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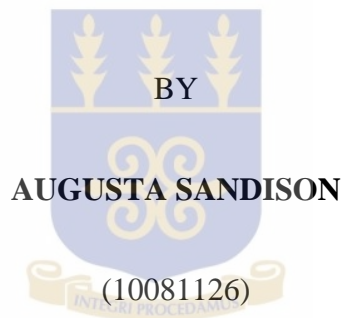
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH

FACULTY OF ARTS

TRANSLATION FROM FRENCH INTO ENGLISH OF

**“L’ÉCONOMIE DU GABON: UNE ÉCONOMIE À LA REMORQUE DE SON
PÉTROLE”**

THIS DISSERTATION IS SUBMITTED TO THE UNIVERSITY OF GHANA, LEGON



IN PARTIAL FULFILMENT OF THE REQUIREMENT FOR THE AWARD OF

MA TRANSLATION DEGREE.

JUNE, 2014

DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, do hereby certify that this work is my original work and that no part of it has been published for the award of a certificate to my knowledge, I am solely responsible for any short comings that may be found in this work which I submit with the approval of my supervisor.

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We hereby certify that the preparation and presentation of the work herein have been carried out according to the laid down procedure for the supervision of projects by the university

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Signature.....

Date.....

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my husband, Isaac Kweku Acheampong, for his support and encouragement and to my son, Isaac Kweku Acheampong Jnr., whose smiles and cries inspire me to do my best in every field of endeavor.



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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FRENCH

AGRIPOG : Société agricole de Port-Gentil

AGROGABON : Société de développement de l'Agriculture et de l'Élevage du Gabon

BAD : Banque africaine de développement

CEMAC : Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale

CFG : Compagnie forestière du Gabon

COMILOG : Compagnie minière de l'Ogooué

DREE : Direction des relations économiques extérieures (France)

F CFA : Franc de la Communauté financière africaine

FMI : Fonds monétaire international

HEVEGAB : Société de développement de l'hévéaculture au Gabon

MAECI : Ministère des affaires étrangères et du commerce international (Canada)

NTIC : Nouvelles technologies de l'information et des communications

OAB : Organisation africaine du bois

OCTRA : Office des Chemins de fer transgabonais

PDDT : Plan directeur de développement touristique

PME/PMI : Petites et moyennes entreprises/industries

SEEG : Société d'énergie et d'eau du Gabon

SHM : Société de la Haute Mondah

SNAT : Société nationale d'acconage et de transit

SNBG : Société nationale des bois du Gabon

SOGARA : Société gabonaise de raffinage

SOSUHO : Société sucrière du Haut-Ogooué

TVA : Taxe sur la valeur ajoutée

\$CAN : Dollar canadien

\$US : Dollar américain

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ENGLISH

ADB: African Development Bank

ATO: African Timber organization

CEMAC: Central African Economic and Monetary Community

DFAIT: Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade

FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization

IMF: International Monetary Fund

OPEC: Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries

SME / SMI: Small and Medium-Scale Enterprise / Industry

TDP: Tourism Development Plan

VAT: Value Added Tax

ABSTRACT

People cannot co-exist without communication. In the situation where people speaking different languages need to communicate, translation becomes imperative. It is for this reason that many theorists have taken keen interest in the subject of translation. The objective of this dissertation is to underscore some of the difficulties translators encounter in the translation activity and to promote an appreciation of translation techniques that may help translators to provide accurate translations for any source language text.

This dissertation is made up of an introduction, an internship report, an original document, an analysis of the problems faced when translating the document, a conclusion and a glossary.

The introduction addresses the concept of translation and factors that influence it. It examines some factors that influence translation such as equivalence, text function, linguistic knowledge and social knowledge. Chapter one presents a report on the three month internship undertaken at the end of the MA translation program - place of internship, experience gained as well as challenges encountered. The original document is presented in chapter two and the translated version follows in chapter three. Chapter four analyzes the problems faced when translating the document and the techniques used to resolve them. The conclusion sums up the entire dissertation.

Keywords: Translation techniques, equivalence, translation problems, factors that influence translation

INTRODUCTION

The word translation derives from the Latin *translatio* which originates from merging the words, *Trans* and *fero*, meaning “to carry across” or “to bring across”. The term translation has several connotations. It can refer to the general subject field, the product (i.e. the text that has been translated) or the process of translating (Munday 2001, p. 4). According to Munday, “translation entails changing an original written text (the source text or ST) in an original verbal language (the source language or SL) into a written text (the target text or TT) in a different verbal language (the target language or TL)”. In this section of the dissertation, we shall address some factors that influence translation such as equivalence, text function, linguistic knowledge and social knowledge.

Catford (1995) defines translation as the “replacement of textual material in one language (SL) by equivalent textual material in another language (TL). Here, Catford mentions the notion of equivalence which has been the major problem of translation practice. Texts in different languages can be equivalent in many ways. They could be equivalent according to different levels of presentation (context, semantics, grammar, lexis, etc.). The notion of ensuring that equivalence is preserved at all costs has been the major problem of translators. The translator has the option of focusing on formal equivalence which renders the text literally (word-for-word) at the expense of features natural to the target language or he may choose dynamic equivalence which conveys the essential message at the expense of the original word order. The former is described by theorists as ugly but faithful whereas the latter is described as beautiful but inaccurate.

There is no clear-cut boundary between dynamic equivalence and formal equivalence. Each is used at various times and in various contexts by the same translator and at various points within the same text, sometimes simultaneously. The most important element that must be taken into consideration is the “function” of the text.

Every text type has a corresponding text function. Fawcett (1997, p. 104) explains that a content-centered text type will have an informative function; a form-centered text type focusing on the sender will have an expressive function whereas a behavior-centered text type focusing on the receiver will have a persuasive function. Each major text type has subdivisions into numerous text types such as novel, play or lyric for the expressive type; text book, report and essay for the informative type; and sermon, propaganda and advert for the persuasive type. In translation, the translator must maintain the same text function as the original. If the text function of the original text is to produce a persuasive effect, then the translation must also have such an effect.

In order to decipher the function of text, the following questions must be asked: what, why, when, how, where, who? In his book, *Translation and Translating: Theory and Practice*, Roger T. Bell (1991) explains that these questions define one or more parameters of variation:

- What? Refers to the message contained in the text.
- Why? Directs the receiver towards the intention of the sender.
- When? Shows the time of the communication in the text and sets in the historical, current or future context.
- How? Refers to either the manner of delivery (the tenor of the discourse i.e. serious, flippant or ironic) or medium of communication (the mode of the discourse i.e. verbal or non-verbal, speech or writing).
- Where? Refers to the place of communication; the physical location of the speech event realized in the text.
- Who? Is concerned with the participants involved in the communication; the sender and receiver.

The six questions asked above have one important notion running through and that is **communication**. Translation is an example of written communication. Thus, to better explain the translation process we need to begin by describing the communication process in a monolingual communication.

In monolingual communication the sender selects his message and chooses a code (language). He then encodes the message and selects a channel. Next, he transmits a signal containing the message to the receiver. The receiver receives the signal containing the message. He recognizes the code and decodes the signal. He then retrieves the message and comprehends it.

Bell (1991) describes the human information processing as involving three stages carried out by three storage systems:

- The first stage involves reception, filtering, storage and initial processing of information by the sensory information system.
- The second stage involves the final analysis, short-term storage and a second filtering of the data by the short-term memory system
- The third stage entails assessing the long-term memory system and integrating new information.

Through the sensory systems of the body - sight, smell, hearing, taste touch, smell, the human brain receives a huge quantity of information. The brain filters the information and may discard all information with the exception of what the system may be focusing on at a particular period. This information is then stored briefly for about half a second in the sensory information store. Here, it is rehearsed and analyzed in terms of features and knowledge. Next, it is passed on to the short-term or working memory where it is analyzed in terms of its distinctive and constituent features, organized into a coherent pattern, passed on to be disambiguated and finally entered into the long-term store. The long-term memory system allows new data to be stored and existing data to be

accessed. It also serves as a database in which information is stored in a manner that facilitates access.

In the translation process the translator receives a signal containing a message and recognizes the code. He decodes the signal, retrieves the message and comprehends the message. He then encodes the message by means of another code or language. Next, he selects a channel, verbal or non-verbal, speech or writing to transmit the message. It is important to note however, that the process is not as easy as the process seems to portray. Roger T. Bell in his book *Translation and Translating* (1991) provides a more complex and detailed model of the translation process. He asserts that the initial stage of translation is in reading the text. The reader of a text is faced with three problems: 1. What the text is about 2. What the writer's purpose was in producing it and 3. What suitable context is for its use. In order to answer these questions, and get the meaning of the text, the reader must draw on appropriate linguistic and social knowledge.

The translator calls upon many domains of knowledge in processing texts but the centrality of linguistic knowledge cannot be overemphasized. There are three levels of linguistic knowledge of which the translator must be a master. These are syntactic knowledge, Semantic knowledge and pragmatic knowledge.

Syntactic knowledge entails knowing what elements exist in a language and how they may be properly combined. Here, what is involved is the knowledge of the systems of 'chain and choice' which organize the semantic meaning of a proposition. Fawcett (1997, p.6) explains that the order in which we put words is governed by syntax – the rules of our language which tell us what kind of word can come in what place in a sentence. A critical look at the sentence below will reveal that because the syntax or word order of the sentence is jumbled up it is void of meaning:

- The he boy asked come to.

Thus, we see that for meaning to be derived syntactic knowledge must be combined with semantic information.

Semantics is defined as the study of meaning. Semantic knowledge refers to knowledge of such concepts as denotation, connotation, componential analysis, presupposition and entailment. Semantic knowledge is important in both monolingual communication and translation. Given the text below, we realize that the text will be devoid of meaning if words are not provided to fill the blank spaces. However, if the words - *scientific, is, branches, has, of* - are provided a competent user of the language will have little difficulty in filling in the gaps. This ability is as a result of his semantic knowledge.

- Linguistics.....the.....study.....language.

Fawcett (1997, p. 19) explains that meanings and meaning structures do not match between languages. Every language has gaps and shifts when compared with other languages. He adds that variation between languages in the different components and relations of word meaning has two consequences for translation. Firstly, the meaning that is transferred will be decided by the context, not by the dictionary, and secondly, the transfer will nearly always involve some form of loss or change. Albrecht (1973:23), cited by Fawcett (1997, p. 26) also asserts that human translation “is always to some extent false”. He uses the analogy of currency transfer to explain the differences in ‘pure’ meaning between languages. According to him, although the aspect and numerical value of the coins and notes change, their ‘real’ value should not change, but in reality, their real value does change because they fit into a different price structure. Taking the French example, *je suis allée chez moi*, we notice some difference in meaning with its English equivalent, *I went to my house*. The French version shows the speaker to be a woman whereas the English doesn’t. A competent translator would be able to handle such meaning differences with his semantic knowledge. However, semantic knowledge and syntactic knowledge alone do not guarantee equivalence. In

addition to them, the translator is expected to deduce the intentions of the authors by applying his pragmatic knowledge.

Pragmatic knowledge refers to knowledge of the intended meaning which is derived from context. It involves the textual characteristics of **intentionality, acceptability and situation**, that is, the attitudes of the producer and receiver regarding the context of use. It takes into consideration such factors as culture, epoch, and experiences of life, etc. Pragmatic knowledge goes beyond syntax and semantics to include real use of code or language for communication.

Text processing operates in both directions: reception and production (i.e. reading and writing). According to Bell (1991), every text has its propositional content and illocutionary force which the translator must retrieve, explicate, negotiate, structure and finally reconstruct context to ensure efficient translation. This being the case, there must be two texts that share a common propositional content but which differ in terms of force; text 1 reflecting the intentions of the writer in producing the text (illocutionary force) and text 2 attempting to make sense of text 1, the (perlocutionary force). Text 2 becomes the semantic representation of text one. To convey the intended meaning of an original text, the translator must according to Durieux (1990:671) cited by Fawcett (1997, p. 125), “possess the knowledge that the author presupposes their readers to have”.

Besides linguistic knowledge – syntactic, semantic and pragmatic knowledge, several social factors need to be considered in text processing. 1) The *context*, i.e. setting and scene of writing differs as between writer and reader. 2) *Participants*, i.e. writer and reader who are different individuals with different experiences of life. 3) *Goals*, for both the writer and the reader which may be different. 4) *The tenor*- what the writer intended the text to mean may differ drastically from the way it is actually taken by the reader. For instance, what the writer intends to be entertaining may be felt to be annoying by the reader. 5) Norms – expectations concerning behavior of participants - producers and receivers - must be shared and realized in socially recognized text-types which are readily identified by users.

The social status of a people influences the way they use language. Translators must, therefore, have knowledge of the social status of the target audience. Fawcett (1997, p. 117) gives the example of ‘belles infidèles’ translations of the seventeenth and eighteenth which were based on sociolinguistics. The people, for whom these translations were made, were of a social class whose lifestyle was based on concepts of decency and decorum. Thus, translations were expected to conform to the same concepts. Similarly, translations made for the President of the Republic of Ghana will most certainly use diplomatic language given his profession and social status.

