

PENRESA FOCUS ON GABON

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Forbes

AFRICA



A New Dawn For Gabon

Special thanks to



H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba
President of Gabon

Hon. Julien Nkoghe Bekale
Prime Minister

Prof. Lee White
Minister of Forests, Oceans,
Environment and Climate Change

François Ntombo Tsibah
Managing Director of GOC



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Entering A New Era, Stronger Than Ever

By embracing the PSGE, Gabon is creating a conducive environment to expand its economy and welcome foreign investment.



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Photo Cover: François Zima Photo

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Gabon has begun to modernise and diversify its economy through the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE) by building strategic infrastructure through major public and private investments to support the country's promising development. PSGE is also aligned with the 2030 Agenda of the United Nations and Agenda 2063 of the African Union, which is Africa's economic growth and development plan for the rapid transformation of the continent as a whole. This alignment has placed Gabon on a transformative pathway for Africa. Former Prime Minister Emmanuel Issoze Ngondet says that "these two agendas, together with the Paris Climate Agreement, will determine the global direction of efforts to end poverty, to promote prosperity and well-being for all, to protect the environment and to fight against climate change."

As a part of these efforts to diversify its market, Gabon is focusing on its ICT advantage, building on the digital revolution as the Gabon of Services becomes a high value-added services centre. In the realm of the digital financial economy, Gabon utilises technology to maintain one of the best rankings of financial inclusion in the region. Nicholas Achiri Asangwe, Managing Director of Ecobank Gabon, explains, "The widespread

use of mobile phones means that Ecobank is empowering the Gabonese to conduct their banking transactions from their mobiles wherever and whenever they want. We are making banking accessible, convenient and affordable to everyone in Gabon." Digital technology continues to improve lives in Gabon by providing people with access to banking, administrative and medical services.

ICT has been particularly effective in helping to reduce distances in Gabon and reaching citizens in more rural areas. A high-speed, reliable and affordable network creates vast opportunities and for this reason, Gabon has begun to improve its internet coverage by introducing high-speed fibre optics through the Central African Backbone (CAB) project. To facilitate this, the administration has enacted new regulatory policies and public-private partnership (PPP) arrangements, which create a conducive environment for sector development, promoting innovation and attracting international investors.

Likewise, Industrial Gabon strives to diversify through local processing of the country's resources such as wood, mining and agriculture. The main focus areas of diversification are in the forestry sectors, where the transformation of raw materials has boosted the economy. Gabon has been historically dependent on the oil sector, but the government has focused on increasing value addition to the economy by creating a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), such as the SEZ in Nkok. The zone's main function is to develop various industries, most notably the wood processing industry, to promote investment. Diversifying the economy will make it more resilient to external changes and influences, thus creating a more stable economy.

SEZs offer a unique fiscal status which provides a stable and competitive economic climate for foreign investors and prospective companies. These zones have created a rise in PPPs and as a result, Gabon is rapidly emerging as Central and West Africa's manufacturing hub. Kumar Mohin, General Manager of GSEZ, says, "Before GSEZ was established, big working capital and investment were needed if you wanted to enter the timber sector. When GSEZ came into play, they divided the sector and invested in infrastructure and logistics. We bridged the gap between forestry and manufacturing."

These moves, coupled with the PSGE, are strengthening and stimulating Gabon's economy as it readies for its future in the global market. As Gabon lessens its dependence on oil and diversifies its economy through forestry, ICT, infrastructure, mining and agriculture, Gabon is proving that it has what it takes to be a major player in every sector.

H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba President of Gabon

A Visionary Leader With An Ambitious Plan For Gabon



Gabon has recently marked the ten-year anniversary of a very ambitious mandate: The Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE), which is aimed at achieving sustainable development and diversifying the national economy. Looking back on the past ten years, the PSGE has helped the country evolve greatly and Gabon has enjoyed the benefits of the framework, first implemented by His Excellency President Ali Bongo Ondimba. The approach is focused on the country's natural assets and seeks to elevate Gabon as one of the five leading countries in Africa. President Ondimba states, "The PSGE seeks to reduce the country's dependence on extractive industries and dampen the volatility of raw-material prices, it is already taking shape through an industrial base that is creating jobs and wealth." Diversification is the secret to Gabon's success.

On the forefront of Ondimba's PSGE agenda is diversification, which seeks to expand the industry and service sectors by reducing the country's reliance on oil and gas as a foundation of the economy. Though the future of the oil and gas sector offers limitless opportunities, a diverse economy reduces the country's position of the past, which held Gabon's economic growth in direct relation to oil and gas prices. The plan is boosting socio-economic development, but the PSGE seeks to diversify in order to change the lives of Gabonese people entirely. Ondimba states, "The human individual must occupy in our respective actions and of our obligation to reconcile development and durable peace with the preservation of the environment for present and future generations. My government is striving to offer the people of Gabon better living conditions

through a number of measures, ranging from reducing the prices of food staples to building new hospitals. I have also initiated an equal-opportunity programme that will enable all Gabonese people to enjoy the same resources as they embark on a path of personal and collective fulfilment."

In addition to these initiatives, the government has implemented an economic recovery programme that will "adjust the budget, develop infrastructure and encourage the private sector to leverage the economy's diversification and transformation" with the goal of improving the youth employment rate. Ondimba states, "The programme gives pride of place to everything that promotes the maximisation of our youth potential. The strategy implemented by Gabon aims to accelerate the structural transformation of our economy by moving to an economy of industries and services with high added-value in the near future." The programme also pays special attention to competitiveness factors, such as human capital formation and the construction of development infrastructure, which will inevitably create more job opportunities for Gabon's youth. Ondimba continues, "Over the short term, we intend to devote greater efforts to education and training in order to improve the performance of our basic education system. The goal here is to enhance the employability of our workforce, provide a qualified labour force for our labour market and accelerate the integration of young people into the workforce."

In seeing the success of the past ten years, Gabon is only motivated to keep moving forward towards progress. The future of Gabon is aided by the country's place as a strong proponent of regional stability, while also having been directly involved in mediation efforts in surrounding countries. In this regard, Ondimba states that the PSGE fits directly with the goal to develop not only Gabon but the African continent: "Gabon is a country that bears the stamp of peace, and we want to remain the haven of fraternity and solidarity that we have always been. Along with security, peace is an essential prerequisite for the development of Africa."

The Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon is diversifying the economy, revitalising sectors, creating jobs and changing the lives of the Gabonese people.

Clearing The Way For Economic Development

Appointed as Prime Minister by His Excellency President Ali Bongo in January 2019, Hon. Julien Nkoghe Bekale’s background in diverse ministerial roles has set Gabon in good stead to boost its business climate and stabilise its economy.

What programmes have been put into place to help realise the PSGE in 2025?

Since 2011, we have initiated an all-out development of our economy with the aim of minimising the share of fiscal revenues from the hydrocarbon trade. We have embarked on a significant effort to modernise and diversify the economy through the PSGE which is based on three pillars: Gabon Industry, Green Gabon and Gabon Services. This project was updated in 2017, through the adoption of the Plan de Relance Économique (PRE) whose goal is to adapt the country to the new context of economic and financial crisis resulting from the fall in international oil prices. We intend to put Gabon on a sustainable path with the establishment of these foundations for sustainable development.

Since 2011, Gabon has put together a broad public and private investment programme concomitantly with the construction of key infrastructure to enhance the competitiveness and attractiveness of our economy. This dynamic has allowed the emergence of several growth drivers, helping to transform the country into a value-added, diversified and sustainable economy in many sectors such as: wood, digital, agriculture and mines.

What opportunities exist in the development of ecotourism in Gabon?

Gabon has embarked in the process of improving its visibility as a tourist destination and enhancing the value of current tourist sites. These orientations materialise progressively through targeted investments and allow the implementation of tourist circuits to offer quality infrastructure and services through the development of flagship ecotourism activities and a hotel park within the National Parks. We aim to reconcile the development of the economy, the protection of the environment and the well-being of local communities. It is an alliance of openness and preservation of the essential.

The geostrategic situation of Gabon offers the opportunity to create new ways for sub-regional trade, while being an exceptional gateway for exports to the world. What are the major projects underway to improve road infrastructure and transport?

