

Otmar Schuster: Partnership: EU – NRW – Cameroon, that's our goal!

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## 1. Why we came up with that conference?

Meeting with Fabien Omboudou Ndjina in the Worldbank Conference April 2012, un géomètre expert comme moi, we had quickly the same professional understanding of our task in the Worldbank, of our family driven SME – business and Fabien told me I should come to Kamerun.

In Geneva soon after that, we meet with Martin Berlinguer Eboudou, head of the Presidential office; he encouraged our beginning cooperation.

Then Fabien visited us in Germany and he came to ZENIT. He found the idea of PPP marvelous and wanted stante pede propose a ZENIT for Kamerun. Mr. Wolfmeyer and Dr. Rath said: Slowly, slowly, this country is not in our focus! But since two of our members were interested in a cooperation with Kamerun and the business opportunities showed up by the Kamerun government aimed at several of our members, we decided to invite a minister from Kamerun to explain the opportunities in a country like Kamerun.

Meeting with Minister Madeleine Koung a Bissike in Cameroon last autumn, and the colleagues in the ministry dealing with planning and cadastre.

Discussing with them the problems about geo-information and property cadastre, I felt at home. Kamerun has in that respect good French roots, in terms of profession and in terms of property register and fiscal cadastre.

The necessary renewal of the property system, the necessity to collect actual geo-information as a basis for planning and construction of infrastructure is a huge field of activity, which need public money. The establishment of a conference- hotel- and shopping center in the center of Yaoundé is a task, which stimulates the fantasy of all professions and investors around.

That is what we wanted to our members and the NRW-export economy.

Of course in the country we see that the Chinese have made long term contracts and huge investment i.e. for the railway. But don't see them as a danger; in Ethiopia they are our client, why not in Kamerun.

## 2. What is our experience?

In the last ten years Africa has changed. And Cameroon has changed. It is emerging from a country of underdevelopment to a country with an upcoming economy and what is even more valuable but parallel: the democratic structures are more and more stable. Sometimes You feel also: more bureaucratic, which means, that more people are establishing and controlling each project. So - as we are used to it in Germany. Public procurement, public tendering and at least contracting is a more and more complicated thing even in Africa!

## 3. Be aware of disappointments!

I am sure that the danger for disappointments are on both sides.

When we sent out the invitations I got a typical answers from a wind park planning and financing firm:

“After careful considerations we decided not to follow the invitation; I was so often in Africa, everywhere our technology was desired, but we never got a job. It was never more than a “Sundays speech!” And we are too small to stand these long decision processes.”

Everybody, who is in this business, understands the disappointment in these sentences. The more it is necessary to work inside a structure.

The more is necessary the personal key to the countries.

The more it is necessary to find friends in the countries,

The more it is necessary to know that all commerce needs, giving and taking – yes, all business begins with giving, which means: You have to bring in Yourself. You have to be aware, that Your partners think about their own future and the future of their own children as well, they are not only byers.

So, what we want to do here is embedding the work of the SME's abroad in the warm atmosphere, establish personal relations between people of the same branch, so that we both can overcome all the difficulties and time consuming barriers.

Doing the business in this way, we enjoyed good experiences and we performed unbelievable successes: M. Scheper and Tarek Zein stand for the 1500 km national border between Saudi Arabia and Yemen- a 1 billion \$ project - and I am sure, that the Rhein Ruhr Engineers from Dortmund even can speak about bigger processes.

#### 4. What is the task of Zenit in this context?

One task of ZENIT is to take the SME clientele with us and install the bridges, on which these firms can go. This is what we try to do here.

Frankly spoken: No exploitation of public households! But of course it is good to enjoy the backing of the NRW – Government!

The other side means, and that is clear: that a German SME organization like ZENIT network cannot solve all difficulties for our members or for our friends in the partner country. We are one small player with scarce financial resources. But what we have members and entrepreneurs, who are willing to do their business as an undertaker in the best sense of the word.

#### 5. What is our chance?

Our chance is to begin a process true to scale and content, not to promise or to imply more than we can deliver from both sides.

The realistic view should comply:

- We invest in the dialogue about the different tasks
- We invest in friendship from both sides
- We accept the rules of public procurement in a democratic state
- If we become strong enough we invest in exchange of apprentices, or even employees, we are on a good way.

My experiences with our Polish, Rumanian and Bulgarian partners mean that these friends had to learn,

- what means cooperation in competition?
- what is the actual limits of conduct in a social market economy? Indeed it is a great difference between the work in a pure market economy and a social market economy? This challenges also our partners, because we are asked to hold the limits of compliance.
- How to identify the competition line in every business concerned?

Our chance today is to lay a bottom for the friendship under those who know each other already and bring our interested parties to those branches in Kamerun, in which a cooperation makes sense. We are glad to have got attention by both governments and we feel obliged to support the realization.

Yesterday Fabien and me found the grave of a Kamerunian prince on a cemetery here in the neighborhood. We found this evidence of the cosmopolitan relations between our countries 120 years ago. This evidence urges for hurrying up. We have lost much time.

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