In this dissertation, we shall apply the factors discussed above to translate “**l’économie du Gabon: Une économie à la remorque de son pétrole**”. We shall strive to achieve equivalence between the source text and the translation.

CHAPTER 1

INTERNSHIP REPORT

To become a master of an art, one will have to train ceaselessly. Thus, as part of the M.A Translation program, students are required to work as interns in institutions where they could practice in-field translation so as to master and improve upon the skills acquired in the classroom. In this section of the dissertation, we shall first of all describe the institution in which we worked. Next, we shall address the nature of the internship we undertook – our responsibilities, tools that were available to us, the environment in which we worked, transport and telephone accessibility, our challenges and finally, our assessment of the internship.

1.1 Description of the institution

Although it is a requirement to undertake an internship, the University does not assign students to specific institutions. The student has the tedious task of searching for an institution. After having searched far and wide, we got accepted at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. This ministry's core function is to advise the Government in the formulation and implementation of Ghana's Foreign policy objectives. It also exists to promote and protect the interest of Ghana and its citizens abroad and to enhance Ghana's security and prosperity.

The organizational structure of the ministry is as follows:

- The minister, Honourable Alhadji Muhammed Mumuni
- Deputy minister, Honourable Chris Kpodo
- The chief director
- The directorates

The directorates are referred to as bureaus. The Middle-East and Asia, Europe, Americas and Africa bureaus are concerned with Ghana's bilateral relations with the respective countries. The administrative bureau oversees the smooth running of the ministry whereas legal issues involving

Ghanaians abroad are handled by the legal bureau. The security bureau ensures the security of workers and property, while the passports bureau processes and issues passports to enable Ghanaians travel abroad. The information and communications, finance, protocol, multilateral and estate bureaus, all work in their various capacities to enhance Ghana's bilateral relations with the outside world.

1.2 Responsibilities

We were assigned to the information and communications bureau where we worked under the direct supervision of Mrs. Martha Pobbée who is the head of the bureau. As translators we translated correspondences as well as Ghana's Foreign policy into French. In addition, we translated brochures of the Ghana Investment Promotion Council which addressed the profiles of the various sectors of Ghana's economy such as tourism, mineral processing, energy and property development. The translated versions of the brochures are expected to be distributed among Ghanaian missions in Francophone countries. Moreover, in our search for documents for our thesis, we had the privilege of translating a system dictionary for Rhema Systems Company.

1.3 Tools

Our work at the ministry was greatly facilitated by the tools provided. We were provided with a comfortable desk where we could sit and work. We were also allowed to use the desktops, printers and photocopy machine in the bureau. Internet connectivity was constant and this facilitated our work tremendously since we could consult online dictionaries and glossaries at any given time. In addition, we were given a 'Robert et Collins anglais-français dictionary' which we consulted when all the desktops were being used.

1.4 Environment

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration has a very serene environment conducive for translation since translation requires maximum concentration and research. At the beginning of the internship however, we found the information and communications bureau an unpleasant place

to work since the staff were not friendly. On the first day of work for instance, we had a rather cold reception. This however, did not deter us. We were determined to achieve the purpose for which we were there. As we continued to work, the situation changed and we enjoyed our work at the ministry.

1.5 Transport and telephone accessibility

The ministry does not provide transport for interns. We went to work by means of public transport. It was not a difficult task getting transport in the mornings. In the evenings however, we struggled to get home. There were times we joined long queues only to fall into heavy traffic jams. Occasionally we got a ride from foreign ministry workers who used the same route as ours.

We had access to the telephone at any given time. This eased the burden of walking from one bureau to another to gather information.

1.6 Challenges

Work at the ministry was not all rosy. We had some challenges which we tried to surmount. The first of these challenges was the fact that we did not have a supervisor who was a translator. We relied solely on the skills we acquired in school to carry out our assignments. Thus, we did not learn new techniques in translation except that we became masters of those learnt at school since we used them over and over again. In addition, there was no constant flow of documents for translation. There were seasons where there was virtually nothing to translate and seasons where there was a lot to translate within a very limited period. When there was nothing to do, we worked on our thesis and when there were many documents we spent sleepless nights working on them.

1.7 Internship assessment

We found the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration a good institution for trainee translators since correspondence between Ghana and its Francophone neighbors is feasible through translation. In addition, the ministry provides the necessary basic tools for translation. However,

Internship at the ministry is only advisable in seasons where there are documents to translate. It is very disheartening to struggle to get to work and realize there was nothing to do. The internship program taught us the importance of meeting deadlines as translators. This made us work with speed. However, we did not underrate the importance of accuracy, faithfulness to the message of the text, and research. These guiding principles learnt during the internship will undoubtedly enhance our career as translators.

CHAPTER 2

ORIGINAL DOCUMENT

2.0 PARTIE VI

L'économie du Gabon : Une économie à la remorque de son pétrole

Par Franklin Assoumou Ndong

2.1 Les bases de l'économie gabonaise et quelques faits saillants

À l'Indépendance en 1960, plusieurs voies (socialisme, marxisme-léninisme, capitalisme, social-démocratie, etc.) s'ouvraient au Gabon qui avait peu puisé dans ses ressources naturelles et n'était pas préparé aux grandes transformations économiques des années à venir. La voie choisie reposait sur trois idées principales: 1) maintien de l'option libérale et ouverture de l'économie sur l'extérieur, 2) développement de la coopération régionale (au niveau de l'Afrique) et/ou sous-régionale (pays voisins), 3) diversification de l'économie et recherche d'une transformation des modes de production du monde rural. Le passé récent montre que la stratégie économique gabonaise reposait sur le libéralisme dirigé et planifié, ensuite sur le «progressisme démocratique et concerté» (notamment en régime de Parti unique, 1968-1990) dont la finalité (théorique) était en principe l'élévation du niveau de vie et la promotion du bien-être de toute la population (urbaine et rurale).

Au courant de la dernière décennie, d'abord dans les pays riches, puis dans les pays moins avancés, un fort courant libéral a contesté la mainmise de l'État dans l'économie, tel que le Gabon le vit depuis son Indépendance. Deux courants de pensée agitent aujourd'hui la réflexion sur le libéralisme: 1) le courant libéral "social-démocrate" ou courant social et 2) le courant néo-libéral. Le courant social reproche à tout libéralisme de conduire à l'abandon les plus démunis de la société (malades, travailleurs peu qualifiés, chômeurs, personnes âgées, handicapés, etc.) et défend une certaine intervention de l'État-Providence (selon les circonstances). Quant aux néolibéraux, ils rejettent le principe de *l'État-Providence*, donc l'intervention de l'État dans l'économie jugeant qu'une telle pratique conduit à la crise et propose le désengagement de l'État. Cette politique,

maintenant appliquée un peu partout dans le monde, voit l'État comme «facilitateur» et non comme «acteur» dans l'économie («l'État appuie le développement, il ne crée pas la richesse»). Beaucoup de pays sont engagés dans cette voie, notamment par le truchement de la mondialisation des économies. Le Gabon n'y échappe pas: on l'observe notamment avec les vastes programmes de privatisation déjà réalisés et ceux en cours dans le pays alors que l'État a déjà entamé la mise sous contrôle privé des grandes sociétés publiques et parapubliques. C'est le cas de la Société d'Énergie et d'Eau du Gabon (SEEG), sous contrôle de Vivendi, de l'Office des Chemins de fer Transgabonais (OCTRA), de la Société Sucrière du Haut-Ogooué (SOSUHO), de la Société Gabonaise de Distribution (CECA-GADIS) et plus récemment, des Ciments du Gabon et de la Compagnie Forestière du Gabon (CFG) qui sont déjà sous concession privée. D'autres privatisations sont en cours d'études ou de réalisation pour les sociétés comme: Gabon Télécom (issue de la scission de l'Office des postes et télécommunications en *Gabon Télécom* et *Gabon Postes*) et sa filiale *Libertis* (Téléphones cellulaires); la Société de Développement de l'Agriculture et de l'Élevage au Gabon (AGROGABON); la Société de Développement de l'Hévéaculture au Gabon (HEVEGAB); la Société Agricole de Port-Gentil (AGRIPOG); Gabon Informatique; la Société Nationale d'Acconage et de Transit (SNAT), Air Gabon; etc.

Les revenus tirés de la commercialisation des ressources naturelles (essentiellement le pétrole) ont permis à l'État d'accroître le niveau de l'emploi en créant des entreprises publiques. Cependant, l'État a initié des projets industriels coûteux dont la rentabilité économique et financière était douteuse. Des choix sectoriels pas toujours judicieux ont été opérés sans tenir compte du niveau d'endettement; ce qui a contraint l'État gabonais à s'engager, sous l'instigation des institutions de *Bretton Woods* (FMI, Banque mondiale), dans un vaste programme de restructuration, appuyé par la dévaluation du Franc CFA (Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine), la réforme fiscalodouanière (avec les pays membres de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale, CEMAC) et l'instauration de la Taxe sur la Valeur Ajoutée (TVA). Le pays a été frappé en 1999 par une grave crise financière (et sociale) compte tenu de la baisse drastique des cours

mondiaux des matières premières (dont le pétrole) dont il tire l'essentiel de ses ressources financières. De plus, faute de nouvelles découvertes pétrolières, la production de l'or noir est appelée à diminuer dans l'avenir. Qui plus est, l'abandon de la production de l'uranium et les baisses cycliques des ventes de bois (notamment vers l'Asie) constituent des irritants sérieux au développement économique du Gabon. Compte tenu de ces signes de déclin de l'industrie pétrolière, l'État gabonais, avec l'arrivée d'un nouveau Ministre pourvu d'un mandat d'austérité à la tête de l'Économie et des Finances, tentait au début de l'an 2000, de réduire tant bien que mal son train de vie notamment par l'entremise d'une réduction du nombre de ministres, d'une baisse de l'effectif (pléthorique) des fonctionnaires (estimés à 40 000 agents dont 25% sont dits « fantômes »), d'un contrôle plus stricte des finances publiques et du remboursement de la dette. Les résultats de cette politique d'austérité demeurent mitigés. Le ministre désigné d'alors n'occupe plus actuellement ses fonctions à l'Économie et aux finances. Le nombre de ministres a même tendance à augmenter ces derniers mois. La hausse actuelle des prix du brut et l'amélioration des ventes de bois semblent donner une lueur d'espoir pour la fin de la crise, mais ce ne sera pas suffisant, car le pays souffre de nombreux maux qui compromettent son développement dont la dépendance de son économie au pétrole, un manque de dynamisme entrepreneurial encore marqué chez les Gabonais et des habitudes de mauvaise gestion acquises au fil des années. Aussi, le Gabon a-t-il notamment besoin d'une diversification de ses bases d'activités économiques et ses sources financières ou de devises et d'un meilleur contrôle de la gestion des finances publiques. Une des façons de la diversification de l'économie gabonaise serait (entre autres) la promotion de la création de nouvelles entreprises performantes et créatrices d'emplois, notamment par des initiatives locales. La coopération et le partenariat avec l'étranger (en l'occurrence le Canada et/ou le Québec) est aussi une avenue importante pour parvenir à créer de nouvelles entreprises; d'où la nécessité pour le Gabon d'étendre son éventail de partenaires étrangers autres que les Français déjà très présents dans tous les secteurs économiques du pays, dont les secteurs pétrolier et forestier.

2.2 L'économie gabonaise : une économie encore peu diversifiée

L'économie gabonaise, très peu diversifiée et très dépendante des cours du pétrole brut, du dollar américain et de l'euro, a tout d'une économie de rente, extravertie et lourdement endettée. On note par ailleurs un secteur secondaire ou productif en « éternel » balbutiement et une faible compétitivité des entreprises avec un secteur des PME/PMI peu performant et un secteur informel de plus en plus important. Ce qui a pour conséquence un chômage croissant et une paupérisation d'une proportion de plus en plus grande de la population.

La manne pétrolière qu'a toujours reçue le pays depuis les années 1970 a pour conséquence un niveau très faible des activités de transformation au Gabon: les **produits pétroliers et miniers** sont exportés bruts, et le **bois** est exporté à environ 90% en grumes, dont plus du tiers de la seule essence de l'Okoumé, l'essence reine du déroulage et du contre-plaqué. Et son **agriculture**, très orientée dans la monoculture de rente et de subsistance, longtemps délaissée au profit des produits importés (surtout d'Europe), est largement sous-développée: en effet, l'agriculture (y compris l'élevage et la pêche, excepté le secteur forestier) ne contribue que pour environ 5% du PIB et presque rien pour les exportations (moins de 1%). Malgré maintes prises de position de l'État envers le développement agricole, ce pourcentage (par rapport au PIB) n'a pas beaucoup bougé depuis au moins 15 ans. Au Gabon, le **déséquilibre alimentaire** (absence d'autosuffisance alimentaire) reste marquant, alors que le pays demeure dépendant de l'extérieur (environ 125 milliards de Francs CFA, soit environ 170.8 millions de dollars américains, en importations agroalimentaires – boissons non incluses – en 2001 selon les données du FMI). Mais le problème de l'autosuffisance alimentaire au Gabon ne saurait se poser de la même façon que dans les autres pays africains (surtout en Afrique subsaharienne), car on peut dire que les Gabonais ont « les moyens d'importer » les aliments grâce à la rente pétrolière (sic) : la manne pétrolière procure encore aux Gabonais un niveau de vie relativement élevé en Afrique, malgré qu'elle ne représente pas en elle-même (i.e. la manne pétrolière) la garantie d'une redistribution équitable de la richesse dans la population. En

effet, le revenu *per capita* relativement élevé du Gabon (comparé aux autres pays africains) cache une forte disparité dans la redistribution de la richesse dans la population.

