s and 1990s, we have witnessed the increasing reactivation of contacts between Cameroon and the Arab East. It emerges from which that this cooperation between Cameroon and the OIC fits almost in this theory of independence, where the Platonic realist theory which develops realism as a doctrine according to which the sensitive appearances and the individual beings are only the reflection. Whereas Saint Thomas tries to give a societal description following the combined points of view of a political philosophy based on the observation of cultural realities (Islam as an Afro-Arab cultural rapprochement in the Lac Chad Basin). It goes without saying that this cooperation between Cameroon and the OIC is part of this so-called realistic theory because this cooperation is deployed in a set of areas that constitute its field of action and achievement. Since then, the two parties have developed multifaceted cooperation relations in the political, economic and cultural fields.

## **POLITICAL COOPERATION WITH THE OIC**

This cooperation is reflected the presence of Cameroon's in OIC activities and visits between the two parties. The creation in December 1997 of the post of Minister Delegate to the Minister of External Relations in charge of Relations with the Islamic World (MINDELMI), gave this cooperation a new impetus. This impulse is justified by the participation of Cameroon in the VI Summit of Kings, Heads of State and Government of the OIC held in Dakar, from December 9 to 12, 1991, of which Cameroon was represented by the Prime Minister, Head of Government. At the 13th OIC Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, april 14-15, 2016 and by the Minister Delegate to the Presidency of the Republic in charge of Relations with the Assemblies, at the 12th Summit held in Cairo, Egypt, from February 2 to 7, 2013. This amendment to the Charter of the organization relating to its name was ratified on December 18, 2018. In addition, the 38th session gave rise to the establishment of the Permanent and Independent Commission on Human Rights (CPIDH), through the election of its members, in particular that of Oumar Abou Abba, Consul General of Cameroon in Jeddah. And, following the very high agreement of the Head of State, the latter's candidacy was endorsed, for a second term of three (03) years from August 2016, during the 13th OIC Summit, held in Istanbul in Turkey, from April 14 to



15, 2016. The said Summit proceeded to the election of nine (09) expert members of the CPIDH and designated the city of Jeddah in Saudi Arabia, to house the seat of the Commission. The Cameroonian delegation led by the Cameroonian Ambassador to Saudi Arabia and permanent representative to the OIC, Iya Tidjani, also took part in the extraordinary session of CFM, held on November 17, 2016, in Mecca, Saudi Arabia. It was during this session that Yousef Ahmed Al Othaimen was elected Secretary General of the OIC. The latter, after taking office, addressed to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, a letter of thanks for the support given to him by the Cameroonian delegation. In addition, Cameroon, through Minister Delegate to the Minister of the foreign affairs in charge of relations with the Islamic World, has participated since 2015 in the coordination meeting of OIC Foreign Ministers which is held each year in New York (United States), on the sidelines of the work of the OIC. United Nations General Assembly. This annual meeting of the OIC reviews all issues of political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. In 2015, Cameroon had the opportunity to educate the participants on the developments of the fight against Boko-Haram and to fix the OIC General Secretariat, on the state of humanitarian needs, following the effects of the Central African crisis. in the Eastern Region and the atrocities of Boko-Haram in the Far North of Cameroon.

This situation had previously led the said Ministers to adopt, during the work of the 42nd and 43rd sessions of the CFM, the Resolutions condemning the activities of the terrorist group Boko Haram in Nigeria and in neighboring countries, as well as on humanitarian assistance to refugees and displaced persons. Minister Delegate to the Minister of the foreign affairs in charge of relations with the Islamic World, represented Cameroon at the 46th session of CFM on the theme "50 years of Islamic Cooperation: Roadmap for Prosperity and Development", held in Abu Dhabi in the United Arab Emirates from the 1st to March 02, 2019 (46th session of CMAE Abu Dhabi from March 1 to 02, 2019). It is also important to note the participation of two OIC experts in the meeting organized in Yaoundé on February 05 and 07, 2015, on security and terrorism in Central Africa, following the Extraordinary Summit of Heads of State and Government of ECCAS on Security in Central Africa. On a regular basis, Cameroon participates, through ministerial delegations or its representatives, in various OIC Sectoral Conferences (46th session of CFM on the theme "50 years of Islamic Cooperation: Road Map for Prosperity and Development», held in Abu Dhabi, United Arab Emirates from March 1 to 2, 2019). In tourism, Cameroon was a member for 3 years (2009-2011) of the Implementation