Gabon has a road network of 1,572 kilometres of paved roads including 672 roads built since the accession of H.E Ali Bongo Ondimba to the State, reflecting the desire to open up certain areas of Gabon and improve the overland connection with neighbouring countries and consequently opening up the country a little more to the rest of the world. The Trans-Gabon Rail connects the country from east to west by rail and is a network of 710 kilometres. Gabon today has two deep-water ports, both are located in the Owendo district. Our country has three international airports in Libreville and Port-Gentil. These were recently renovated to meet international standards, as were sixty local aerodromes. My government is working to initiate and finalise several major road and airport infrastructure projects.

Despite diversification efforts, the country still depends on the hydrocarbon sector. From a regulatory point of view, how is the new Hydrocarbons Code more attractive?

The new framework regulating hydrocarbon activity is a balanced code that repeals the Law N° 011/2014 challenged by almost all the operators in the oil sector. Gabon was almost at the back of the pack among African countries in terms of attractiveness. As proof of this, Gabon hadn't signed an oil contract in the last four years due to the rigidity of the old code. With all the advantageous tax provisions put in place by the new code, we are repositioning ourselves among the most attractive countries in the Gulf of Guinea.

The objective here is to increase the volume of investors through further exploitation of gas and the increase in hydrocarbon production. The expected consequence is the increase of state revenue. 



“We aim to reconcile the development of the economy, the protection of the environment and the well-being of local communities. It is an alliance of openness and preservation of the essential.”

Prof. Lee White

Minister of Forests, Oceans, Environment and Climate Change

Preserving Paradise With Sustainable Solutions

With the forestry sector acting as pillar to the economy, the Ministry's role is both relevant and crucial for progress.



“Forestry has shifted from an exporting industry to a transformation industry. The next priority is to ensure that forests are giving a respectable contribution to GDP.”

Penresa spoke to environmentalist Prof. Lee White, appointed Minister of Forests, Sea and Environment in June 2019 about his vision for Gabon and the need to balance preservation and sustainability, as well as the deep impact of forest conservation upon the nation's economy.

What is your top priority now as Minister?

Our priority is to make clear that we have a sound and sustainable vision on forestry. Banning raw wood export means that all timber has to be transformed. Forestry has shifted from an exporting industry to a transformation industry. The next priority is to ensure that forests are giving a respectable contribution to the GDP. We are also focused on climate change and marine pollution. As a ministry, we are working to improve forestry governance, maximise the benefits of forestry, fisheries and working with the Minister of Tourism.

What challenges must be overcome in order to maximise Gabon's incredible opportunities?

Our vision is to increase the contribution of the forestry sector to the Gabonese economy while preserving the forests. We have made a commitment to the Paris Agreement to reduce our CO₂ emissions. To achieve that, we have to give value to the forests. The forests also have to contribute to the economy. These natural resources must be given their value so we can create more jobs to transform our economy and save the forests. Forests would compete with oil and we would even become number one on the market.

Covering 80% of the territory, the Gabonese forest is home to more than 2,000 species including very popular noble species such as the Kevazingo, the Wenge and Moabi. What are your current efforts to preserve species within your native forests?

Gabon has a very clear vision for finding a balance between preservation and sustainable harvest. We are 21% protected on land and 27% on the oceans. We have 30 national parks,

covering 11% of Gabon, and then we have another 10% of types of protected areas. The protected areas will have their ecosystem protected and will serve for tourism and carbon capture. That means that we are already quite well equipped to preserve the diversity of our forests. In addition, our forestry is already managed on a scientific basis. Before you can log, you have to do a sustainable management plan. So, you need to go out to the forest and do a sample to work out the density of the timber trees, which is then calculated statistically. Once you have done that, you have to come out with a management plan to ensure that all of those species are managed sustainably.

In order to guarantee the highest standards of forest management, President Ali Bongo announced that by 2022, all forestry companies will be required to be FSC certified.

What is your sector doing to empower local communities and include them in Gabon's economic growth?

There is an obligation for the companies operating near communities to put a percentage of their revenues into community development projects. There is a very strong component of working with local communities to make sure that they benefit from our presence and that they have good living and working conditions.

For the readers of FORBES AFRICA and the discerning investor, why is NOW the right time to invest in Gabon?

We have made a significant investment in the forestry sector, particularly with GSEZ. You can transform the wood so that the industry becomes more efficient and viable. People can be confident that wood from Gabon is legal, socially and ecologically responsible and positive both for people and the environment. Companies thinking about getting into Gabon today will benefit from the investment the President has made in the last decades and also from the work we have been doing to make the trees more valuable.

Diversifying The Economy To Achieve Continued Growth

ANPI recently set up a One Stop Shop to make it even easier and attractive to open a company in Gabon.

ANPI, the National Agency for Investment Promotion of Gabon, was established in 2014 by the Presidency of the Republic with the aim of promoting investments within the broader goal of diversifying the country's economy and walk towards the realisation of the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE). "We really entered the diversification strategy of the country," says Gabriel Ntougou, ANPI's CEO. "The vision behind that is that we cannot diversify the economy only with our budget. We should attract investors for that." The government's efforts include the creation of a 1126-hectare special economic zone in which operate more than 88 companies in sectors such as wood transformation, health, steel and chicken processing.

Another task falling within ANPI's purview is the promotion of entrepreneurship, moving Gabon towards a more proactive economy: "We have launched programmes for youth and businesses," explains Ntougou, "because we need more skills to manage businesses, creating a business plan or doing accounting." The programmes have focused mainly on the agricultural sector, which plays a strategic role in Gabon, a country covered in forests for 80% of its almost 270,000 km² surface. "We have huge potential for agriculture and wood transformation," adds Ntougou.

In 2016, the Parliament approved a law for public-private partnerships (PPP), opening opportunities for investors to share risks with the State of Gabon. According to Ntougou, the new legislation has already brought in results: "GSEZ was a joint venture among the government, and so were



"We think the set-up is there: it is the right time to come to Gabon. We are a peaceful and stable country."

**Gabriel Ntougou,
CEO of ANPI-Gabon**

OLAM and AFC," says Ntougou. "That joint venture built the special economic zone in Nkok and the new Owendo International Port and launched projects for the plantation of rubber and palm oil. As a result, today Gabon exports palm oil."

The government is working on a new framework to improve the ease of doing business in the country and facilitate investors willing to operate in Gabon. A One Stop Shop initiative has been launched to cut times for the creation of companies. "We set a target: 48 hours," says Ntougou, "It takes time to get so many administrations to work together. In our One Stop Shop we

have the tax administration (certifications), the justice department (for the commercial number), the social security department (for company incorporation) and relationship managers. So, the client has only one person to talk to. We are working hard to achieve our target. Today, we do 65% of requests in 48 hours." With the support of the World Bank, ANPI developed a software to help with request processing. The capital needed to set up a company has been reduced to US\$ 110. "We also have a specific department who helps people writing statuses and bylaws for companies, which accelerates the process," adds Ntougou.

Under the framework of the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE), President Ali Bongo has stressed the need for a more diversified economy and the construction of strategic infrastructure through major public and private investments. According to Gabriel Ntougou, investors need to seize the moment, because Gabon has all the fundamentals: infrastructure, land, and a facilitating and supportive administration. Opening a business in Nkok, he says, is incredibly easy: "Five minutes and you are done. We have a One Stop Shop there. If you want to install your business in Nkok, you can do it in two hours. It is the right time; the grounds are there. We are working on a new investment law now, to adapt it to the new competitive situation." The new law, adds Ntougou, puts a strong accent on the diversification of the economy, the flexibility of labour and the protection of the environment. A further confirmation that Gabon is ready for new and bold investors. 



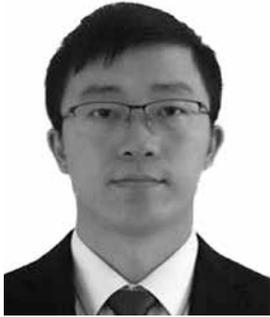
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Shen Jie

Director General of CRBC Gabon Branch

Paving The Way To Social, Regional And Economic Development

CRBC is creating a long-term sustainable development strategy in Gabon, partnering with the government and employing locals in order to make a long-lasting impact.



“Our most important achievement, of which we are very proud, is that all our projects prove to be significant for local growth.”

Since you have been appointed Director General of CRBC Gabon branch, what have been some of your main objectives?