Avec environ 1.2 million d'habitants et une rente pétrolière qui lui permet d'afficher un **revenu par tête d'habitant oscillant entre 3 500\$ et 5 000\$US** (3 740\$US en 2001 selon le FMI, parmi les plus élevés d'Afrique), le Gabon, encore appelé « El Dorado », a tout d'un « émirat pétrolier ».

Pour cet ancien membre de l'OPEP, encore actuellement, l'or noir peut représenter jusqu'à plus de 80% de ses revenus d'exportation (81% en 1996, 77% en 1997 et 82% en 2001), contribuer à plus de 40% de son produit intérieur brut (43% en 1996, 41% en 1997, 42% en 2001 et 36% en mi-2002) et représenter plus de 50% des recettes budgétaires de l'État (57% en 1998 et 58% en 2001).

Les autres grands produits d'exportation viennent loin derrière: les **produits forestiers** (2e richesse du pays) représentaient 13.6% des recettes d'exportation en 1996, 11% en 1998 et 13% en 2001; le **manganèse** (dont le pays est le 4e producteur et 3e exportateur mondial avec des réserves évaluées à 200 millions de tonnes) représentait 2% des exportations en 1996, 3.1% en 1998 et 1% en 2001; puis **l'uranium** avec 0.3% des exportations en 1996, mais sa production fut abandonnée en 1999.

Par ailleurs, la structure du produit intérieur brut (PIB) gabonais est caractérisée par la **prédominance de la branche pétrolière** qui a créé plus du tiers de la richesse en 2001 (42% du PIB) et par la contribution non négligeable du secteur tertiaire. De façon globale, en 2001, le secteur primaire comptait pour 50% du PIB, le secteur secondaire 8% et le tertiaire, 42% (voir tableau plus loin). Ce déséquilibre structurel dans l'économie du pays a des impacts parfois négatifs sur la répartition socio-économique des richesses du pays, notamment par la concentration des activités économiques dans les endroits où le pétrole est exploité au détriment des zones et semi-urbaines qui sont vidées de leurs populations. Qui plus est, le renchérissement des prix du pétrole combiné à une **inégaie répartition de la richesse** a créé une situation paradoxale où **la misère côtoie la richesse quotidiennement**. De fait, Libreville est souvent (tristement) classée parmi les villes les plus chères du monde. En effet, le classement mondial de 2002 des villes les plus chères du monde (selon *The Economist Intelligence Unit*) situait la Capitale gabonaise au 4e rang, ex-

aequo avec Hong-Kong, après Tokyo, Osaka-Kobe et Oslo, mais devant des métropoles comme Zurich, Londres, Genève, Paris, Montréal, New-York ou Los Angeles. Pourtant, comme nous l'avons mentionné plus haut, les données du PNUD indiquent qu'environ 60% des Gabonais vivent en-dessous du seuil de pauvreté tandis que 23% vivent une pauvreté dite extrême : les indicateurs sociaux (santé, éducation, espérance de vie, taux de mortalité infantile, pauvreté, etc.) accusent donc un retard significatif au regard du niveau appréciable du revenu par habitant au Gabon.

Tableau 2.0

Répartition du PIB du Gabon par secteur d'activités, 1997-2001						
<i>(Chiffres en milliards de F CFA)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	(%)
Secteur primaire	1551	962	1309	1983	1701	50
Agriculture, Élevage, Chasse et Pêche	132	134	137	141	147	
Exploitation forestière	92	52	72	86	87	
Pétrole brut	1274	714	1042	1702	1415	42
Mines	53	62	57	54	52	
Secteur secondaire	341	365	300	281	285	8%
Industries agroalimentaires, boissons	40	45	43	43	45	
Industries du bois	15	16	21	16	21	
Autres industries	82	87	78	84	87	
Raffinage	9	16	17	20	21	

Électricité, Eau	36	29	33	34	35	
Bâtiment & Travaux publics	152	159	99	70	62	
Recherche, services pétroliers	7	12	8	14	14	
Secteur tertiaire	1001	1082	1040	1067	1107	33%
Transport	164	172	145	150	157	
Services	322	362	347	359	385	
Commerce	232	251	235	241	245	
Services financiers, Assurances	24	19	19	19	20	
Administration publique	259	278	295	298	300	
PIB aux coûts des facteurs	2894	2409	2649	3330	3093	
Droits et taxes à l'importation	215	263	191	247	294	9%
PIB Total (prix courant)	3109	2645	2840	3578	3387	100%
Taux de change moyen FCFA par dollar US	583.7	590.0	614.9	710.0	732.5	

Source: FMI, *Gabon: Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix*, March, 2002.

Alors qu'on prévoit une diminution de la production pétrolière de 50% durant les cinq prochaines années (FMI, 2002), deux défis importants pour le développement du Gabon demeurent 1) la diversification de son économie (renforcement des secteurs hors pétrole) et 2) une gestion publique saine et rigoureuse. En effet, pendant que les revenus pétroliers continueront à diminuer, les besoins financiers du Gabon demeureront élevés, notamment pour le financement des infrastructures sociales (éducation, santé, etc.) et physiques (routes, bâtiments publics, etc.); sans oublier le fardeau

de la dette extérieure qui risque fort de s'alourdir un peu plus. Pour preuve, selon les données du FMI, **pour chaque 100 000 FCFA dépensés par l'état gabonais en 2001, 40 000 FCFA allaient au paiement de la dette.** Le Gabon aura plus que besoin de rééchelonnement de sa lourde dette (s'il ne peut obtenir son abolition) pour alléger les impacts dévastateurs à court et moyen termes sur son économie et son équilibre social.

2.2.1 Les secteurs pétrolier et minier au Gabon

Le pétrole

Les activités pétrolières et minières constituent l'axe fort de l'économie gabonaise. Comme nous l'avons évoqué plus haut, le secteur pétrolier domine. Le lien majeur entre le secteur pétrolier et le reste de l'économie réside essentiellement dans la rente pétrolière versée à l'État au titre de la fiscalité directe et indirecte et du revenu de ses participations dans l'exploitation pétrolière. Puis, malgré son importance dans les exportations du Gabon, le pétrole est peu transformé sur place alors qu'on ne retrouve qu'une usine de raffinage, la Société Gabonaise de Raffinage (SOGARA).

La production pétrolière n'a cessé de croître entre 1970 et 1997, atteignant un record absolu en 1997 avec 18.6 millions de tonnes ou 135 millions de barils (370 000 b/j); ce qui maintenait le Gabon au troisième rang de l'Afrique subsaharienne, derrière le Nigéria et l'Angola. Mais tout semble indiquer qu'il s'agissait là d'un plafond étant donné les réserves limitées (estimées à environ 150 millions de tonnes) et l'absence de découverte notable depuis plus de 10 ans. La production pétrolière est en baisse constante depuis 1998. On note cependant une intensification des investissements dans l'exploration (notamment avec l'accord de nouveaux permis à des compagnies américaines, canadiennes et australiennes); ce qui fait suscité l'espoir pour de nouvelles découvertes et donc du redressement de la production à moyen et long termes. Qui plus est, le domaine de l'offshore ultra-profond (entre 2000m et 4000m d'eau) fait l'objet d'appels d'offres; mais les investissements dans ce domaine peuvent être très coûteux et ainsi décourager les investisseurs potentiels. Une décroissance progressive de la production semble inévitable au cours

des prochaines années; ce qui oblige l'État à intensifier la préparation de «après-pétrole» par l'attraction d'investissements vers d'autres secteurs de l'économie.

Les principales compagnies intervenant dans la production pétrolière sont : TotalFina-Elf Gabon, Shell-Gabon, Perenco, Agip et Chauvco. Toutefois, l'industrie pétrolière dénombre d'autres intervenants (Oxy, Amoco, Schlumberger, Amerada, etc.) oeuvrant notamment dans l'exploration et les autres services pétroliers. On note un intérêt de plus en plus marqué des **compagnies canadiennes** et australiennes dans le secteur pétrolier gabonais ces récentes années.

Les exportations des produits pétroliers gabonais vont principalement aux États-Unis (proportion de 72% en 2002 et 82% en 1997), puis en France (3% des exportations pétrolières 1997, 11% en 1998 et 8.5% en 1999), alors que les USA recevaient conjointement la même portion des exportations pétrolières que la France en 1990, soit 37%. Les autres clients pour le pétrole gabonais sont les Caraïbes, l'Asie Orientale et l'Europe; mais dans des proportions peu significatives.

Tableau 2.1

Production pétrolière et participation du pétrole dans les recettes de l'État au Gabon					
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Production pétrolière (en millier de tonnes: '000t)	18462	17500	15500	13500	12900
Exportations pétrolières (FOB) (en milliards de FCFA courants)	1172	840	1090	1781	1509
Exportations Totales (FOB) (en milliards de FCFA)	1537	1535	1272	1849	1850
Recettes pétrolières (en milliards de FCFA courants et % des recettes totales)	583 58.3%	456 51.1%	350 50.1%	1014 73.3%	790 58.2%
Recettes totales de l'État (en milliards de FCFA)	1000	892	699	1384	1357

Source: DREE, Ministère de l'économie et des finances (France), février, avril, 2002

Les mines

Dans le secteur minier, l'**épuiement de la mine d'uranium** (i.e. la fermeture de la Compagnie de la Mine d'Uranium de Franceville ou COMUF en juin 1999) et la stagnation de la sidérurgie mondiale limitant les utilisations du manganèse ont marginalisé ces dernières années la place des industries d'extractions dans l'économie gabonaise. Le manganèse a cependant un bel avenir, avec

une production annuelle de 2 millions de tonnes et des réserves considérables estimées à un siècle de production à ce rythme.

La **Compagnie Minière de l'Ogooué (COMILOG)**, jusqu'à récemment une société parapublique, exploite le minerai de manganèse depuis 1962. La compagnie a été privatisée en 1997 et se retrouve aux mains d'intérêts étrangers notamment du Groupe français ERAMET. La COMILOG a aussi entrepris récemment un projet de revalorisation de l'ancienne mine d'uranium. Une nouvelle usine d'enrichissement des fines du manganèse est rentrée en service en janvier 2001.

Il existe d'autres ressources minières plus ou moins abondantes au Gabon. On note la présence de l'**or** qui suscite déjà l'intérêt des groupes étrangers notamment les Sud-Africains et les Canadiens. De plus, un **large éventail de ressources géologiques** a pu être identifié, mais elles demeurent sous-exploitées ou pas du tout exploitées: fer, niobium, barytine, potasses, phosphates, soufre, marbre, granite, talc, diamant et les métaux ferreux comme le plomb, le zinc, et le cuivre. Un **grand projet d'exploitation des phosphates et du niobium** est au stade de la réalisation des études de faisabilité du projet. Enfin, les **réserves de fer** (estimées à plus de 300 millions de tonnes de minerai commercialisable) identifiées dans le Nord-Est du pays ne sont pas entamées, faute, dit-on, des débouchés commerciaux et du fait de l'insuffisance des infrastructures de transport.

2.2 Le secteur forestier gabonais

Le secteur forestier regorge de potentialités significatives pour le Gabon. Environ 80% du territoire est couvert de forêt. Toutefois, la forêt gabonaise subit d'intenses coupes de bois qui tendent à réduire cette superficie du territoire forestier. Les **22 millions d'hectares de forêt** présentent un potentiel commercial estimé à 400 millions de mètres cubes dont 130 millions de mètres cubes d'**Okoumé**, essence ayant des qualités presque imbattables pour l'industrie du déroulage. Le volume annuel de bois produit par l'exploitation forestière oscille autour de 2 millions de mètres cubes et ne concerne qu'une soixante d'essence sur un total de plus 400 essences forestières connues. Le couple Okoumé-Ozigo représente près de 80% de l'activité de la filière bois au Gabon.

L'Asie est le principal acheteur du bois gabonais, ensuite viennent l'Europe et le bassin méditerranéen.

La **Société Nationale des Bois du Gabon** (SNBG) détient le monopole de commercialisation du bois; sa vocation étant de maintenir les prix, de contrôler la qualité et d'assurer la promotion du bois gabonais. La SNBG est contrôlée à 51% par l'État gabonais et à 49% par les producteurs forestiers.

On note qu'environ **sept (7) sociétés assurent les 2/3 de la production de l'Okoumé**. La principale étant la Compagnie Forestière du Gabon (CFG) qui dispose d'une usine de production de contreplaqué à Port-Gentil. Cette entreprise parapublique est sur la liste des entreprises à privatiser par l'État gabonais. D'autres intervenants majeurs dans le secteur forestier sont des **entreprises malaisiennes** qui occupent beaucoup de terrain depuis quelques années au Gabon. Elles contrôlent aujourd'hui plus de 3 millions d'hectares de forêt, sans tenir compte des projets en négociation; ce qui représente 40% du total des permis.