Committee of the "Framework for Development and Cooperation in the field of Tourism among the OIC Member States 2008-2018; in trade, Cameroon regularly takes an active part in the meetings of the Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation of the OIC Member States (COMCEC) under the chairmanship of Turkey and that of the Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT) in Morocco and participation in Conferences of Ministers of Information, statutory meetings of the OIC Permanent Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs (COMIAC), under the chairmanship of Senegal. At the cultural level, Cameroon participates in the Conferences of Ministers of Culture, in the sessions of the General Conference of the Islamic Organization for Education, Sciences and Culture (ISESCO). In terms of Health, Cameroon to participate in Ministerial Conferences on Health and also in Conferences of Ministers of the Environment. In the case of refugees, a Cameroonian delegation led by the Delegate Minister of the foreign affair in charge of relations with the Islamic World to the Ministerial Conference on Refugees in the Muslim World, in Turkmenistan, from May 10 to 11, 2012. In the area of social affairs, we also note the participation of Cameroon at the 1st Ministerial Conference on the Safeguarding of the Institution of Marriage and the Family, held from 08 to 09 February 2017, in Jeddah (Saudi Arabia) and participation in the OIC meeting on the advancement of women and the family during the 1st Ministerial Conference in Jeddah). In addition, the highest authorities of the organization stayed in Cameroon, namely: the former Secretary General of the OIC, Hamid Al Gabid, visited Cameroon in 1996, on the occasion of the holding in Yaoundé of the Summit of the Organization of African Unity; the former Secretary General, Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu, paid an official visit to Yaoundé on January 28 and 29, 2008. This visit took place just at the 11th Dakar Summit including the election of the Secretary General and the issue of reforms of the organization were the order of the day. These visits allowed Cameroon to consolidate cooperation with the organization. The OIC also supports the ideals and values to Cameroon and Cameroon's in international institutions. It also constitutes an appropriate framework for the development of bilateral relations with other states and the formation of new partnerships with other actors willing to support Cameroon in its development. However, Cameroon's votes in UN bodies on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, one of the OIC's raison. The General Secretariat of this Organization and some member states. Cameroon's position advocating the peaceful resolution of this conflict and the coexistence of two states, Israel and Palestine.

## **ECONOMIC AND FINANCIAL COOPERATION WITH THE OIC**

The cooperation between Cameroon and the OIC in the economic and financial field has developed through instruments such as the general agreement on economic, technical and commercial cooperation signed and ratified in 1978; the agreement on the promotion, protection and guarantee of investments signed and ratified in 1995; the framework agreement on the system of trade preferences between member states. Cameroon has, from 2004 to 2006, actively participated in negotiations aimed at establishing a system of trade and trade preferences among OIC member states. These negotiations resulted in two legal instruments: The Memorandum of Understanding on the Preferential Tariff Scheme (PRETAS) which entered into force in 2010 and the Agreement on the Rules of Origin of Products. Cameroon ratified PRETAS by Decree that, several institutions play a major role in the development and strengthening of economic cooperation with the OIC. These are among others: The Islamic Development Bank (IDB); The Islamic Chamber of Commercial and Industry (CICI); The Islamic Center for the Development of Trade (ICDT); The Islamic Export Credit Insurance and Investment Guarantee Company; The Standing Committee for Economic and Commercial Cooperation (COMCEC) among member states (The 37th session of CFM, May 18-20, 2010 in Dushanbe, Tajikistan). At the national level, the OIC contributes to the financing of several development projects. The Islamic Development Bank particularly plays a role appreciated by the Cameroonian public authorities. Moreover, the very first project financed by this Bank, the day after its creation in 1975, was a Cameroonian project, namely the construction of the Song Loulou hydroelectric dam. The Islamic Development Bank (IDB) intervenes through the granting of loans, technical assistance and private sector financing. Concessional loans generally granted for a repayment term of 20 years with a 10-year grace period, and an administrative charge of 0.75%. Non-concessional loans When it comes to the financing of large scale projects, the conditions attached to this loan are: a repayment period of 15 years with 5 years' deferral and an administrative charge of 5%. Technical assistance, which consists for the Bank in providing know-how and / or technical means to help in the development or implementation of policies or projects, or to help develop the capacities of institutions, organizations, human resources responsible for carrying out these policies or projects.