Our main objective is to find a long-term development strategy in Gabon. We have made it our current goal to finish the road project Port-Gentil - Omboue. This project is the best way to demonstrate our technical skills and financial capabilities, and we always believe that quality works are the best advertising. Human resources are the key to any company's success, and since we aim at sustainable growth in Gabon, we are planning to reinforce our team by recruiting not only skilled local technicians and workers but also experienced Gabonese managers. In fact, in every country we enter, our purpose is to become a reliable partner of the local government in the field of infrastructure planning and construction.

CRBC is among the largest engineering and construction firms globally and operates through more than 50 branches and offices in Asia, Africa, Europe and the Americas. How was this impressive status obtained and what were some of your major achievements?

It is a result of more than half a century of experience in contracting in foreign countries. We were able to seize the majority of opportunities by listening to our clients and studying policies, but it's also thanks to our employees' devotion and sacrifice. Our most important achievement, of which we are very proud, is that all our projects prove to be significant for local growth. For example, the Mombasa-Nairobi-Malaba Standard Gauge Railway in Kenya, the Maputo-Katembe bridge in Mozambique, the Thies-Touba toll highway in Senegal, and in Gabon the Port-Gentil - Omboue Road. Gabon has great potential. Within ten years, we have signed three major road projects. Now our Gabon Branch is one of the most efficient subsidiaries of our company.

What challenges do you believe still need to be overcome in infrastructure development to boost growth?

The government's investments and banks' loans are important for the construction of public works, but if we want a sustainable development of infrastructure, it's necessary to encourage private capitals to invest in this field, for instance, toll roads and concessions in exchange for infrastructure.

How are you working to overcome difficulties on-site?

Since our job is to build roads and bridges in primary jungles, we have had to overcome numerous difficulties, such as the installation of living and working facilities, water purification, electricity generation, mining and transportation of construction materials. On the technical side, we have had to come up with and test many special soil treatments to find the best solutions for geotechnical challenges, because a big part of our road is built on silt, swamp or mangrove.

How will CRBC's projects add value to the natural wealth of the region and create employment opportunities for locals?

At the peak of our construction period, we employed more than one thousand local workers and provided professional formations for local engineers, technicians, engine drivers, lab assistants and topographers. With this rich experience, they may easily find jobs.

For the first time in Gabon's history, the economic capital of Port-Gentil will be connected by road with other cities, and we expect a substantial development of this region with lower commodity prices for locals. We think with the improvement of transportation conditions, more sectors will flourish, such as ecological tourism which meets with the goals of Green Gabon and Services Gabon.

What are some of your CSR initiatives?

We have built temporary roads and bridges for local people in easily flooded places, repaired school buildings and donated school supplies and delivered several fresh water wells for villages. We have also sponsored a one-year learning experience in China for a group of local engineers.

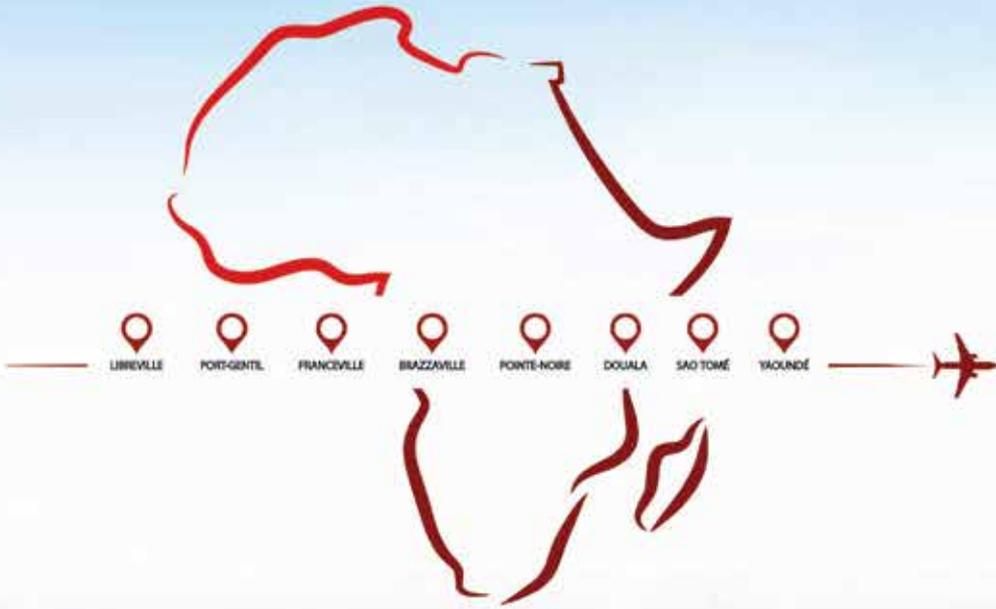


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“Gabon Car Entreprise was created in 2013 as the result of a common interest shared by me and my late father. Cars were a part of our every day life bringing excitement, joy and convenience to our usual day to day activities. Once the time came for myself to start building a business, I looked for inspiration in my interests and I tried to find something that would also fit my academic background in commerce and logistics.

Six years later we are proud to see that the amount of vehicles we own and operate, as well as our staff, is continuously increasing. These improvements have been enabled by our growing client portfolio ranging from one day rentals, to local companies and international clients using the cars for business purposes over the course of months.

Gabon Car Entreprise has set an ambitious goal for the upcoming years. As the Director General, I am working hard on overtaking the position of leading company in the sector. We want to accomplish this by gaining a strong international footprint, keeping an eagle eye



Jean Christian Janody,
Director General of
Gabon Car Entreprise

on becoming professional and globally known like other internationally renowned car rental companies.

With the current government focus on promoting Gabon as a tourist destination, one of our objectives is to be able to support the country by offering excursions and trips to relevant national attractions.

Our commercial offers are oriented to car rentals with or without a driver, leasing, airport assistance and car fleet management. We have recently identified a high demand for short term car rentals at a low cost, so we are currently in the development phase of a new product called 'Quick Car' in order to cater to our different customer's demands.

Gabon Car Entreprise is a client oriented company. We emphasise on building a strong relationship with our

clients by offering the best quality of service at the best price- and to become the transport solution provider of choice, we have put in place a quality management system that safeguards that all expectations are met professionally and satisfaction rate is always at 100%.”



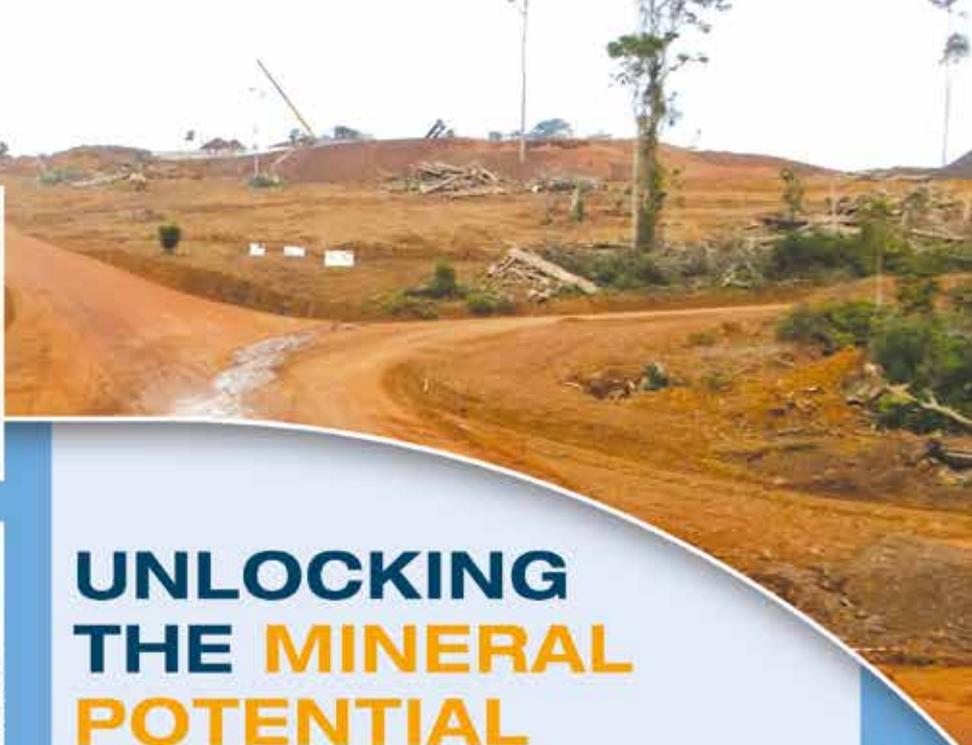
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UNLOCKING THE MINERAL POTENTIAL OF GABON

Nouvelle Gabon Mining (NGM) is a Gabonese company involved in the extraction of manganese ore. It operates a manganese deposit in Franceville/Haut-Ogooué, Republic of Gabon. The company is owned by international investors and the Gabonese Government.