La majeure partie de la production de bois (environ 80 à 90%) est encore exportée sous forme de grumes. La transformation est pratiquée pour seulement autour de 15% de la production. Les usines de transformation, jusque-là peu nombreuses, sont en net développement. Une dizaine d'usines sont maintenant opérationnelles et quelques projets sont en vue de réalisation. Il existe **4 principales usines de déroulage** (dont 3 de fabrication de contreplaqué) : La CFG, Rougier-Gabon, la Société de la Haute Mondah (SHM) et LUTEXFO. Parmi les scieries importantes on peut citer l'usine de la C.E.B du Groupe Thanry et Lutexfo-Soforga.

Afin d'encourager la transformation du bois sur place, l'État gabonais a mis en place des quotas progressifs de transformation qui prévoyaient la transformation de 50% de la production au Gabon en l'an 2000 (cet objectif n'a pas été atteint) et de 90% en l'an 2025. Ce qui est difficile à atteindre vu le nombre insuffisant d'entreprises capables d'absorber un tel degré d'activités, les faibles quantités et qualité de la main-d'œuvre ainsi que le faible niveau de formation des Gabonais dans le domaine forestier. Mais il demeure un potentiel de transformation significatif dans la filière du bois

au Gabon que certaines sociétés (autant étrangères que locales) se montrent de plus en plus intéressées à exploiter.

La principale question qui se pose présentement au Gabon est **comment assurer la pérennité de la ressource et des activités forestières** compte tenu des **pratiques de coupe douteuses** de certains exploitants forestiers et le manque d'application des règles de contrôle: les règles et les pratiques de gestion et d'aménagement durable la forêt gabonaise restent à raffiner et à être appliquées. Pour répondre à cette préoccupation, l'Organisation Africaine du Bois (OAB), dont fait partie le Gabon, a mis en place récemment un ensemble de critères d'aménagement durable en vue d'une éco-certification des pratiques forestières en Afrique.

Signalons au passage que l'expertise québécoise en matière de gestion et d'aménagement des forêts et le dynamisme des entrepreneurs forestiers du Québec constituent un intérêt pour le développement des relations d'affaires entre le Gabon et le Québec dans le domaine forestier, incluant l'implantation des entrepreneurs québécois dans l'industrie forestière du Gabon.

Sur le plan de l'emploi, malgré la forte contribution financière du pétrole dans les caisses de l'État, l'industrie pétrolière gabonaise crée peu d'emplois (1581 emplois en 1999, en baisse constante depuis 1996 selon les données du FMI), comparée à d'autres industries comme celui du bois (9 232 emplois en 1999, en hausse constante depuis 1995 selon les données du FMI), de la construction (5 365 emplois en 1999), même de l'agriculture primaire (2 168 emplois en 1999), de l'agro-industrie (2 270 emplois en 1999), etc.

2.3 L'agro-industrie et autres industries secondaires au Gabon

L'industrie agroalimentaire est essentiellement dominée par les secteurs de la sucrerie (une usine), l'eau minérale (une usine), des brasseries (5 usines), de la cigarette (une usine) et de la minoterie (une usine).

La plupart des entreprises de cette industrie ont été créées par l'État et sont maintenant sur la liste des privatisations si elles ne sont pas déjà cédées au secteur privé.

Par ailleurs, une cimenterie (Ciment du Gabon, sous contrôle norvégien) produit 130 000 tonnes de ciment par année.

Enfin, les investissements routiers importants attirent de nombreuses sociétés de bâtiment et travaux publics, notamment des filiales françaises.

2.4 Le secteur de la pêche et de la pisciculture au Gabon

Avec ses 800 Km de côtes maritimes, ses nombreux cours d'eau de plus de 10 000 km² de superficie et sa zone économique exclusive de 150 000 km², les **réserves halieutiques maritimes et continentales** du Gabon sont estimées respectivement à plus de 210 000 et 24 000 tonnes. La demande intérieure en poisson était estimée par le Ministère de la planification à 47 000 tonnes en 1993 et à 61 500 tonnes par an au tournant de l'an 2000 (les besoins réels locaux se situeraient actuellement autour de 40 000 tonnes par an). La **production locale** totale (artisanale et) oscille autour de 30 000 tonnes par année. Afin de réduire le niveau de dépendance alimentaire du Gabon vis-à-vis de l'étranger et de mieux profiter de ses ressources, le Gouvernement considère depuis quelques temps le secteur de la pêche (ou celui de l'agroalimentaire en général) comme prioritaire.

Toute la production de poisson et crustacées n'est pas consommée sur place, une partie étant exportée vers l'Union européenne et certains pays africains. Les principales **sociétés exportatrices de poisson** sont *Amerger*, *Sigapêche*, *Océane* et *Socol*.

Actuellement, on retrouve au Gabon une **flotte industrielle** d'environ 17 bateaux (dont 9 appartiennent à la société *Amerger*), mais 25 autres navires de différents pays (Nigéria, Chine, Corée, Espagne, etc.) disposent des autorisations de pêche. On estime la **pêche industrielle** à

environ 10 000 à 11 000 tonnes par année. Le chiffre d'affaires réalisé par ces armements étrangers est estimé à environ 40 milliards de FCFA (80 millions de dollars canadiens) et les redevances versées à l'État gabonais ne s'élèvent qu'à 130 millions de FCFA.

Il est nécessaire que le Gabon adopte un nouveau système de gestion des ressources. Il serait ainsi souhaitable de rediscuter des permis de pêche et de revoir l'encadrement réglementaire et fiscal qui semble défavoriser les entrepreneurs nationaux et aussi la transformation sur place des prises. Dans cette hypothèse, le système des coûts de fonctionnement devrait aussi être revu afin d'encourager l'investissement dans le secteur très prometteur de la pêche (baisse des coûts du carburant; assouplissement du fardeau fiscal et/ou douanier; etc.). Il faudrait aussi accentuer la formation des Gabonais dans le domaine de la pêche.

La **pêche artisanale** est difficile à évaluer faute de statistiques fiables. Elle concerne essentiellement les lagunes, fleuves, rivières et la zone maritime du littoral. Elle compte environ 2000 pirogues dont au moins la moitié immatriculée à Libreville. **Elle est pratiquée très majoritairement par des étrangers**, dont les Nigériens, Togolais, Sao-Toméens et les Équato-Guinéens. Environ 20% des Gabonais seulement pratiqueraient la pêche artisanale. On estime la production de la pêche artisanale autour de 23 000 à 24 000 tonnes par année.

Le Ministère de la Marine marchande étudie la mise en place d'un programme d'action en faveur du développement de la pêche artisanale. Il y a un **manque de politique claire de gestion de la ressource** alors que certaines zones sont en principe interdites à la pêche à cause de l'activité pétrolière; certains secteurs sont inadaptés à la pêche au chalut à cause des fonds rocheux; etc. Il y a lieu d'instaurer des moratoires sur certaines espèces (comme la crevette) afin de reconstituer les stocks. Par contre, certaines ressources demeurent inexploitées.

Aux activités de pêche on peut associer l'**aquaculture**. Au Gabon, la pisciculture en eaux dormantes est une tradition, surtout dans la province du Woleu-Ntem au Nord. Mais la quantité et l'impact économique, compte tenu de la **faible productivité** est encore négligeable. La pisciculture

d'eau douce permet de produire des espèces comme la Carpe, le Tilapia, le Silure et la Crevette, fort appréciés du consommateur local.

La production piscicole ne représente que 230 tonnes par an sur les 9 000 à 11 000 tonnes provenant de la pêche dans les lagunes et rivières du Gabon. Mais cette production pourrait être améliorée et devrait passer à 10 000 tonnes (selon les estimations de la FAO et des autorités gabonaises) pour satisfaire les besoins du million de consommateurs gabonais qui a de toute évidence une **préférence pour les poissons d'eau douce, vendus frais**, aux poissons de mer, souvent congelés.

Les professionnels de la pêche au Gabon estiment que les besoins du pays sont importants et la pisciculture peut jouer un rôle majeur pour les combler. Cependant, le **manque de moyens** (financiers et humains) handicape son développement. La pisciculture représente des avantages dans les domaines de l'environnement, de la consommation, de la santé publique et de l'emploi. Elle permet de valoriser les déchets agro-industriels (son de blé, résidus de brasserie, fabrication d'huile de palme, élevages de volaille, etc.). Les coûts des terrains, de l'énergie, du matériel de transport et du matériel piscicole s'évaluent à des dizaines de millions de F CFA (quelques milliers de dollars canadiens); ce qui n'est pas à la portée de toutes les bourses pour les petits producteurs locaux, d'autant plus que les banques sont réticentes à leur accorder des prêts.

Avec le concours de la Mission Française de Coopération et l'Institut de Recherches Agronomiques et Forestières, **8 projets d'élevage de Tilapia** ont été lancés. Deux autres projets d'élevage de crevette sont en étude, notamment au large de Pointe-Denis et à une centaine de kilomètres de Port-Gentil (à Batanga). D'autres projets de transformation sont à l'étude, dont une **usine de traitement du thon** (investissement germano-asiatique) ainsi qu'une unité de pêche et de transformation (par la Société Gabono- Mauritanienne de pêche).

Tout compte fait, le secteur de la pêche et de la pisciculture au Gabon paraît avoir beaucoup d'atouts pour décoller rapidement si les décisions politiques adéquates sont prises et si les investisseurs sont au rendez-vous.

2.5 Le secteur du tourisme au Gabon

À l'instar d'autres secteurs de l'économie gabonaise, **le tourisme a été longtemps délaissé au Gabon**. Pourtant, le pays dispose d'importants atouts pour faire du tourisme un secteur vivace et productif pour l'économie nationale.

Actuellement, le Gabon dispose d'environ 75 hôtels (la plupart de classe internationale), huit (8) agences de voyages et d'environ 150 restaurants. Plus encore, le pays est baigné par plus de 800 km de côtes offrant des **kilomètres de plage** dont sont friands les Européens, les Nord-Américains, les Japonais, etc. On y retrouve aussi une forêt luxuriante regorgeant d'espèces animales et végétales à visiter. Le Gabon offre aussi **cinq (5) réserves fauniques** dont *La Lopé*, *Moukalaba*, *Wonga-Wongué*, *Setté-Cama* et *Iguéla*. Les deux dernières offrent des activités de pêche sportive.

Pourtant, le tourisme demeure insignifiant comme activité économique au Gabon. La clientèle des hôtels est presque exclusivement constituée de gens d'affaires. Une étude financée par la Banque Afrique de Développement (BAD) a permis de mettre en place un **Plan Directeur de Développement Touristique (PDDT)**. Des investissements de près de 40 milliards de FCFA (environ 80 millions de dollars canadiens) sont prévus (par le Ministère du Tourisme en collaboration avec la BAD) pour 15 ans pour améliorer le secteur touristique gabonais qui offre un potentiel économique et financier non négligeable.

2.3 La balance commerciale et les partenaires commerciaux

Le solde commercial du Gabon est généralement positif depuis l'Indépendance du pays. La **balance commerciale** présente d'ailleurs un solde fortement positif en 2001 de 1 159 milliards de F CFA (environ 1.6 milliard de dollars US), équivalent à un taux de couverture de 257%, selon les données de la Direction des Relations Économiques Extérieures (DREE) de France. Cependant, on constate une détérioration de la balance commerciale entre 1996 et 1999 due à la baisse des exportations (crise du pétrole et du bois) alors que les importations demeurent en progression constante depuis au moins 1994.

Tableau 2.2

Évolution des échanges commerciaux du Gabon			
<i>En millions de FCFA, sauf (*)</i>	1999	2000	2001
Exportations	1325616	1901667	1895822
Importations	554453	680032	737092
Solde	771164	1221636	1158731
Taux de couverture (*), %	239	280	257
Solde balance of paiements (*)	41	77	8
<i>(en milliards de FCFA)</i>			

Source : DREE, Ministère de l'économie et des finances (France), Avril 2002

Les **importations gabonaises** étaient de l'ordre de 737 milliards de FCFA en 2001 (environ 1 milliard de \$US), soit une augmentation de 8.4% par rapport à leur niveau de 2000. Les **exportations** ont, quant à elles, subi une légère baisse de 0.3% en 2001 par rapport à leur niveau de 2000, passant de 1 902 milliards de FCFA (environ 2.7 milliards de \$US) à 1 896 milliards de F CFA (environ 2.6 milliards de \$US).