Several other projects were carried out thanks to the financial support of the (IDB), notably:

CELLUCAM; The village water supply project through 400 boreholes; The Douala-Yaoundé road; The equipment of the Kousséri hospital; The Menchum Integrated Rural Development and Far North Rural Development Project; The SCAN project in Foubot and many other projects on the inventory of forest resources, the construction of two schools in Kousséri and 48 schools in border areas as well as their equipment, the feasibility study of the Fouban-Tibati road, the cereal storage and rehabilitation project of the Cereal Office followed by the Chari-Logone project. Cameroon's economic crisis at the end of the 1980s made cooperation between Cameroon and the IDB less dense, particularly during the 1990s. However, the Cameroonian government compliance with its debt repayment schedules has led his legal partners in their majority to decide to unfreeze the financing of current projects, but also to again show increased interest in our country through the identification and financing of new projects, in particular: The construction of the Ayo Bonis road in the Eastern Region; The construction of the Limbé shipyard; Partial financing of the Fouban-Tibati road; Rural electrification of 33 localities in 4 provinces; The Mont Mappait development project; The basic education support project; the Sangmélima-Ouessou road construction project (Sangmélima-Doum section). In addition, several projects were identified following the mission carried out by the Vice-President of the IDB in Cameroon from April 7 to 15, 2004, namely: The project to build a dam on the Kadéï; The construction of a dam in Lom Pangar; The rehabilitation of 1000 km of tracks, etc. Seven (07) financing projects in the cotton sector with an estimated value of over thirty (30) million euros, were submitted by our country and approved during the 2nd and 3rd meetings of the OIC Project Committee on cotton held on May 11, 2009 and September 27, 2010, respectively in Izmir (Turkey) and Casablanca (Morocco). Funding research has been launched by the OIC General Secretariat on this subject.

## **PROSPECTS FOR CAMEROON-OIC COOPERATION**

In perspective, a rail link project to link West Africa to East Africa, in particular Dakar (Senegal) to the port of Sudan and Djibouti, via Central Africa (in particular Cameroon and Chad), is under study. Cameroon is a member of the Committee of the countries concerned by this project. As requested by the Prime Minister, Head of Government, the N'Gaoundéré-Garoua-Ndjamen route has been proposed for the section of this OIC project in Cameroon. At present, the feasibility of the project and the question of its financing are under examination by



the General Secretariat of the OIC and the IDB. During its 17th meeting held in Istanbul, Turkey on October 4, 2010, the COMCEC requested the OIC General Secretariat to consider the proposal made by the IDB to incorporate this project into the Dakar - Djibouti Railway Project sponsored by the African development bank. The IDB's interventions in Cameroon are mainly oriented towards the financing of public and parapublic sector projects. To date, the Bank's project portfolio in Cameroon shows a total of 82 operations. Cameroon ratified, in 2017, the Temperament Sale Agreement for the financing of the Maternal, Newborn and Child Health Support Project. Financially, Cameroon is contributing, along with other OIC member states through the payment of statutory contributions. In addition to its contributions, Cameroon has often shown, in the form of donations, its support for certain institutions and programs of the organization such as the Islamic Solidarity Fund and the Islamic Foundation for Science, Technology and Development, the Special Program for the Development of Africa (PSDA). Cameroon has also responded to the solidarity appeal launched by the OIC in August 2010 to all member states to provide aid to Pakistan, which is the victim of severe flooding, as well as to Mali facing terrorist attacks. The Government had set up an interministerial committee for the evaluation of Cameroon's contributions to international organizations. The CFM Resolution No. 6/32-AF, the implementing measures of which have been entrusted for examination to the organization's Standing Committee on Finance (CPF), provides for sanctions against States which do not honor their obligation commitments. These sanctions consist of the suspension of the right to apply for any vacant post at the OIC; the suspension of membership or any request for membership of the various bodies, offices and committees; the exclusion of the possibility of hosting conferences, symposia or any other activity of the OIC; suspension of the right to speak during meetings; suspension of voting rights; the suspension or denial of the granting of assistance and facilities at the level of the various institutions of the OIC as well as the financing or financing of projects by the IDB; suspension of membership of the OIC. MINFI was made aware of the opportunity to refer the concessional measures adopted by the 39th session of the CPF (Jeddah, 27 - 29 December 2010) which aim to reduce by 50% the arrears of the States concerned, provided that the latter honor their engagement within three (03) months. Other fields of cooperation with the OIC were put under examination after the conclusions of the sub-regional economic forum OIC / IDB of Yaoundé in June 2010 whose major recommendations were: The opening of credit lines with local banks and other financing institutions to support SMEs in Member States; Improving the capacities of member states to

design and implement projects; The opening of a representation of the IDB in Yaoundé, which will provide information on the activities of its various structures, in particular the financing of private sector projects, trade support, insurance...; IDB support for the establishment and development of business relationships between private operators in participating States and those in IDB member countries, particularly in the Middle East and the Gulf.