The mining concession known as "Manganese of Franceville" has a renewable duration of 25 years and covers an area of 835 km². The fourteen (14) plateaus of the Franceville mine are best known for its JORC reserves estimated at 150 million tonnes of ore.



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Energy

Tapping into Gabon's potential as a leading oil and gas producer in sub-Saharan Africa

Introducing A New Era Of Exploration And Revolutionary Discoveries

Gabon's new Hydrocarbons Code has brought a new energy in the sector, especially for what concerns offshore resources.

G

abon is one of the top ten oil producers in sub-Saharan Africa. With current production rates hovering around 200,000 bpd, the hydrocarbons sector has been a pillar of the country's economy for over five decades and remains an unparalleled driver of growth. In recent years, the government has been progressively shifting the focus to Gabon's conspicuous offshore oil and gas reserves, which account for about 70% of the country's total resources.

During 2018's Africa Oil Week, Gabon launched its 12th Shallow and Deep-Water Licensing Round, putting an offer on 12 shallow water and 23 deep-water blocks. In July 2019 the government fully implemented a brand-new Hydrocarbons Code to open the way to new investments in the sector. The new code replaced the pre-existent 2014 code, increasing market liberalisation and creating enticing opportunities for companies looking to invest in Gabon's oil and gas sector. As a consequence of the attractiveness of the new code, in October 2019, seven new exploration and production sharing agreements (EPSA) were signed with Assala Upstream Gabon, Assala Gabon SA, Perence Oil and Gas Gabon Limited and Sinopec Overseas and Gas Ltd., driving US\$250 million in investments.

Most interestingly, the new code enables investors to maintain a higher degree of control over operations in production sharing contracts (PSC), cutting the state participation quota from 20% to 10%. "The new code will allow for an augmentation of oil production," says Jacqueline Bignoumba, President of UPEGA, the Association of Gabon's

Petroleum Companies. "This code will allow for a relaunch of exploration and the discovery of new fields. If production increases, it will contribute to the diversification of the economy." With the new code Gabon will be able to promote offshore exploration, where already a number of important discoveries have been made and new investors have been attracted to the nation's natural gas potential.

A few months after entering into force, the new code has already engendered some positive effects: in the summer, Malaysian company Petronas signed an agreement for two exploration permits. Soon thereafter, Houston-based West African producer Vaalco announced that it had scheduled a drilling campaign for an appraisal well, to be later followed by a development well in its Etame field, with further developments expected for late 2019 and early 2020. The company also extended its lease contract for its Gabonese floating, production, storage and offloading (FPSO) vessel to September 2021.

"Gabon is a critical part of our business," says Thor Pruckl, Executive VP of International Operations at Vaalco. "The investment climate has improved thanks to the efforts of the Gabonese government and we are looking forward to continuing and expanding our operations in the country."

Indeed, Gabon's reserves host an incredible potential in terms of oil and gas resources and the government is keen on finding ways to ensure the country can fully benefit from its offshore riches, increasing gas production with the ultimate aim of satisfying its internal demand and becoming a gas exporter in the near future. Within this context, an agreement has been recently signed with Perenco Gabon for the construction of an LNG production plant.

The government's strategy for the hydrocarbons sector includes the development of a domestic petrochemical industry, with Port-Gentil set to become the country's petrochemicals hub in cooperation with long-time partnering companies such as international giant Total. Total, the country's leading retailer of petroleum products, recently decided to focus its efforts on offshore resources and is working to provide efficient and clean energy while investing in local content and employing local workforce. According to Total Gabon's Director General Stéphane Bassene, the new Hydrocarbons Code and the ongoing bidding round have caused shockwaves of excitement within the sector: "There will be blocks for the industry, so there are opportunities," he says. "There has been a lot of movement in our industry in recent years and this is a very exciting time."

Indeed, with the bidding round in its final stages and the new Hydrocarbons Code in full force, great things are afoot in the oil and gas sector of Gabon, ready for bold investors eager to seize its opportunities.





“Through the mandate we have been given by the government, we aim to make our organisation a national pride. This involves restructuring our business so that it becomes a model of a national oil company, operating at international standards. An efficient and competitive company which contributes to the development of the hydrocarbon industry and to the creation of national wealth in all of the upstream and downstream petroleum activities.”

François
Ntombo Tsibah,
Managing Director
of GOC

Reshaping The Oil Industry Of Gabon

Over the past year, Gabon Oil Company has entered several strategic partnerships, contributing to strengthen the national oil company.

Gabon Oil Company is the commercial name of the National Hydrocarbons Company of Gabon, established in 2011 by decree of H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon. GOC achieved its first notable result a few months after, signing a crude oil marketing contract in November 2012. Shortly thereafter, in December 2012, the company signed its first production sharing contract for the Remboué oilfield followed by the signature of the Mboumba field production sharing contract in 2016, with a daily production of about 850 b/d.

Since 2018, GOC entered many strategic partnerships to increase its production by taking interests in different producing fields operated by Perenco, BW Energy and Maurel & Prom adding about 11,150 b/d non operated production. Above all, Gabon Oil is deeply committed to providing quality products and services that cover the entire value chain of the hydrocarbon sector, while giving special consideration to the environmental issue.

On November 7, 2019, the Council of Ministers appointed François Ntombo Tsibah as the new Managing Director of GOC. M. Ntombo Tsibah immediately announced his goal to make GOC a more competitive national oil company operating with international standards.

With a background rooted in the oil sector, M. Ntombo Tsibah is a seasoned engineer with 30 years international and national experience in the oil industry, specialised in petroleum engineering and production engineering, as well as being skilled in projects and economic evaluations.

The recently enacted new Hydrocarbon Code shows that there remains little doubt that Gabon's present condition as

a natural hub for the surrounding sub-region is the result of the government's welcoming policies towards businesses and perspective investors. Among the innovations of this new Code, we note the significant lengthening of exploration periods, the relaxation of economic and fiscal terms, a greater flexibility in the execution of contracts in general, the abolition of the simple exploration contract in favor of the exploitation convention, as well as the exemption of tax of the capital gains of transfers in petroleum interests carried out during the first phase of exploration. In this new business environment GOC has a key role to play. 

GOC KEY FACTS:

- Creation of GOC by Presidential Decree 1017/PR/MMH [24 August 2011]
- Signing of the state crude oil marketing contract [2 August 2012]
- Startup Mboumba field operation [26 October 2016]
- Transfer of state interests to GOC in 32 Perenco license [5 December 2018]
- GOC drew 12.5% interests of the Ezanga license with M&P [28 October 2019]
- GOC drew 10% interest in the Dussafu license with BW Energy [20 March 2019]



GABON OIL

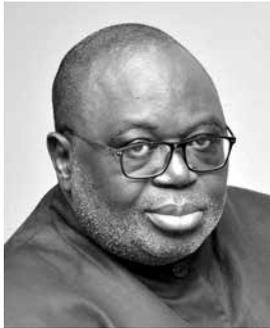
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Christian Koubdje

Director General of Maurel & Prom Gabon

Further Oil Exploration To Secure Economic Growth

Maurel & Prom is looking to strengthen its assets in the country with new operations in southern Gabon.



“We will continue exploration because reserves are the life of the company. M&P will always be there, we are a good partner for everyone.”

As a prominent French group active in Gabon since 2005, what role does Gabon play for you?

We made our discovery in 2005, in the Ezanga field. First oil was in 2009, and in 2014 we reached our plateau, which was about 26-27,000 barrels per day. Gabon is 70-80% of Maurel & Prom's business. The country is a major asset to us, and they are very important for the group. Soon we will be drilling in the southern part of Gabon. That will be the first time we have done an exploration well since 2005.