Tableau 2.3

Répartition des importations Gabonaises					
<i>(Montants en milliards de Francs CFA)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001 (%)
Produits agroalimentaires	91528	98312	95138	114581	123510 (17)
Boissons	11094	12713	11673	11645	13253 (2)
Autre produits de consommation	90533	109633	76704	90157	112320 (15)
<i>Total produits de consommation</i>	<i>193156</i>	<i>220658</i>	<i>183515</i>	<i>216384</i>	<i>249084 (34)</i>
Produits sidérurgiques	36466	33488	27876	28221	33355 (4)
Outillages, appareils électriques	115773	128968	95356	121123	135252 (18)
Machines et appareils électriques	37195	39376	32279	64375	58377 (8)
Vehicules	66607	78124	41325	57593	63255 (9)
Produits intermédiaires pour industrie construction et travaux publics	19726	24221	15322	17243	23023 (3)
Autres	109141	190195	158780	175092	174747 (24)
Total des importations	578064	715031	554453	680032	737092 (100)

Source : DREE, Ministère de l'économie et des finances (France), avril 2002.

N.B. Pour une conversion des montants en US\$, voici le taux de change moyen de 1US\$ en

FCFA : 1999:615; 2000:710; 2001:732. Ex. Pour 2001, les importations totales gabonaises

s'élevaient à 1.006 milliards de US\$.

Notons au passage qu'il existe parfois des différences déconcertantes dans les données (statistiques) disponibles sur le Gabon, notamment entre les données publiées par la Direction de la Statistique Commerciale du Fonds Monétaire International (FMI) et celles publiées par d'autres institutions comme la DREE (France), les Douanes gabonaises et le Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances du Gabon. Exemple, les données du FMI indiquaient que les exportations du Gabon avaient progressé de 8.9% en 1997 par rapport à leur niveau de 1996, comparativement à une baisse de 5% selon les données de la DREE de France, passant de 1 631 milliards de F CFA (1996) à 1 369 milliards de F CFA (1997).

Ayant absorbé 72% des exportations pétrolières gabonaises en 2002, les **États-Unis représentent le plus important client du Gabon**. Ils renforcent ce rôle depuis la dévaluation du Franc CFA en 1994 et aussi à cause de la demande des raffineries de la côte Est des États-Unis pour lesquelles le pétrole gabonais conviendrait particulièrement. **Les États-Unis ont représenté en moyenne 61% des exportations gabonaises en devises entre 1998 et 2001**. Cette part a un peu baissé à 56% en 2001. **L'Union Européenne** est le 2e client du Gabon avec environ 19% des exportations gabonaises, dont 14% en direction de la France (2e client en importance du Gabon) en 2001. Les États-Unis ont progressivement pris la place de l'Union Européenne comme principal client du Gabon à cause principalement du pétrole qui y est vendu; tenant compte du fait que l'or noir représente la principale source de devises du Gabon. Les autres clients du Gabon sont : la Chine (principal acheteur du bois gabonais), la Suisse, la Corée du Sud, l'Inde, le Japon, le Sénégal, etc.

Le commerce entre le Gabon et les autres pays d'Afrique est quasi insignifiant (3% des ventes en moyenne entre 1998 et 2001) et particulièrement le commerce avec les autres membres de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale (CEMAC), soit 0.7% durant la même période. Ce qui démontre une faible intégration économique sous-régionale et africaine malgré l'existence de nombreuses organisations africaines dont l'objectif est justement l'intégration économique.

Tableau 2.4

Destination des exportations gabonaises par pays ou zone commerciale				
<i>En millions des francs CFA</i>	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)
Etats-Unis	1028500 67%	750800 59%	1157900 63%	1040882 56%
France	173500 11%	108800 8%	82900 4%	255802 14%
Chine	53600	98500	124700	94720
Suisse/Lichtenstein	4000	40100	102100	70432
Corée du Sud	32500	30800	68800	65389
TOTAL	1534700	1271600	1849341	1849656
Afrique	30 300	26 600	27 000	95 031
CEMAC	4 600 0.3%	7 300 0.6%	10 530 0.6%	21 749 1%
Union Européenne	278 100 18%	196 000 15%	186 100 10%	348 508 19%

Source : DREE, Ministère de l'économie et des finances (France), avril 2002.

N.B. Pour une conversion des montants en \$US, voici le taux de change moyen de 1\$US en FCFA : 1999 : 615; 2000 : 710; 2001 : 732.5. Ex. Pour 2001, les exportations totales gabonaises s'élevaient à 2.5 milliards de \$US.

L'Union Européenne était, en 2001, le premier fournisseur du Gabon avec une part de marché de 63.5%. Elle maintient cette position depuis de longues années. **La France occupe à elle seule 40% du marché gabonais.** Cette part de marché de la France s'est déjà établie autour de 48% avant la dévaluation du F CFA en 1994, avant de chuté à 40% cette année-là et à 39% en 1997, après quelques remontées en 1995 et 1996. Les États-Unis suivent l'Union Européenne avec 11% des importations gabonaises en 2001 et le Japon ensuite avec 6%. Les autres fournisseurs du Gabon sont : la Hollande, le Benelux, le Maroc, le Cameroun, la Côte D'ivoire, l'Afrique du Sud, la

Thaïlande, l'Inde, la Chine, etc. Toute l'Afrique ne fournit qu'à peine 8% des importations gabonaises.

Tableau 2.5

Provenance des importations gabonaises				
<i>En millions de FCFA</i>	1999	2000	2001	% 2001
France	308100	258600	296761	40.3
Etats-Unis	95200	65300	78847	10.7
Japon	42700	29100	42003	5.7
Hollande	23600	19200	29548	4.0
Belgique et Luxembourg	23900	16000	28962	3.9
TOTAL DES IMPORTATIONS	715000	554500	737092	n/a
Afrique	43 600	34 800	58 030	7.9
CEMAC	10 100	12 000	23 052	3.1
Union Européenne	476 200	374 400	468 386	63.5

Source : DREE, Ministère de l'économie et des finances (France), avril 2002.

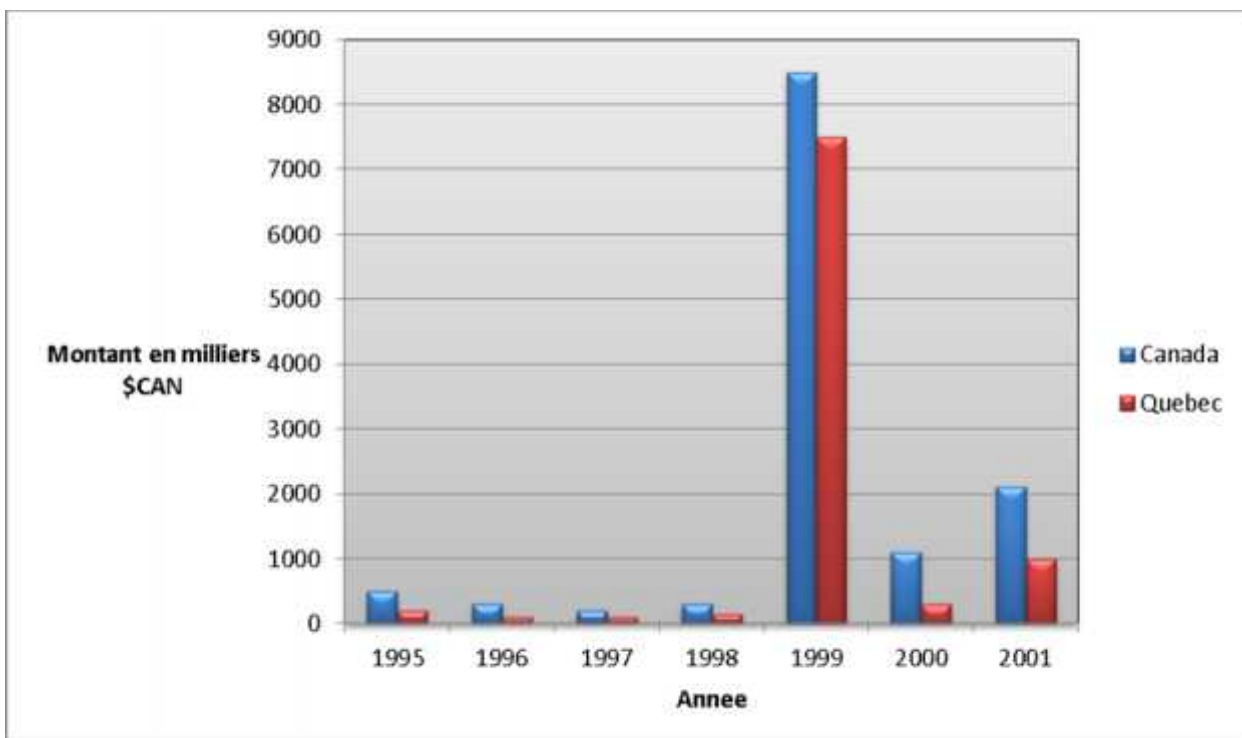
N.B. Pour une conversion des montants en \$US, voici le taux de change moyen de 1\$US en FCFA:1999:615; 2000:710; 2001:732.5. Ex. Pour 2001, les importations totales gabonaises s'élevaient à 1.006 milliards de \$US.

2.4 Commerce avec le Canada et le Québec

La part du Canada et du Québec dans les exportations du Gabon est relativement minime. En effet, les exportations gabonaises vers le Canada (ou importations canadiennes du Gabon) s'élevaient à 2.3 millions de dollars canadiens en 2001, dont 1.2 million (52% des exportations gabonaises vers le Canada) vers le Québec. Ces exportations du Gabon vers le Canada sont en baisse par rapport à

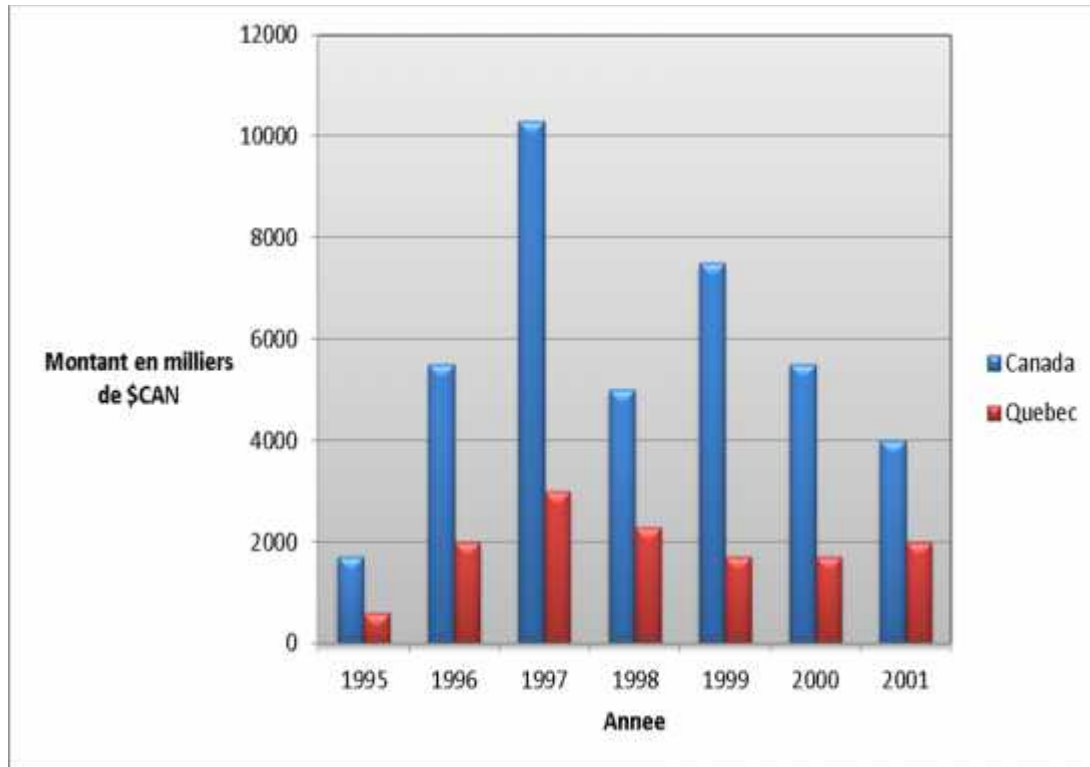
leur niveau de 1999 (8.6 millions de dollars), mais demeurent nettement supérieures à leur niveau d'avant 1999. Le pic des importations canadiennes du Gabon en 1999 peut s'expliquer par une soudaine montée des ventes de produits pétroliers (huiles brutes, minéraux bitumeux) gabonais au Canada, alors que le prix du pétrole atteignait un niveau très bas. On n'observe pas du tout d'autres ventes de pétrole au Canada par la suite.

Graph 2.1 **Importations canadiennes et québécoises du Gabon**



Les importations gabonaises en provenance du Canada et du Québec (ou les exportations canadiennes vers le Gabon) représentent moins de 1% des importations totales gabonaises. Le Canada a exporté vers le Gabon des marchandises pour environ 4.3 millions de dollars canadiens en 2001, dont 2.1 millions pour les exportations en provenance du Québec (49% des exportations totales du Canada vers le Gabon). Ces exportations sont en baisse quasi-constante depuis 1997 alors qu'elles avaient atteint 10.4 millions de dollars canadiens.