## **SCIENTIFIC, TECHNICAL AND CULTURAL COOPERATION**

This cooperation is mainly expressed through Permanent Committees (OIC Standing Committee for Information and Cultural Affairs / COMIAC; Standing Committee for Science and Technology / COMSTECH), subsidiary bodies, in particular the Islamic University of Technology (ITU) of Dhaka in Bangladesh, the Center for Research on History, Art and Islamic Culture (IRCICA), the Center for Statistical, Economic, Social and Training Research for Islamic Countries (SESRIC) as well as through specialized institutions (notably the Islamic organization for education, science and culture / ISESCO) and affiliates such as the Sports Federation of the Games of Islamic Solidarity (ISSF). At the scientific and university level, several young Cameroonians have received training grants from the Islamic University of Technology (ITU) of Dhaka in Bangladesh, which provides practical lessons in fields as diverse as electronics, auto mechanics, refrigeration, electricity. Cameroon, which has sat as a member of the Board of Directors since 2012, is represented by Ibrahima Adamou. During the year 2015-2016, sixteen (16) Cameroonian applications (out of the twenty-five submitted) were selected for the ITU Dhaka scholarship. The interest and the offer of other academic institutions of the OIC (Islamic University of Niger, Islamic University of Uganda), however, remain little exploited. The same is true of relations with COMSTECH. MINESUP sporadically participates in the activities of certain academic bodies of the Organization, such as the Conference of Ministers of Higher Education and Scientific Research of the OIC.

At the cultural level, Cameroon maintains very good relations with ISESCO, the culmination of which is the official visit to Cameroon from May 13 to 15, 2014, by its Director General Abdulaziz Othman Altwaijiri. The Director General of ISESCO was accompanied for the occasion by Abdoulaziz Yaouba, teacher at the Institute of International Relations of Cameroon (IRIC) and Program Specialist within this institution. During this visit to strengthen

cooperation between Cameroon and this specialized institution of the OIC, the Director General of ISESCO was received in audience by the Prime Minister, Head of Government. It should be noted that Cameroon is a member of the ISESCO Executive Council. The creation in 2014 of the ISESCO / FUMI (Federation of Universities of the Islamic World) Chair for Cultural Diversity at IRIC is also in line with this logic, Mouiche Ibrahim is its Coordinator. In addition, a Cameroonian delegation, led by Iya Tidjani, took part in the work of the 9th Islamic Conference of Ministers of Culture held from November 2 to 4, 2015, in Muscat (Sultanate of Oman). During these meetings, Yaoundé was chosen as the capital of Islamic Culture for the African Region in 2022. Other projects are also underway, in particular those relating to the securing of the archaeological site of Bidzar in the North Region and the publication of catalogs from the inventories of museums of traditional chiefdoms in the northern part of Cameroon. Cameroonian delegations also take part in the COMIAC meeting, the 10th session of which was held on April 28 and 29, 2015 in Dakar, Senegal. On the whole, cultural relations with the OIC remain weak. Most of them are limited to participation in meetings of the Organs of the OIC. Cameroon nevertheless contributes to the functioning of bodies such as IRCICA are almost up to date. It would be desirable for Cameroon to benefit from OIC support in this area. A strategy to boost its cooperation with the OIC in this area should therefore be put in place.

## **THE LEGAL FRAMEWORK FOR COOPERATION**

Cameroon signed the statutes of the organization for the development of women in the member states of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation (OIC), on May 06, 2018, on the sidelines of the 45th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the OIC, held from 05 to 06 May 2018 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Cameroon has ratified the following instruments: The General Agreement on Economic and Commercial Cooperation between OIC Member States; The framework agreement on the system of Trade Preferences between member states; the Agreement on the Promotion, Protection and Guarantee of Investments between Member States; The Memorandum of Understanding on the Preferential Tariff Scheme. In addition, and as noted above (point II), Cameroon participated, after its signature and ratification of the framework agreement on the System of Trade Preferences between the member States, in the negotiations (2004-2006) which resulted to PRETAS and to the Rules of Origin of Products.