Your oil production has seen a 14% increase in the first six months of 2019, compared to the same period of 2018. What was the reason behind this impressive performance?

The figure is mainly due to two things: firstly, our drilling campaign to develop more wells, which translated into more oil. We also replaced a number of dead wells. Secondly, we have secured the export. Last year, we had had shutdowns because of the high pressure in export. This year, through several optimisation exercises, we found a way to keep producing.

How do your operations help Gabon achieve economic growth?

M&P constitutes about 10% of the Gabonese production overall. We employ 340 people, so not only do we contribute to the national budget, but to employment as well. One of our main priorities is looking after the population living in the areas where we do business. We try to do the best we can, in cooperation with the government, which tells us on what kind of projects we can embark to empower locals. We also work with them to define what their needs are. We contribute to the vision set by the Gabonese government.

Local content plays a decisive role in the African gas & oil industry, ensuring job creation and capacity building for the future

of the continent. How does local content factor in your operations?

We employ most of the people living in the villages where we operate, unless we need specific skills. Even then, if there are people within those villages who have the skills required, we hire them. Right now, we are employing over 200 people from the villages. Besides that, a percentage of our turnout goes to CSR projects directed to those villages. For each village, we try to take into consideration the needs of the whole community, not just individuals, through meetings with several parties. If they need a small hospital, a school, some nurses in the hospital, teachers, etc; together with the government, we will take care of that.

Gabon is showing serious signs of economic recovery. The country recently put 35 oil blocks for sale, in a bid to attract other International Oil Companies (IOCs). How do you differentiate from the competition?

Most of the new blocks are deep offshore, while we are concentrating on our proven assets, all onshore. One day, we will go offshore, but right now only big majors can go there. We try to do the best that we can onshore and as we go along, we will develop this country and move slowly to deep offshore. Besides, the new Hydrocarbons Code will definitely attract more people for the deep offshore blocks.

For the readers of FORBES AFRICA and the discerning investor, why is NOW the right time to invest in Gabon and why should Maurel & Prom be the preferred partner?

First and foremost, the new Hydrocarbons Code is fair: it gives investors a lot of time to recover and carry on with their projects. I am Gabonese and when I look around, I see a lot of political stability. As for us, we will continue exploration because reserves are the life of the company. M&P will always be there, we are a good partner for everyone.



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Realising Opportunity With Natural Gas

Perenco has evolved to gas production, adding value and improving lives.

Starting its production activities in 1992, Perenco has evolved into a premier gas business in Gabon. For over ten years, Perenco has provided natural gas to Port-Gentil and Libreville for power generation. Baptiste Breton, Director General of Perenco tells Penresa, "The gas business was part of Green Gabon's efforts, which worked to reduce fuel emissions from power generation. That is why we decided to invest in the construction of a commercial gas network." This network starts from South Gabon to Libreville and as of 2019, Perenco is the sole commercial gas operator in Gabon. Breton explains, "We are now producing 100,000 barrels of oil per day. Gabon has a large accumulation of gas, which can justify dedicated gas development projects."

These efforts not only help Gabon reach more energy stability but also benefit the country's economy and employment. With over 2,000 employees, their presence has a clear impact on job creation. Breton says, "We are hiring as many Gabonese



Baptiste Breton,
Director General

as possible for our operations. We are also working with Gabonese subcontractors for our onshore operations and we are working with many local services companies." Their presence has had a lasting positive effect.

With over 30 years of operations in Gabon, Perenco has seized every opportunity to expand. Breton says, "About 40% of our gas supply comes from the gas flare reduction project in Gabon. When you produce oil, you also produce associated gas. In 2009, Gabon decided to reduce flaring in the country. A part of the strategy was to create this commission network so that the gas can be processed into clean gas."

Moving forward, Perenco is pursuing strategies that will reduce flaring in all of their projects. The sector still has an incredible amount of growth opportunity. Breton says, "As of today, 100% of the electricity of Port-Gentil comes from commercial gas. In Libreville, we have 50% gas and 50% fuel, which means we have a 50% growth potential."

**PASSION
RESPONSABILITY
COURAGE
INTEGRITY
HUMILITY
CONFIDENCE
OPTIMISM**

OIL REMAINS AN ADVENTURE

Through innovation and dedication, Perenco offers oil and gas solutions in 14 countries around the world. We are driven by the committed men and women who work alongside our goal of providing excellent technical and economic performance. We have adopted a sustainable approach to our projects, caring for the social, human and economic needs of the local populations in which we work. These oil and gas projects are supported by our steadfast global partnerships to ensure we lead a competitive energy market.

PERENCO
OIL & GAS GABON

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Urbain Beka Nguema

Gabon General Manager of BW Energy

Diversifying The Market And Increasing Revenue In Gabon's Oil & Gas Sector

BW Energy's rapid success has positioned them to expand the economy of Gabon, increasing jobs and revenue for the country.



“BW Energy has proven in a short period of time of 18 months that it is committed to investing in Gabon's Oil & Gas sector.”

BW Energy was established in late 2017 and has since developed a portfolio of attractive upstream oil and gas assets in West Africa and Brazil. What were some of the major milestones of the company?

We are very proud of our successful beginnings and milestones. On April 10, 2017, BW Energy received its approval of first operatorship from DGH Gabon after it acquired 66.67% interest of Harvest Natural Resources. In May 2017, we also acquired 25% of Panoro for the same Block. BW also had its first exploration discovery in mid-2018, and we managed to achieve first oil on September 16, 2018, which occurred within 18 months of Block Acquisition. We have been producing at about 12,000 bpd (Gross) for the last eleven months from two wells. Right now, BW Energy is the first operator in Gabon producing from Dentale D6 horizon offshore Gabon. In other areas, BW has also been approved as operator of the Maromba Block in Brazil by the Brazilian regulator ANP.

Current gross production from the Dussafa field is at around 12,000 barrels of oil per day. What are the planned timelines and set goals of production for the next phase?

Everything is going very well. We are on time and have already embarked on Phase II of development and exploration drilling. Our Phase II, which is four wells, is scheduled to be in production by the first half of 2020. We expect our production to peak around +20,000 bpd. After that, the planned Phase III, which includes the Ruche development, will add another +15,000 bpd in the fourth quarter of 2021.

How does this support the government's 2025 vision and benefit the Gabonese economy?

For starters, BW certainly will be playing a continuous role in Gabon's economy by increasing Gabonese production, thus generating direct revenue in terms of royalty and profit oil. As an indirect benefit, we help in creating and increasing

local jobs, training locals, and generating additional revenues in terms of taxes, customs revenues, financial support to social programmes and infrastructure. We have done well so far and we expect our role to increase with time.

BW Offshore is planning on listing BW Energy as a separate energy and production company and targets to also list on the Oslo Stock Exchange this year. What benefits does this create for BW Energy, its shareholders and partners? What are your plans for the upcoming years as a separate entity?

With the listing, BW Energy will have access to increased capital to fund additional phases in both Gabon and Brazil. With these projects, BW Energy production will increase, thus increasing shareholder value along with partners too. As a separate entity, we plan to be in the Oil and Gas upstream space and intend to grow both organically and to increase shareholder/investor value through acquisition.

Under the Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE), President Ali Bongo has stressed the need to diversify the economy and build strategic infrastructure through major public and private investment to support the country's development. For the readers of Forbes Africa and the discerning investor, why is NOW the right time to invest in Gabon and why should BW Energy be the preferred partner?

BW Energy has proven in a short period of time of 18 months that it is committed to investing in Gabon's Oil and Gas sector. We have already invested close to US\$1 billion in total, with exploration at US\$50 million, Phase I being US\$180 million, Phase II being US\$250 million and Phase III being US\$400 million. We want to support the Gabonese government in its endeavour to diversify and the additional revenue generated through increased production will certainly play a role in supporting the President's vision.



BW Energy S.A.
A Member of the BW Group
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www.bwoffshore.com



BW ENERGY

Established in 2017, BW Energy has developed an impressive portfolio of oil and gas assets throughout West Africa and Brazil, accomplishing major accolades such as:

- Approval of first operatorship in April 2017 from DGH Gabon.
- Acquiring 25% of Panoro for the same Block in May 2017.
- Achieving the position of first operator in Gabon producing from Dentale D6 horizon offshore Gabon.
- BW has also been approved as operator of Maromba block in Brazil.
- Announced plan to list BW Energy as a separate listed company in June 2019.