Graph 2.2 Exportations canadiennes et québécoises vers le Gabon



En terme de produits, parmi les principales importations gabonaises en provenance du Canada en 2000 et 2001, on retrouve: les biens d'équipement de différentes sortes (tracteurs, véhicules terrestres, pièces d'équipements, matériels et machines électriques, etc.), les produits agroalimentaires, les meubles, etc. Parmi les exportations gabonaises, on retrouve essentiellement les produits du bois, les légumes, les plantes médicinales, du matériel électrique, etc. Si l'on compare aux autres années, on remarque que le commerce entre le Canada et le Gabon varie énormément d'année en année en termes de produits échangés. Cela indique qu'aucun créneau particulier n'a été développé dans le commerce entre les deux pays et que les échanges varient au gré des opportunités pas toujours identifiées d'avance. Toutefois, le développement récent du secteur du bois au Gabon peut représenter un créneau commercial qui se renforcera entre le Gabon

et le Canada. On peut aussi y ajouter le secteur informatique et électronique avec le développement d'Internet et des autres technologies de l'information et de la communication.

Tableau 2.6

Exportations canadiennes vers le Gabon par groupe de produits		
<i>(Montants en dollars canadiens)</i>	2000	2001
		\$ 538990
Tracteurs	\$ 2090064	839136
Viandes, Abats de volaille	239558	183696
Voitures/Véhicules divers et accessoires	263299	524759
Résines diverses	86436	140000
Machines traitement de l'information	49390	518492
Pièces d'appareils	36870	56200
Imprimés, gravures, photos	19785	28715
Abats de bovins, porcins...	13218	64799
Appareils de laboratoires photos	7956	361775
Meubles et accessoires	-	141708
Poissons congelés	-	135500
Constructions préfabriquées	-	111476
Composés hétérocycliques	-	

TOTAL AUTRES PRODUITS	\$ 2610272	\$ 620899
TOTAL TOUS LES PRODUITS	\$ 5416848	\$ 4266145

Source : *Strategis (Industrie Canada)*.

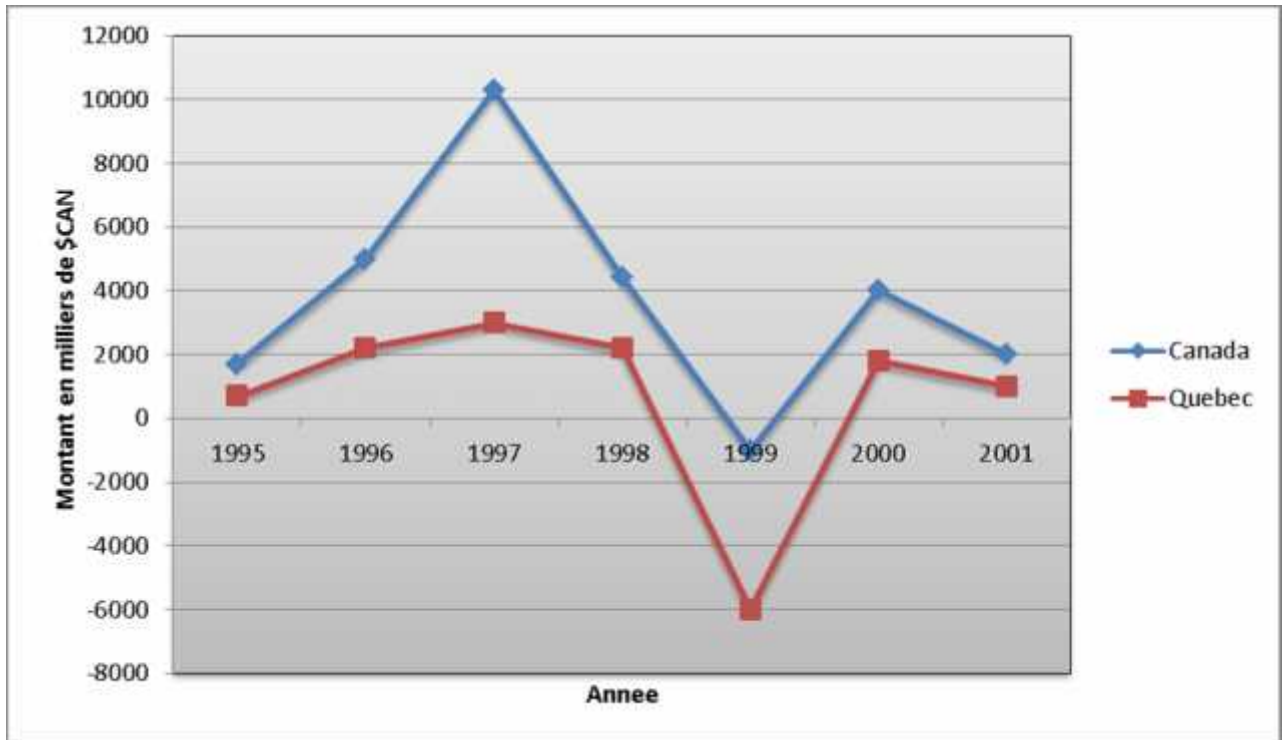
Tableau 2.7

Exportations canadiennes vers le Gabon par groupe de produits		
<i>(Montants en dollars canadiens)</i>	2000	2001
Feuilles de placage, bois sciés ou tranchés longs	\$ 588469	\$ 1752674
Condensateurs électriques	629405	253147
Carottes, navets, betteraves, racines comestibles	26101	6864
Légumes à cosse frais ou réfrigérés	10574	23128
Plantes, graines et fruits pour parfum et médecine	1313	606
Accessoires de véhicules automobiles	370	4303
TOTAL AUTRES PRODUITS	\$ 47604	\$ 233046
TOTAL TOUS LES PRODUITS	\$ 1303836	\$ 2273768

Source : *Strategis (Industrie Canada)*.

En somme, les relations commerciales entre le Canada et le Gabon demeurent très faibles et évoluent en dents de scie depuis 1995 comme le montrent le tableau suivant. La balance commerciale du Gabon envers le Canada est généralement déficitaire, sauf pour l'année 1999 alors que le Gabon affichait un surplus commercial de 1.1 million de \$CAN avec le Canada (5.9 millions avec le Québec).

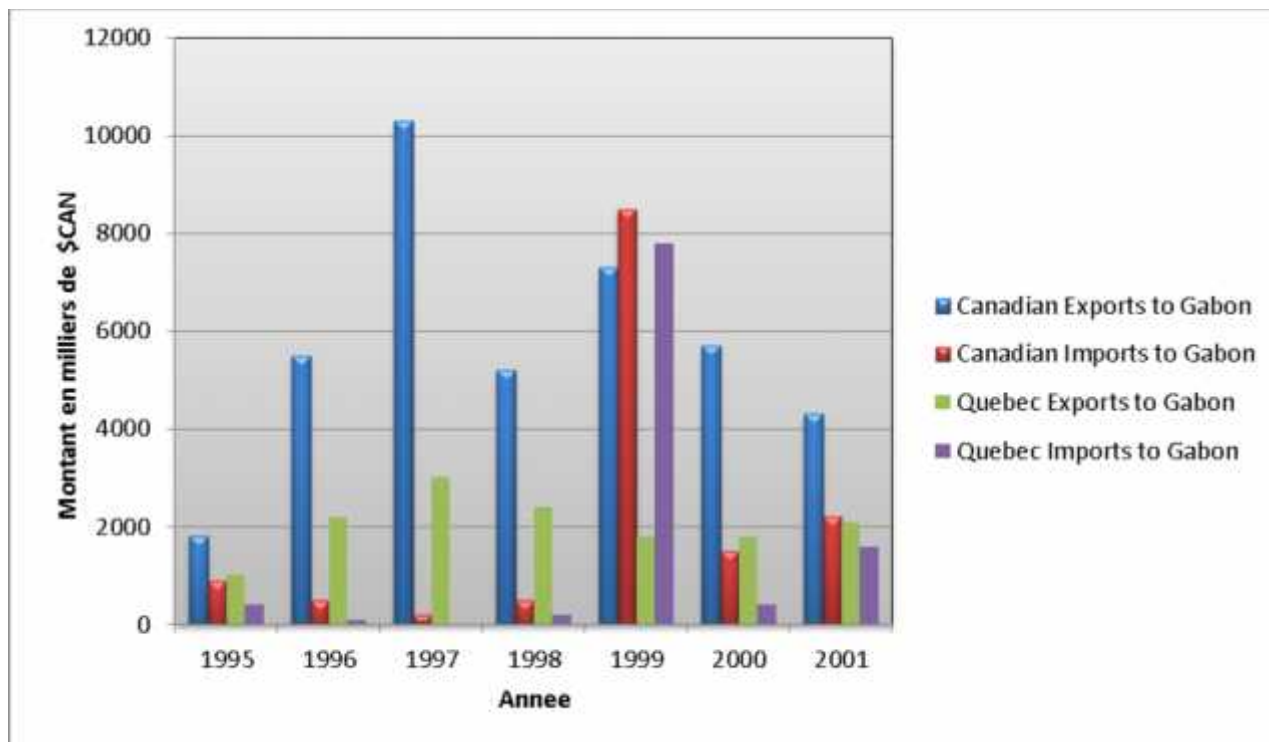
Graph 2.3 Balance commerciale du Canada et du Québec avec le Gabon



Source : Strategis (Industrie Canada)

Tableau 2.8

Données sur le commerce canado-gabonais					
<i>(Montants en milliers de dollars canadiens)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Importations en provenance du Gabon					
Canada	107	326	8569	1304	2274
Québec	7	107	7653	244	1245
Exportations vers le Gabon					
Canada	10432	5050	7445	5417	4266
Québec	3027	2554	1782	1839	2147
Balance commerciale avec le Gabon					
Canada	10325	4724	-1124	4113	1992
Québec	3020	2447	-5871	1595	902
Source : Strategis (Industrie Canada)					

Graph 2.4 Évolution du commerce entre le Canada et le Gabon

Notons finalement qu'en novembre 2002, le Canada et le Gabon signaient une Convention fiscale en vue d'éviter les doubles impositions et de prévenir l'évasion fiscale en matière d'impôts sur le revenu et sur la fortune. Cette convention peut avoir des effets positifs sur l'investissement canadien au Gabon dans la mesure où elle peut rassurer les investisseurs. Les pays peuvent mutuellement bénéficier d'un renforcement de leurs relations commerciales. Pour ce faire, le Canada et le Québec doivent se montrer plus agressifs sur le marché gabonais, car les investisseurs et entrepreneurs français voudront certainement garder ce marché relativement lucratif en Afrique que représente le Gabon.

2.5 Emploi et entrepreneurship au Gabon

On estime le taux de chômage à environ 20% au Gabon. Il demeure encore plus élevé chez les jeunes de moins de 30 ans. L'État est l'un des principaux pourvoyeurs d'emplois à travers ses sociétés parapubliques et son administration (Fonction publique). La main-d'œuvre étrangère représente un peu plus du quart de la population active. Selon les données du FMI, le secteur

tertiaire englobait 75% des effectifs du secteur formel au Gabon en 1999 alors que l'administration publique (centrale et locale) représentait 65% des emplois du secteur tertiaire. Le secteur secondaire demeure un maillon faible de la création d'emplois au Gabon avec environ 12% des emplois en 1999 (voir tableau suivant).

En ce qui a trait aux entreprises, **on compte plus de 6 000 entreprises dans le secteur formel et 10 000 dans le secteur informel au Gabon.** Parmi les entreprises du secteur formel, 78% sont des PME/PMI, 5% des micro-entreprises et 17% des grandes entreprises appartenant en majorité à des intérêts étrangers (i.e. entreprises multinationales) dont les Français. **Les Gabonais contrôlent environ 40% des PME/PMI** et les ressortissants ouest-africains et de la sous-région de la CEMAC sont les principaux fondateurs des micro-entreprises exerçant leurs activités dans le secteur informel, respectivement 70% et 90%.

Notons par ailleurs que la présence française est marquée au Gabon non seulement en termes d'entreprises, mais aussi au niveau de la coopération économique et financière. En effet, en 2001, **plus de 60% des concours extérieurs du Gabon en termes financiers et techniques sont français**; de même que **70% des investissements étrangers au Gabon**, 75% des dépôts bancaires, la majorité des assurances (i.e. filiales françaises), voire une bonne part du commerce et des autres services. Le premier contribuable du Gabon est le groupe pétrolier TotalFinaElf. Le Gabon est aussi le 2^e pays d'Afrique pour le stock des investissements français. Les liens historiques entre la France et le Gabon, la présence de nombreux Français au Gabon (environ 10 000), la ressemblance des cadres juridiques français et gabonais, ainsi que la présence de plusieurs voies de communications maritimes et aériennes entre la France et le Gabon peuvent expliquer cette forte présence française en terre gabonaise.