These instruments aim to increase the volume of trade between member states. Their implementation will ultimately make it possible to initiate the stage relating to the creation of a Common Market in the OIC area. Cameroon signed PRETAS on November 24, 2006. In addition, Cameroon ratified the statute of the Islamic Institute of Standardization and Metrology on July 7, 2000. In addition, during the 7th Session of the Ministerial Conference of the 'OIC for Food Security, held April 26-28, 2016 in Astana, Kazakhstan, Iya Tidjani, Cameroon signed the Statute of the Islamic Organization for Food Security. Other instruments have not been signed and ratified by Cameroon. This is the Statute of the Islamic Civil Aviation Council; The Statute of the Telecommunications Union of Islamic Countries; The agreement establishing the Islamic Committee of the International Crescent; The agreement establishing the organization of the Islamic Association of Shipowners; of the agreement on the subscription of the Capital of the Islamic Naval Society. Certain arrangements to which Cameroon has been invited to subscribe call for a reserved attitude, due to their divergence from our commitments in multilateral treaties concluded under the aegis of the United Nations on the one hand, and their implications in relation to our Policy Foreign on the other hand. They are: The OIC Agreement on Diplomatic Privileges and Immunities; Of the Statute of the International Islamic Court of Justice; Of the OIC Convention on Combating Terrorism. Moreover, it is desirable that some of these agreements be updated.

## **THE PLACEMENT OF CAMEROONIANS IN THE OIC**

After the non-renewal of the candidacy of Tori Limangana, for a second consecutive term for the Post of Deputy Secretary General in charge of Economic Affairs during the elections which took place during the 36th Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held in Damascus in Syria, from 23 to 25 May 2009, Cameroon lost this post to the benefit of the Nigerian Hamid Opeyoye and no longer has compatriots placed at a high level of responsibility within the OIC. Despite the position of Abdoulaziz Yaouba at ISESCO and Mohamadou Oumarou at the OIC General Secretariat. Cameroon is represented on the Boards of Directors. This is the Statistical, Economic, Social and Training Research Center for Islamic Countries (SESRIC), Cameroon's three-year mandate, renewed in 2009, ended in 2011. Cameroon was re-elected for another three-year term (2011-2012). TEDOU Joseph, Director General in charge of the National Institute of Statistics, sits as a member at the Islamic



University of Technology (UIT) of Dhaka, Cameroon is also represented at the International Islamic Press Agency (IINA) with a member of the Board of Directors. Cameroon also served for two terms on the Council of the Islamic Solidarity Fund (ISF). It should be noted that, following the recruitment test for translators which took place on July 7, 2004 in Yaoundé under the supervision of the Director of OIC Conferences, Ahmadou Mohaman retained, was unable to take up his duties, in order to that Cameroon retains this place, the OIC General Secretariat had been requested to proceed with its replacement by one of the Cameroonian candidates placed on the waiting list. This was not successful, nor was the one undertaken following the recruitment as an economist of Oumarou Abdou, on the alleged grounds that a new selection procedure by public call for candidates was underway. Despite these data, Cameroon's presence in the OIC is almost insignificant. A more effective strategy should be deployed to address it. The referral in August 2009 to the OIC Secretary General for placement, Mohamadou Youssoufa, former Consul General of Cameroon in Jeddah, to a position of high responsibility within the OIC General Secretariat, was not crowned with success. This move followed the decision not to renew Tori Limangana's candidacy for the post of OIC Deputy Secretary General for Economic Affairs. Indeed, after PRESICAM's decision to withdraw the Cameroonian candidacy for the Post of Secretary General mentioned above, AMBACAM Riyadh had succeeded in obtaining (in exchange for this withdrawal) from Secretary General Ekmeleddin IHSANOGLU, the principle of positioning two Cameroonians at two posts high ranking. The SG / OIC unfortunately did not keep their promise. Moreover, Cameroon must improve its image within this Organization for which certain member states have often criticized it. At the political level, its position in international fora (UN General Assembly, UN Commission on Human Rights, etc.) concerning the Israeli-Palestinian problem makes Cameroon a country reserved for non-accession or ratification of certain agreements of the organization.

## **THE GOALS OF THE OIC**

The Islamic Summit is held every two (02) years to make political decisions in order to give directives on the achievement of the goals and to consider issues of concern to the member states and the Muslim Community (Ummah). Cameroon has ratified the amendment to Article

8 of the Charter of the OIC Charter adopted at the 44th session of the Council of Foreign Ministers of the Organization, which reduces the holding of the said Summit once every 02 years instead of 03 years. The Council of Foreign Ministers (CMAE), which meets each year, examines the means of implementing the general policy of the Organization by adopting decisions and resolutions on matters of common interest and following their progress. There is an annual Coordination Meeting of Ministers of Foreign Affairs of OIC member countries on the sidelines of each session of the United Nations General Assembly. The General Secretariat, the executive body of the Organization, is responsible for applying the decisions taken by the aforementioned decision-making bodies. To coordinate and drive its action, unify its views and positions, and record tangible results in the fields of political, economic, cultural, social, spiritual and scientific cooperation between the Member States, the Organization has created twenty-one (21) the vast majority of secondary organs at ministerial level. The latter are mainly classified, according to their degree of autonomy from the parent Organization, into Standing Committees, Subsidiary Organs and Specialized or Affiliated Institutions.