BW Energy is a fast-moving and motivated company with highly skilled technical and commercial teams. The production of the Dussafu project went from development to successful production in only 18 months. BW Energy's current oil production is around 12,000 barrels per day, but the implementation of Dussafu field will increase this production to 20,000 barrels, ensuring that BW Energy is well-equipped for the oil and gas needs of Gabon.

BW Energy supports the Gabon government's 2025 Vision to benefit the Gabonese economy by increasing Gabonese production, generating direct revenue and profit oil. The company is also focused on creating local jobs through training locals and generating additional revenue for the country.

Through Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR), BW Energy gives back to the community in which they work. BW is committed to enhancing the Mayumba town, which is close to our offshore block and they have a local team in Libreville that is responsible for assessing the needs for the community and participate accordingly.

In only 18 months, BW has demonstrated its commitment to investing in Gabon oil and gas sector and support the Gabonese government in its desire to diversify. This is all a part of its goal of continued success and positive impact in Gabon.

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Bernard Gervais De Souza

Director General of SEEG

Serving Citizens And Businesses For More Than Half A Century

SEEG is organising its structure to keep improving the country's supply and efficiently address issues.



“It is in adversity that human beings find solutions. Now there are great opportunities.”

Founded in 1950, the Gabon Water and Energy Corporation (SEEG) is a state-owned corporation with a private management. The company employs 2,000 people and provides energy and water to the whole country.

What has been your major focus since your appointment as SEEG's Director General?

We have two main objectives. We want to keep a certain constancy in the supply of water and electricity for our Gabonese clients, as well as reassuring our agents through social dialogue. In the second phase, we wanted to give the organisation a certain structure that could measure up the challenges of the company. Now we are in the last part of this phase with the new nominations and a new consideration of the new challenges: sustainable development and extension of our supply. So, we have created a company, we are nominating new people, and the new objective is to get into the operative phase of our new mandate: bring water and electricity everywhere at the best possible conditions.

How will SEEG's strategies for energy stability benefit Gabon's economy and attract investments and business development?

Energy is the first condition for economic development. The economy cannot work without electricity. In any country, the company charged with supplying water and electricity is the heart of the economy. The projects of the government depend first of all on SEEG's ability to supply water and electricity to companies and individuals. Development projects are dependent on our efficiency.

What do you believe to be the right energy mix to ensure constant power supply for Gabon?

In the 1970s, the state started to invest into hydro energy with the construction of several hydro plants. However, the demand was growing faster than the real capacity of hydro, so we kept developing thermal energy as well. Our energy mix today is mostly made up of hydro energy and

thermal energy. A big percentage of this thermal energy is still coming from diesel plants, but we want to invert this trend and get into this renewable wave. We have a big project called 'Zero Diesel'. We want to develop hydro and gas, which will mix with solar, wind and biomass. Our ambition is to have an energy mix which is 100% clean, with a big percentage coming from renewable energy.

What investment opportunities exist for local and foreign investors in water treatment?

We have a project which is being examined by state operators and us, which consists of reinforcing the production capacity of Libreville by 140,000 m³ per day. We need to extend this to the rest of the country. If foreign or local investors get interested in this sector, there is so much work to be done at a very important scale. This means opportunities, both in the capital and in other cities.

The Ministry of Mines, Energy and Waters recently launched a project named "Blue Brigade" to address leaks in the water supply. How is that going?

We have created a mechanism which is based on communications by our citizens and on the intervention of our teams. We are developing information campaigns so that citizens can report leaks. We have teams active 24/7 which react immediately to any leak. The results have been impressive.

For the readers of FORBES AFRICA and the discerning investor, why is NOW the right time to invest in Gabon?

In water and electricity, as well as mining, there are incredible opportunities for private partners, but also for mining. It is about finding ideas and developing opportunities. It is now the time to develop them. SEEG will be the privileged partner because you cannot develop without electricity and we can say that we have certain skills: we are highly trained professionals and we are open 365 days a year, 24/7.



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Loukoumanou Waïdi

Director General of BGFIBank

Building Trust And An Inclusive Banking Sector

BGFIBank uses innovation, caring for its employees and adapting to the needs of its customers to continue to advance the sector.



“BGFIBank Gabon has built a strong bond of trust with its customers. It is the first asset of a bank.”

How do you think the financial sector has evolved over the last few years and what are your forecasts for the future?

With continued demographic growth in Africa and the development of new financial services, the banking sector is poised to continue to grow. The forecasts for the banking sector in the coming years are good. In order to seize opportunities, BGFIBank has developed a solid long-term strategy.

BGFIBank has been named “Best Bank in Central Africa” at the African Banker Awards. How was this status achieved?

It's the result of a lot of collective work. Our success is indeed collective. The credit goes to the teams who are our greatest qualities. In order to navigate well, you must have a compass. In other words, a medium-to-long-term strategy. The compass of our Group is in our “Excellence 2020” business plan.

What differentiates BGFIBank in the Gabonese banking sector?

What I can say is that over time, BGFIBank Gabon has built a strong bond of trust with its customers. It is the first asset of a bank. Secondly, we have developed a specific range of services for a demanding clientele. Aside from that, the expertise of our teams makes us unique. It is the singularity of our bank.

Gabon's financial inclusion rate hovers around 39% How is BGFIBank working to improve this indicator by using digital technologies to reduce the unbanked population?

In recent years, BGFIBank has devoted a lot of resources to innovation. This innovation has made it possible to reach and bank more remote populations. I am thinking in particular of our application BGFIBank Mobile, through which the margins of progress are enormous.

Why is digitisation crucial for your business and the banking sector?

Financial services are part of everyday business, but so are the people. We must adapt to their way of life. Today, many things are digital; we access the internet via smartphones. The banking sector must adapt to these new uses. To be a frontier in Africa where these technologies are used and developed.

Corporate Social Responsibility now plays a role in almost all multinational enterprises. What initiatives have you put in place to support the communities you serve?

The first social responsibility of a company is to contribute to the training of its own employees through continued education. That's what we do with BGFIBank Business School, which is considered one of the best business schools in Central Africa. In addition, we have the BGFIBank Foundation, which aims to serve the communities of the countries in which we are present. It is evolving in the fields of education and training, two sectors that guarantee the future of future generations.

To realise the 2025 vision of Gabon, President Ali Bongo Ondimba emphasised the need to develop public and private partnerships to support the country's development. For FORBES AFRICA readers and investors, why is NOW the right time to invest in Gabon and why should BGFIBank be the partner of choice?

Gabon presents incredible opportunities. The country is politically and socially stable. The economy is improving thanks to the reforms implemented in recent years aimed at encouraging a return to balanced public finances and reducing the cost of living. Therefore, more public money can be spent on investment, which can stimulate growth. Growth is very brisk with 3.5% in 2019 and 5% expected for this year. In addition, the movement of diversification of the economy continues. There are opportunities in many sectors. Not only in oil or the extractive sectors but also in distribution, agriculture, wood and digital. BGFIBank has a leading position in Gabon and an intimate knowledge of the market. That's why BGFIBank is a natural partner for any investor or entrepreneur who is interested in Gabon.



BGFIBank

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Embracing Digitalisation To Foster Financial Inclusion

Catering to national demand through digital services and corporate responsibility.

Present in 36 African countries, Ecobank Gabon was incorporated in 1988 and was recently named "Best Retail Bank in Africa" at the African Banker Awards. This impressive achievement was realised through their dedication to digitisation, financial inclusion and social responsibility. Nicholas Achiri Asangwe, Managing Director of Ecobank Gabon, says, "Through Ecobank's one bank model, we design and manufacture products centrally and distribute them locally. This provides us with faster distribution so we can offer our products and services, regardless of their size."



Nicholas Achiri Asangwe,
Managing Director
of Ecobank Gabon

Ecobank's digital strategy is founded upon launching innovative products and services to drive financial inclusion to meet the evolving needs of customers. Digitisation allows Ecobank to offer a full suite of consumer, commercial, corporate and government banking products and services, which provide a competitive advantage in the sector. One such example is Rapidtransfer, which has delivered standout convenience, transparency and affordability. Increased

mobile phone usage has led to partnerships with the telecom sector and the development of the Ecobank Mobile App, which offers mobile payment solutions that empower consumers and SMEs. The Commercial Bank launched Omni Lite, a payments platform designed to meet the payment needs of SMEs.