Tableau 2.9

Répartition des emplois salariés par secteur d'activité au Gabon, 1995-1999					
(Nombre d'employés)	1995	1996	197	1998	1999
Secteur primaire	12619	13442	13332	13492	14400
Agriculture	2216	2090	2075	2162	2168
Industries pétrolières	1742	1799	1733	1797	1581
Mines	1842	1796	1575	1531	1419
Industries forestières	6819	7757	7949	8002	9232
Secteur secondaire	12263	12792	13224	13338	13042
Agro-Industries	2669	2483	2202	2249	2270
Autres industries	3221	3572	3566	3532	3486
Électricité et raffinage	2022	1911	1912	1921	1921
Construction	4351	4826	5544	5636	5365
Secteur tertiaire	72983	75330	76898	81748	81725
Transport	9550	9804	9530	9763	9494
Institutions financières	1995	2003	2076	2141	1990
Administration publique	47715	48484	49476	53620	53188

Commerce	5338	5577	5689	5979	5867
Services	8385	9462	10127	10245	11186
Emploi total	97865	101564	103454	108578	109167
Secteur public	66503	66735	65709	69516	68718
<i>Dont: entreprises publiques</i>					
Secteur privé	18788	18251	16233	15896	15530
Emploi total	31362	34829	37745	39062	40449
(en pourcentage de l'emploi total)					
primaire	12.9%	13.2%	12.9%	12.4%	13.2%
Secteur secondaire	12.5%	12.6%	12.8%	12.3%	11.9%
Secteur tertiaire	74.6%	74.2%	74.3%	75.3%	74.9%

Source : Ministère de l'Économie et des Finances du Gabon, cité par : FMI, 2002.

Enfin, depuis les quatre dernières années, la crise économique qui frappe le Gabon oblige le gouvernement à revoir ses politiques de développement et à prioriser le développement du secteur privé, notamment les PME et les autres formes d'entreprises (du moins sur le plan du discours). Il a été créé un Ministère des PME. De plus, une nouvelle *Charte des investissements* (ex. Code des investissements) est rentrée en vigueur en 1998. Elle est régie par la Loi 15/98 du 23 juillet 1998. La Charte énonce une série d'objectifs et de mécanismes qui devraient favoriser l'investissement et la création de nouvelles entreprises au Gabon. Sur le plan fiscal par exemple, la Charte prévoit une exemption d'impôt pour les trois (3) premiers exercices d'exploitation d'une entreprise, le report des résultats négatifs sur les exercices ultérieurs, les crédits d'impôts visant à favoriser la recherche technologique, la diminution du taux d'imposition des sociétés, etc. Sur le plan administratif, la

Charte prévoit des mécanismes visant à réduire la lourdeur administrative: création d'un **guichet unique pour la promotion des investissements et l'enregistrement des entreprises**; décentralisation de la délivrance des agréments; fixation des délais de délivrance d'un agrément à quinze jours au maximum; etc. Sur le plan du financement des PME, un **Fonds de développement et d'expansion (FODEX)** des PME/PMI a été créé pour des projets d'investissement ne dépassant pas 150 millions de FCFA; de même qu'un **Fonds d'Aide et de Garantie** (existe depuis 1981) renforcé pour les projets ne dépassant pas 15 millions de FCFA d'investissement. Sur plan de l'encadrement, l'agence de promotion des PME, **Promogabon**, sous-tutelle du Ministère des PME est en pleine reconstruction après des années d'inefficacité durant lesquelles le secteur des PME n'a véritablement pas décollé. Sur plan international, il est possible d'avoir accès à des programmes d'aide aux entreprises voulant investir et/ou exporter à l'étranger (donc au Gabon), tout dépendamment des dispositions à cet égard dans chaque pays.

2.6 Conclusion et perspectives d'affaires

Le Gabon est une «petite» République pleine de potentiels économiques et d'affaires. Comme l'Afrique elle-même, il vit une certaine marginalisation dans les relations commerciales au niveau international. Pourtant, bien des pays comme la France ont su profiter des énormes richesses du Gabon; surtout grâce aux liens coloniaux préexistants et à une bonne connaissance du terrain des Français. L'Amérique du Nord (principalement le Canada) demeure encore à l'écart du développement du Gabon à cause notamment de la distance et des tractations géopolitiques internationales qui font ressembler le Gabon à une «forteresse française». De plus, l'image négative de l'Afrique au Canada n'aide pas à relever l'intérêt des milieux d'affaires canadiens et québécois pour le Gabon et l'Afrique, avec notamment des événements comme les guerres civiles, les famines et les inondations qui portent exagérément ombrage à l'ensemble du continent. Pourtant, une grande partie de l'Afrique est en période de croissance (avec les taux de croissance les plus forts au monde) et se retourne vers l'extérieur depuis déjà quelques années. Qui plus est, le

rendement sur l'investissement dans les projets africains dépasse de beaucoup ceux du monde (y compris l'Asie et l'Amérique Latine) avec un taux de rendement estimé à 29% réalisé par les entreprises américaines entre 1990 et 1997 (C.f., MAECI du Canada, 2000). L'Afrique se montre aussi depuis la fin des années 1990 comme la grande destination des exportations canadiennes devant les marchés plus en vue comme l'Inde, la Russie, le Chili et l'Argentine.

Le Gabon doit donc évoluer dans ce contexte d'ambiguïté qui prévaut dans la présentation des économies africaines en Amérique du Nord. Le développement du Gabon passe par la revalorisation d'autres secteurs économiques hors-pétrole (Forêt, Agriculture, Pêche, Tourisme, Nouvelles technologies de l'information, etc.), de l'éducation et de la formation, de la santé, de la création d'entreprises nouvelles viables, etc. Une telle diversification de l'économie gabonaise devrait se faire aussi avec une politique cohérente de développement (économique) local, une diversification des partenaires commerciaux étrangers, notamment à travers les transferts de technologies et des connaissances, la cogestion d'entreprises et les investissements directs au Gabon.

Avec d'énormes richesses minières ou géologiques, le Gabon demeure un pays très intéressant pour les échanges commerciaux internationaux. De plus, la volonté des autorités en place de diversifié son économie trop dépendante du pétrole ainsi que les partenaires commerciaux, constitue une avenue importante pour le développement futur des relations économiques entre le Gabon et d'autres pays (hormis la France) dont le Canada (y compris le Québec). Qui plus est, le climat politique stable, le revenu *per capita* parmi les plus élevés d'Afrique, la présence d'infrastructures viables et les lois commerciales favorables à l'investissement étranger sont quelques éléments qui font du Gabon un espace propice aux Affaires en Afrique. De plus, le Gabon peut servir de base de localisation pour les entreprises ayant une vision régionale plus avantageuse pour les affaires en l'Afrique.

Malgré les dernières années difficiles, les perspectives de croissance économique demeurent encourageantes pour le Gabon (taux de croissance estimé à 5.5% pour 2000-2001). Cependant, le

gouvernement doit continuer à assainir les dépenses publiques, à renforcer les mesures de contrôle des dépenses de l'État (meilleure gestion des finances publiques ou bonne gouvernance), à assurer la bonne gouvernance, à lutter contre la corruption et à procéder à une meilleure redistribution des fruits de la croissance (i.e. la richesse nationale) dans la population. Il en va, non seulement du renforcement du développement par la base, mais aussi de la crédibilité du Gabon face à ses créanciers internationaux et aux investisseurs potentiels.

Dans une perspective de développement des relations Gabon-Canada et/ou Gabon-Québec, notons pour terminer qu'il serait intéressant qu'il se développe dès à présent un réseau de contacts entre les régions du Québec (Estrie, Montréal, Québec, Centre-du-Québec, Mauricie, etc.) et le Gabon.

Les gens d'affaires du Canada et du Québec devraient être plus agressifs dans sur le marché gabonais ou africain, sans le concéder d'avance à un pays. Il faut considérer que les époques changent, notamment dans la redistribution coloniale du commerce dans le vieux continent. Il serait souhaitable d'augmenter les visites officielles et privées mutuelles entre les gens d'affaires et autres intervenants économiques et politiques dans les deux pays (Canada-Gabon). On penserait par exemple à l'organisation de missions commerciales au Gabon; sorte «d'Équipe-Estrie» ou «Équipe-Montréal» ou carrément «Équipe-Québec» ou «Équipe-Canada». Comme il est envisageable d'accentuer les missions économiques gabonaises au Canada, notamment dans les régions du Québec relativement à toutes sortes de secteurs économiques comme l'agriculture (ou agro-alimentaire), les mines, l'énergie, les NTIC, les services financiers, les services aux entreprises et aux particuliers, les coopératives, l'environnement, etc. Évidemment, il ne s'agit pas de se lancer dans la précipitation, tout est question de vision à long terme des choses, donc de planification. D'autant plus qu'au Gabon et comme dans beaucoup d'autres pays (notamment d'Afrique et d'Asie), la patience est de rigueur dans le développement des relations commerciales.

CHAPTER 3

TRANSLATED DOCUMENT

PART VI

3.0 Gabon's economy: An oil-driven economy.

By Franklin Assoumou Ndong

3.1 Gabon's economic base and some key facts.

At independence in 1960, economic systems such as socialism, Marxism-Leninism, capitalism, social democracy, etc. cropped up in Gabon. The country had scarcely used its natural resources and was not prepared for the significant economic transformation that was about to take place. The theory adopted was based on three main principles - 1) maintenance of the liberal option and opening up of the economy to the outside world, 2) development of regional cooperation at the continental level and/or within the sub-region), 3) diversification of the economy and transformation of methods of production in rural areas. Gabon's recent past shows that its economic strategy was first based on planned and controlled liberalism, and second on "democratic and collaborative progressivism" (especially under the one party regime that the country experienced from 1968 to 1990) which sought, theoretically, to improve the standard of living and well-being of its people, both in the urban and rural areas.

In the last decade, a strong liberal movement challenged the control of the economy by the state, first in rich countries and later in less-developed countries as has been the case in Gabon since its independence. Currently, there are two schools of thought that are locked in the discussion over the concept of liberalism. They include the liberal "social democrat" movement or the social movement and the neo-liberal movement. The social movement is against any form of liberalism that leads to the neglect of the most destitute in the society (the sick, low-skilled workers, the unemployed, the

elderly, the physically challenged, etc.) and supports some form of intervention from the Welfare State depending on the circumstance. The neo-liberalists, on the other hand, are against the *Welfare State* system and for that matter permits State intervention in economic affairs, thinking that such a system only leads to crisis. They, therefore, propose non-interference by the State. This policy which is now being implemented almost all over the world considers the State as a “facilitator” and not an “actor” in the economy. For the latter, the duty of the State is to support development and not to create wealth. Many countries are committed to supporting development especially through the globalization of economies and Gabon is no exception given the numerous privatization programs it has already undertaken as well as those underway and the fact that the State has begun privatizing big state-owned companies and parastatals such as the Gabonese Energy and Water Company (SEEG), which is being run by Vivendi, the Trans-Gabon Railway (OCTRA), the Haut-Ogooué Sugar Company (SOSUHO), the Gabonese Commercial Development Company for the Distribution Industry (CECA- GADIS), and more recently, the Gabonese Cement and Forestry companies which are already being managed by private concession. Other companies are being considered for privatization or already undergoing privatization. They include Gabon Telecom and affiliates, (which was created out of the demerger of the Posts and Telecommunications Ministry into Gabon Telecom and Gabon Posts and its subsidiary), *Libertis* (cellular phones); the Agriculture and Livestock Development of Gabon Corporation (AGROGABON); Gabon Rubber Cultivation Development Corporation (HEVEGAB); Port-Gentil Agricultural Firm (AGRIPOG); Gabon computers; National Stevedoring and Transit Company (SNAT); Gabon Airways; etc.

Revenue obtained from the commercialization of natural resources, especially oil, in the past enabled the state increase employment opportunities through the creation of state-owned companies. The State however, initiated expensive industrial projects whose economic and financial benefits were questionable. Sector choices, which are not always beneficial, are made without considering the country’s debt portfolio. This situation has compelled the State to submit itself to a comprehensive restructuring program at the prompting of Bretton Woods’ institutions

(i.e. the IMF and the World Bank). This restructuring program is backed by the devaluation of the FCFA, tax and customs reform (with member states of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, CEMAC) and the introduction of Valued Added Tax (VAT). In 1999, the country suffered serious financial (and social) crises due to the drastic fall in global commodity prices (including oil) from which it derives its revenue. In addition, black gold production is likely to drop in future due to the lack of new oil finds. Moreover, the neglect of uranium production and the cyclical downturns in the sale of Timber (especially to Asia) constitute major setbacks in Gabon's economic development. In the view of these signs of decline in the oil industry, the new minister, who had a mandate for ensuring austerity as the Head of the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning, attempted at the beginning of the year 2000, to reduce his expenditure after a fusion especially by reducing the number of ministers and the over-bloated number of civil servants (estimated at 40000, of which 25% are classified as "ghost names"), by ensuring a stricter management of public funds and by repayment of debt. The results of this austerity policy are greeted with mixed feelings. The said minister no longer occupies his position at the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning and the number of ministers has even increased over the past few months. The current increase in the price of crude oil and improvement in sales from Timber seem to give some assurance of an end to the crisis, but this is not enough because the country is facing many problems which are hampering its development, problems such as the dependence of its economy on oil, a lack of entrepreneurial dynamism which is still pronounced among the people of Gabon and poor management practices acquired over the years. Gabon, therefore, seriously needs to diversify its economic base. It also needs to diversify its sources of revenue or foreign exchange and ensure a stricter check on its public funds. One way Gabon could diversify its economy by establishing new efficient job-creating businesses through local initiatives. Cooperation and partnership with foreign countries (in this case, Canada and/or Quebec) is also an important avenue for creating new businesses. Hence the need for Gabon to expand its spectrum of foreign partners

beyond France, which is already very visible in all the economic sectors of the country, including the oil and forestry sectors.