### **THE GOALS OF THE ORGANIZATION OF THE ISLAMIC CONFERENCE**

After the Rabat summit (the OIC) its mission is to: Improve and consolidate the bonds of fraternity and solidarity between the member states and safeguard and protect the common interests, support the causes of the member states, coordinate and unify the efforts member states facing the challenges facing the international community in general and the Islamic world in particular; respect the right to self-determination, sovereignty, independence territorial integrity and non-interference in the internal affairs of each member state; Ensure the active participation of Member States in the global decision-making process in the political, economic and social fields, with a view to guaranteeing their common interests; Reaffirm support for the rights of peoples as stipulated by the Charter of the United Nations and by international law; Strengthen intra-Islamic economic and commercial cooperation, with a view to achieving economic integration leading to the creation of an Islamic Common Market; Strive to promote integral and sustainable human development and the economic well-being of member states; Protect and defend the true image of Islam, fight against its defamation and encourage dialogue between civilizations and religions; Promote and develop science and technology, and encourage research and cooperation between member states in these fields.

## CONCLUSION

Cameroon is among the first African States to obtain funding from these Arab organizations. His Cooperation with the Organization of the Islamic Conference is of undeniable interest for both parties and also at multilateral levels, passes through these Arab development organizations which are considered as the financial arms of the African policy of Arab-Muslim countries. Cameroon has continuously benefited from the Arab Solidarity Fund and the Fund from organizations financed by the Organization of the Islamic Conference since the early 1970s. For its part, Cameroon through decades of financial cooperation with the Gulf countries, benefited from Islamic financing estimated at several billion FCFA from international financial institutions such as: the Islamic Development Bank (IDB), the Arab Bank for Economic Development in Africa (BADEA), the Kuwaiti Fund for Arab Economic Development (FKDEA), the Saudi Fund for Development (FSD), the OPEC Fund for Development and the Abu d'Habi Fund for Economic Development of which Cameroon in its march towards emergence would benefit from strengthening and to boost this cooperation, in order to better take advantage of the opportunities which unfortunately do not always exist, particularly within the framework of the Progra Ms. Special of the OIC for the Development of Africa (PSDA), the Fund for the Fight against Poverty or the recommendations of the Yaoundé Forum of June 2010 paving the way for the establishment of a representation of the Islamic Bank of Development in Cameroon. Despite the many opportunities offered in this direction, this cooperation is holding back any real take off when it should be dynamic in this period of international economic crisis. In view of the above, it is clear that the OIC to finance considerable projects in Cameroon let us note in the early 1970s that thanks to the resources of these OIC member Emirates, Cameroon will have benefited from the exchanges and would have become a real ally of the Arab Gulf countries. In addition, despite several initiatives carried out with the OIC for the development of Cameroon, cooperation with this partner is slow to take off when it should be beneficial in this period of international health crisis. However, opportunities exist in order to strengthen this cooperation, the conduct of a high-level mission to the authorities of this donor could help to further arouse its interest in supporting development efforts in Cameroon. With regard to the OIC, it should also be

remembered that when it was created, the main function of the OIC was political. The preoccupation of the leaders of the Islamic World gathered in Rabat on September 25, 1969, was the liberation of the territories occupied by Israel in particular Al Quds Al Sharif (Holy Shrine) that is to say Jerusalem, housing the Mosque of Al Aqsa considered as the 3rd Holy Place of Islam.

Over time, member states have expressed the need to broaden the organization's competences to cooperation in the economic, financial, scientific, technical and cultural fields. To coordinate and drive its action, unify its views and positions, and record tangible results in the fields of political, economic, cultural, social, spiritual and scientific cooperation between the Member States, the Organization has created twenty-one (21) the vast majority of secondary organs at ministerial level. The latter are mainly classified, according to their degree of autonomy from the parent Organization, into Standing Committees, Subsidiary Organs and Specialized or Affiliated Institutions to propose development prospects in order to consider a review for the decades to come.

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