Ecobank's Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) plays a large part in their vision and success. Committed to the Sustainable Development Goals and the 2030 Agenda, Ecobank has utilised its digital platform to fundraise for charities, NGOs and vulnerable communities. The bank has even developed an Environmental and Sustainability unit within its Group Risk Management department, which is entrusted with environmental and sustainability management, including social risks, adoption of green initiatives, energy conservation and carbon footprint management. Through digitisation and CSR, Ecobank is overcoming banking obstacles and ensuring no one is left behind.



More possibilities



Any payment. Any time. Any place.

More Possibilities

EcobankPay makes it easy to make any payment, any time, any place.

From buying food in a restaurant to buying groceries in store using QR codes on your mobile, it's so convenient!



EcobankPay is_on Ecobank_on

SOBRAGA

SOBRAGA's vision for a cleaner, safer and better future

Driving The Nation Towards A Clean Bill Of Health

Committing to the environment and Gabonese health and safety.

At the heart of SOBRAGA's managerial DNA lies its social responsibility to stakeholders. Dedicated to meeting consumer expectations, preserving the environment, supporting communities and developing employee skills, the company's commitment to the environment has been key to expanding their vision. With a 'zero waste' policy implemented on its various production sites, massive investments in state-of-the-art equipment have been undertaken in order to improve product quality and save energy. The company has structured its social concerns so as to give its initiatives further scope and efficiency, while capitalising upon their leadership within environmental associations focused on the fight against plastic pollution.

The project 'Clean Beaches', renewed this year, had more than 1,000 volunteers partnering with SOBRAGA agents in the cleaning up of the Libreville beaches. The company also supports, in terms of advice, logistics and communication, the mini-company 'Recycling & Collection,' which has specialised in the collection of plastic waste since 2014. SOBRAGA also supports NGOs, such as the Registre Gabonais du Développement Durable (RGDD) which

carries out cleaning measures on the coast every two months. Last May, it signed a partnership with the company Namé, which specialises in the treatment of recycled plastic waste. SOBRAGA's drive to creating a circular economy in plastic waste has significantly contributed to improving the environment in Gabon.

As a brewer, the company is also deeply concerned with promoting responsible consumption. For several years now, the company has been broadcasting a great many messages in order to advocate drinking in moderation, to pay the right price and ensure the appropriate disposal of packaging. They have initiated several awareness campaigns on social networks, in the field and internally. Examples of this can be seen in the preventive training courses that are carried out for employees and the awareness vignettes affixed upon all the vehicles in their fleet. The company is determined to make every effort to provide solutions and hence contribute to the improvement of public health and road safety.

As a result of all its efforts, SOBRAGA has received the distinctive CASTEL Group CSR Award for a second time.

BREWER AND PIONEER OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN GABON

- DEVELOP AND VALORISE THE COMPETENCES OF OUR EMPLOYEES
- REDUCE OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FOOTPRINT
- CONTRIBUTE TO THE SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT OF LOCAL COMMUNITIES
- ENSURE THE QUALITY OF OUR PRODUCTS AND PROMOTE A RESPONSIBLE CONSUMPTION

www.sobraga.net

Cultivating A Specialised Timber Industry

Star Ply is bringing attention to Gabon as a global competitor.

As the forestry sector accounts for 17,000 jobs and 60% of output in Gabon, Penresa sat down with Naveen Goel and Amit Garg, Directors of Star Ply, to discuss the next steps to maximise Gabon's incredible timber potential.

"Gabon has attained the first position in veneer production in Africa and has become the number one veneer exporter to the world. In moving forward, skill development should be of highest priority. Training institutes related to the wood industry will prepare an efficient and employable workforce to help develop the sector. In addition, Gabon should invest in improving the logistics in order to reduce costs and remain competitive in international markets. And last, the country has to improve banking channels, which can finance and enhance the capacity, buy new machinery and offer credit to the customers.

We also take a lot of interest in developing the local industry so that many products can be produced locally. In this way, people will know that such

products can be produced in Gabon, and it will open opportunities for the region.

After having successfully run our veneer plant in SEZ Nkok, we have diversified into plywood manufacturing. Technology will be instrumental to maximise the potential of the timber industry in Gabon. The next factories that we are planning to setup will be specialised and focused on certain niches. We have more than 200 species of wood available and the potential for a more specialised timber industry.

The government has put great efforts to diversify the economy and move from being an exporter of natural resources into industrialisation. There are many opportunities available for investors, and Gabon welcomes them to unlock the potential of the country. We are exploring more opportunities and growing faster, and we are looking into new partners to come and market our products while developing our business. This is the right time to be in Gabon."



Naveen Goel, Director



Amit Garg, Director

A leading manufacturer of high quality and certified plywood.

STAR PLY GABON manufactures interior, exterior and marine grade plywood of various sizes and thickness. Gabon's tropical forest is home for more than 400 species but **STAR PLY GABON** only works with the best, also known as Gabon Okoume.

Okoume plywood is most sought after for high end furniture, musical instrument, luxury goods, boat building, etc. We promise to supply world class quality products for many generations to come.

STAR PLY GABON

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CAISTAB

Fulfilling Gabon's immense agricultural potential

Redefining The Country's Coffee And Cocoa Industries

After the successful launch of Café d'Alanga, CAISTAB plans its next moves to ensure Gabon's agriculture can keep growing strong.

Founded in 1971, CAISTAB is a public institution that operates under the supervision of the Ministry of the Economy of the Republic of Gabon with the general goal of dynamising the sectors in which it intervenes, thus contributing to the progressive eradication of poverty in the country. One of the institution's crowning achievements was the creation of a 170-hectare agro-industrial block in Alanga, in south-eastern Gabon in 1982. In 2018, about 80 hectares of the block were devoted to the production of Café d'Alanga, the first 100% Gabonese Robusta coffee, which was later commercialised in 2019. The Café d'Alanga project stems from a profound desire to encourage domestic processing of Gabon's agricultural resources.

H.E. Ali Bongo Ondimba, President of the Republic of Gabon, recently highlighted the importance of diversifying the country's economy, mentioning the development of the agricultural sector among the government's top priorities. The commercialisation of Café d'Alanga is part a broader strategy, devised by CAISTAB in close cooperation with the Ministry of Agriculture, aimed at supporting the continued development of Gabon's local production of coffee and cocoa as well as relaunching the coffee and cocoa production chain to improve the general life quality of the people of Gabon, as well as creating employment and economic growth.

Moreover, CAISTAB is working on several initiatives aimed at fighting poverty and unemployment, with particular attention to the rural areas of Gabon, which host about 8% of the country's total population. To assist farmers that live and work in rural areas, the institution supplies them with efficient vegetable materials. In addition to that, CAISTAB buys all the available production, fixes fair prices, distributes tools and materials



free of charge and freely provides permanent technical assistance and support. Through a CAISTAB-sponsored programme, 300 young women and men living in rural areas of the country have been offered the opportunity to receive training, entering a path that will enable them to manage their own plantations and become agricultural entrepreneurs.

With the launch on the market of the Café d'Alanga brand, CAISTAB demonstrated that it is possible to produce a high-end Gabonese coffee. The presence of such an appreciated coffee brand will undoubtedly contribute to the valorisation of Gabonese products and resources, increasing cultivated areas, creating new jobs, establishing new transformation factories and reshaping the general value chain of the sector, ultimately attracting new agro-industrial players into the country.

The arrival of new investors will provide Gabon with the opportunity to improve its plantations, increase the quality of its coffee and foster the creation of a more competitive market. In the oncoming months, CAISTAB plans to open new blocks in the Alanga agro-industrial area as well as establishing a coffee roasting plant.

In accordance with its goal to increase local value-addition, CAISTAB launched the

Coffee/Cocoa Purchase Fund (FACC). The fund guarantees the purchase of all the production of coffee and cocoa directly from the farmers, as a way to support local producers with regular purchases, eliminating losses and encouraging the intensification of production efforts. Furthermore, the institution will forge new distribution partnerships to ensure the widespread availability of local products across the country.

In a bid to improve investments in the agricultural sector, the government of Gabon has made available over 5 million hectares of arable land throughout the nation, with the aim of satisfying national and sub-regional demand. New mechanisms have been put in place to encourage investments, and CAISTAB is deeply committed to providing technical and administrative guidance to all perspective investors and potential partners. Gabon's agricultural sector is a vast world of opportunities that are just waiting to be unearthed.



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WORKING TOWARDS UNTAPPING GABON'S COFFEE POTENTIAL

The fight against poverty in rural areas is the essence of the Gabonese government's diversification policy; hence the development strategies of its agricultural sector, particularly in coffee production. In order to revive this sector, Gabon is moving towards niche markets. The goal is to reach a production of 10,000 tonnes in 10 years. Thus, from its production of gourmet coffee, CAISTAB intends to add value by promoting new concepts and focusing on bio-fertiliser to produce Café Alanga, a truly high-end Gabonese coffee.



Closing

Taking Gabon To A More Prosperous Tomorrow

Gabon is revitalising its economy by focusing its sectors under three major pillars of development: industry, forestry and services.

Gabon has been undergoing a transition since 2009 with the implementation of its Strategic Plan for an Emerging Gabon (PSGE) which is focused on diversification to revitalise and empower its economy. This will be accomplished through the strengthening of three major pillars: Industrial Gabon, Green Gabon and Services Gabon. Prime Minister Julien Nkoghe Bekale says, "We have embarked on a significant effort to modernise and diversify the economy through the PSGE. We intend to put Gabon on a sustainable path with the establishment of these foundations for sustainable development."

Gabon has also established an open investment climate for investors through the Special Economic Zones (SEZ) that have been established in the country, such as the one in Nkok. ANPI-Gabon, the National Agency for Investment Promotion, has created a single space that is conducive for prospective investors and businesses. Gabriel Ntougou, CEO of ANPI-Gabon, knows the potential that SEZs bring to Gabon for investors: "What do investors look for? Infrastructure, land, a facilitating administration. We have worked hard to set up those fundamental elements to bring investors to the country. We have a one-stop shop here. It is the right time, the grounds are there. Gabon is a land of opportunity." The expansive acreage, modern port and tax breaks are attractive to foreign investors and creating favourable circumstances across all sectors.

In terms of mining, Gabon is seeing impressive growth as well. As the country focuses on the plentiful resources of manganese and other minerals, there are opportunities for mining support companies to provide heavy equipment to aid in mining processes. Firms have

also obtained exploration licenses for iron ore, copper, gold and even diamonds. Gabon has also invested in the construction of a hydroelectric barrier designed for supplying energy in two transformation factories of manganese which generate 10% of the annual production. Moreover, Gabon has reinforced the governance of its mining sectors, namely by the revision of the Mining Code in order to change the business sector to attract more investors. Gabon is developing the sector thanks to the diversification of mining and local transformation.

The forestry industry especially is seeing huge industrial growth, which began in 2009 when the government illegalised the export of untreated and raw wood in support of local wood production to encourage a wood-based manufacturing sector. Prof. Lee White, Minister of Forestry, says, "The fact that we banned the export of raw wood means that all timber has to be transformed. We shifted from an exporting industry to a transformation industry." As a result, new opportunities are born for timber processing companies. Gabon has an ambitious vision to widen exports in the forest-wood products sector with the help of the Olam Corporation in Gabon, which runs the SEZ.

Forests cover 80% of Gabon, placing conservation efforts at the forefront of the PSGE's goals. The country is attempting to increase the revenue of the forestry sector while keeping practices environmentally sustainable and avoiding species destruction. The sector creates 17,000 jobs and more than 60% of output—excluding oil. Prof. White says, "The vision is to increase the contribution of the forestry sector to the Gabonese economy, yet preserving the forests. We have made a commitment with the Paris Agreement to reduce our CO₂ emissions, and forests play a critical role as an absorber of CO₂. To achieve that ambition, we have to give value to the forests."

The success of the PSGE and the diversification of the economy is a time of exciting transformation for the country and movements which have created a varied and sustainable economy in many sectors, such as wood, digital, agriculture and mines. Fabrice Bonatti, Director General of SOBRAGA, sees progress in the future: "Few countries match so many favourable assets to investment. We have a stable legal and fiscal framework, an efficient banking system and a growing population with one of the highest GDP per capita on the continent." These advantages and the initiatives of the PSGE will take Gabon to the forefront of a more prosperous tomorrow.





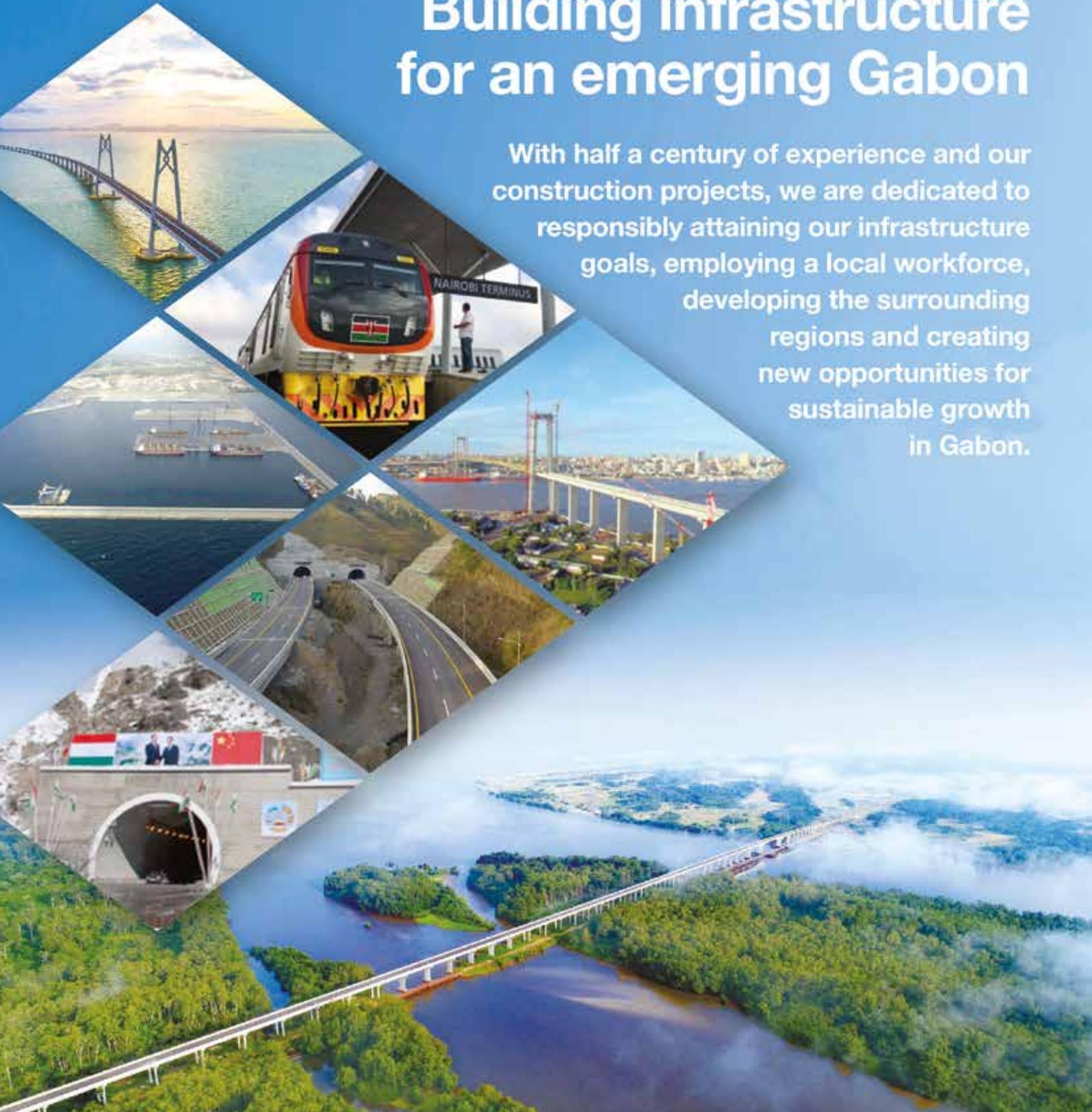
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