3.2 Gabon's economy: An economy that is still not diversified

Gabon's economy which is poorly diversified and highly dependent on crude oil prices, the USD and the euro, has all the characteristics of a typical cash economy, in that, it is externally oriented and highly indebted. It also has a secondary or productive sector that is "perpetually" deep in debt, a little competition among businesses, a poorly performing SME/SMI sector, and an informal sector which keeps expanding. This situation has led to growing unemployment and impoverishment of an increasing number of the people of Gabon.

The oil windfall which the country has been receiving since 1970 has led to a very low level of processing activities in Gabon. **Oil and mining products** are exported in their raw state, about 90% of **timber exports** are not processed, and more than a third of these raw logs belong to the Okoumé species alone, the best species for peeling veneers and plywood. In addition, Gabon's **Agriculture**, which is mainly cash crop and subsistence monoculture, and which has long been neglected to the advantage of imported products (especially those from Europe), is largely underdeveloped. In fact, agriculture (including livestock, fisheries with the exception of forestry) contributes only about 5% of GDP and almost nothing for exports (less than 1%). Despite numerous measures put in place by the State to improve Agriculture, this percentage compared to GDP, has not seen any significant change for at least 15 years. **Nutritional imbalance (lack of food self-sufficiency)** in Gabon is still very high, yet the country still depends on imports. According to IMF reports, about 125 billion Franc CFA (approximately 170.8 million dollars) was spent on agro-food imports, excluding drinks, in 2001. The issue of food self-sufficiency in Gabon cannot be viewed in the same manner as in the case of other African countries, especially sub-Saharan countries, since it can be said that Gabon has the "means to import" food. The people of Gabon have a relatively higher standard of living in Africa because of their oil windfall, although the latter does not guarantee a fair

distribution of the country's wealth amongst the entire population. In fact, Gabon's relatively higher per capita income (compared to other African countries) conceals a marked disparity in the distribution of the country's wealth amongst the people.

With a population of about 1.2 million and an oil revenue which enabled Gabon to record a **per capita income ranging from \$3500 to \$5000** (\$3740 in 2001 which according to IMF reports is one of the highest in Africa), Gabon, still referred to as "El Dorado" has all the characteristics of an "oil emirate". This former member and still a member of the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC) often has black gold accounting for over 80% of its export revenue (81% in 1996, 77% in 1997, and 82% in 2001). Again black gold generally contributes more than 40% of its gross domestic product (43% in 1996, 41% in 1997, 42% in 2001 and 36% in mid-2002) and accounts for more than 50% of the country's budgetary revenue (57% in 1998 and 58% in 2001). Other major export products are lagging far behind. **Forest products** (which constitute the country's second richest commodity) accounted for 13.6% of the country's export revenue in 1996, 11% in 1998 and 13% in 2001. **Manganese** (of which the country is the world's fourth producer and third exporter with reserves estimated at 200 million tonnes) accounted for 2% of Gabon's exports in 1996, 3.1% in 1998 and 1% in 2001. **Uranium** accounted for 0.3% of her exports in 1996. Its production was, however, stopped in 1999.

Furthermore, Gabon's GDP structure is characterized by the **dominance of the oil industry** which generated more than a third of the country's wealth in 2001 (representing 42% of GDP) and the significant contribution of the tertiary sector. Generally speaking, in 2001, the primary sector accounted for 50% of GDP, the secondary sector accounted for 8% and the tertiary sector accounted for 42% (see the table below). This structural imbalance of the country's economy sometimes impacts negatively on the socio-economic distribution of its wealth especially by the concentration of economic activities in areas where oil is exploited to the detriment of rural and semi-urban areas which have been drained of their inhabitants. Moreover the rise in oil prices

combined with the **uneven distribution of wealth** has created a paradoxical situation where **wealth and poverty co-exist side by side on a daily basis**. Indeed, Libreville is often (sadly) ranked among the most expensive cities in the world. In fact, Gabon's capital was ranked fourth with Hong-Kong after Tokyo, Osaka-Kobe and Oslo in the 2002 world ranking of the most expensive cities in the world (according to *The Economist Intelligence Unit*). It, however, came before cities such as Zurich, London, Geneva, Paris, Montreal, New York or Los Angeles. Nonetheless, as mentioned earlier, UNDP data shows that about 60% of Gabon's population live below the poverty line whereas 23% live in abject poverty. Social indicators such as health, education, life expectancy, infant mortality rate, poverty, etc. are therefore far less brighter in comparison with the appreciable level of per capita income in Gabon.

Table 3.0

Breakdown of GDP per business sector, 1997 – 2001						
<i>(Figures in Billions of Franc CFA)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	(%)
Primary sector	1551	962	1309	1983	1701	50
Agriculture, livestock production, hunting and fishing	132	134	137	141	147	
Forestry	92	52	72	86	87	
Crude oil	1274	714	1042	1702	1415	42
Mining	53	62	57	54	52	
Secondary sector	341	365	300	281	285	8
Food and beverage industries	40	45	43	43	45	

Wood industries	15	16	21	16	21	
Other industries	82	87	78	84	87	
Refinery	9	16	17	20	21	
Electricity, Water	36	29	33	34	35	
Construction and Public Works	152	159	99	70	62	
Research and oilfield services	7	12	8	14	14	
Tertiary sector	1001	1082	1040	1067	1107	33
Transport	164	172	145	150	157	
Services	322	362	347	359	385	
Trade	232	251	235	241	245	
Financial services, Insurance	24	19	19	19	20	
Public service	259	278	295	298	300	
GDP at factor cost	2894	2409	2649	3330	3093	
Import duties and taxes	215	263	191	247	294	9
Total GDP (current price)	3109	2645	2840	3578	3387	100
Average exchange rate of the FCFA against the U.S dollar	583.7	590.0	614.9	710.0	732.5	

Source: IMF, Gabon: *Selected Issues and Statistical Appendix, March, 2002.*

While we expect oil production to drop by 50% in the next five years (IMF, 2002) two major challenges that confront Gabon's development still remain 1) the diversification of its economy, i.e., the strengthening of non-oil sectors, 2) Sound and rigorous public management. Indeed, while

oil revenue will continue to drop, Gabon's financial needs will remain high, especially the financing of social and physical infrastructure such as education, health, roads, public buildings, etc. not to mention the external debt burden which could easily increase. As evidence, IMF data reveal that **for each 100,000 FCFA spent by State in 2001, 40,000 FCFA was spent to pay debt.** Gabon needs more than ever to reschedule payment of its huge debt if it cannot obtain its cancellation so as to alleviate short and medium term devastating effects on its economy and social stability.

3.2.1 Gabon's oil and mining sectors

Oil Sector

Oil and mining activities are the pillars of Gabon's economy. As mentioned above the oil industry is the dominant sector. The major link between the oil industry and the rest of the economy lies in oil revenues paid to the state through direct and indirect taxation and revenue obtained from the State's investments in oil production. Despite its dominance amongst Gabon's export commodities, oil is not processed locally whereas there is just an oil refinery - Société Gabonaise de Raffinage (SOGARA).

Oil production grew steadily between 1970 and 1997, reaching an all-time high record in 1997 with 18.6 million tonnes or 135 million barrels (370,000 b/d). This record kept Gabon in the third place in Sub-Saharan Africa, coming only after Nigeria and Angola. Everything appears to indicate that that record constituted a ceiling in Gabon's oil production, given its limited reserves (estimated at about 150 million tonnes) and the absence of a considerable find in more ten years. Oil production has been declining constantly since 1998. Yet, we notice an increase in the investments made in its exploration (especially with new licenses being granted to American, Canadian and Australian companies). This raises hopes for new oil discoveries and therefore a recovery of oil production in the medium and long term. Moreover the ultra-deep offshore market (between 2000m and 4000m depth water) has been put out to tender, but investment in this area could be very expensive and,

therefore, discourage potential investors. A progressive decline in oil production seems inevitable in the next few years. The state, is therefore, obliged to intensify its preparation for “the post-oil period” by attracting investors into other sectors of the economy.

The main companies involved in oil production are Totalfina-Elf Gabon, Shell-Gabon, Perenco, Agip and Chauvco. The oil industry, however, has other stakeholders (Oxy, Amoco, Schlumberger, Amerada, etc.) participating mainly in oil exploration and other oilfield services. We notice that **Canadian** and Australian companies are becoming increasingly interested in Gabon’s oil industry in recent times.

Gabon’s oil exports are sent mainly to the U.S (72% in 2002 and 82% in 1997), then comes France (3% of oil exports in 1997, 11% in 1998 and 8.5in 1999), while in 1990 the US jointly received the same amount of oil exports with France, representing 37%. Gabon’s other clients in the oil industry include the Caribbean, East Asia and Europe. These however, purchase oil exports in insignificant quantities.

Table 3.1

Oil production and its contribution to Gabon's revenue					
	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Oil production (In thousand tons: '000t)	18462	17500	15500	13500	12900
Oil exports (FOB) (In billions of current FCFA)	1172	840	1090	1781	1509
Total Exports (FOB) (In billions of FCFA)	1537	1535	1272	1849	1850
Oil revenue (In billions of current FCFA and % of total revenue)	583 58.3%	456 51.1%	350 50.1%	1014 73.3%	790 58.2%
Total revenue of the State (In billions of FCFA)	1000	892	699	1384	1357

Source: DREE, Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs (France), February, April, 2002.

Mining Sector

In the mining sector, the closure of the Franceville Uranium Mining Company (COMUF) in June 1999 due to **ore depletion** and the stagnation of the global steel industry which have limited the use of manganese, have in recent years marginalized the mining industries in Gabon's economy.

Manganese, however, has great prospects with an annual production of two million tonnes and a considerable amount of reserves that could last for a century.

The **Ogooué Mining Company** (COMILOG) which until recently was a parastatal, has been extracting manganese since 1962. That company was privatised in 1997 and is currently being run by foreign interest groups, notably the French group ERAMET. COMILOG recently undertook a recovery project for the former uranium mines and a new enrichment plant for processing manganese nodules began operations in January 2001.

Other mining resources abound in Gabon. Gold for instance has already attracted foreign groups, especially South Africans and Canadians. In addition, a **wide range of geological resources** – iron, niobium, barite, potash, phosphate, sulphur, marble, granite talc, diamond and ferrous scrap such as lead, zinc and copper could also be found but these are either underexploited or not exploited at all. **A major phosphate and niobium mining project** is undergoing feasibility studies. Finally, iron reserves (estimated at more than 300 million tons of marketable ore) found at the north-east of Gabon have not been yet been extracted due to the supposed lack of commercial outlets and inadequate road infrastructure.

3.2.2 Gabon's Forestry Sector

Gabon's forestry sector has an enormous potential. About 80% of Gabon's territory is covered with forest but this forest area is undergoing intensive logging leading to a reduction in its size. This 22 million hectare forest area shows a market potential estimated at 400 cubic metres of which 130 million cubic metres are of the Okoumé species. The Okoumé species have unbeatable qualities suitable for the wood industry. The annual volume of wood produced from forestry is about 2 million cubic metres. This quantity is from only 60 species out of more than 400 known forestry species. The Okoume-Ozigo species constitutes about 80% of forestry products of the wood industry. Asia is the major importer of Gabon's wood followed by Europe and the Mediterranean Basin.

The **Société Nationale des bois du Gabon** (SNBG) monopolizes the marketing of timber. The company's task is to maintain prices, monitor wood quality and ensure the promotion of Gabon's timber. The State owns 51% of SNBG shares with the remaining 49% being owned by forestry producers.

There are **seven companies which provide 2/3 of the Okoumé wood**. The most important of these companies is the Compagnie Forestière du Gabon (CFG) which has a plywood production plant at Port Gentil. This paragonovernmental company is among companies the state intends to privatize. Other major participants in the forestry sector are Malaysian companies which for some time now have been occupying much land. Currently they occupy more than 300 million hectares of forest, representing 40% of total permits granted. This excludes other projects that are being negotiated.

A large proportion of timber (about 80 to 90%) is still exported in log form. Only about 15% are processed before being exported. Processing plants, which are still very few, are rapidly developing. Ten plants are now operating while other projects are at the completion stage. There are 4 major rotary cutting plants (3 of which manufacture plywood). These plants include CFG, Rougier-Gabon, Société de la Haute Mondah (SHM) and LUTEXFO. The C.E.B plant of the Thanry group and Lutexfo-Soforga are among leading sawmills in Gabon.

In order to encourage local wood processing, the State has put in place progressive quotas for processing with the aim of processing 50% of wood produced in Gabon by the year 2000 (this goal was however, not achieved) and 90% by the year 2025. This figure would be difficult to attain, given the insufficient number of companies that have the capacity to perform such operations, the low quantity and quality of labour, and the low level of training of Gabonese in the field of forestry. Gabon's timber industry still has a great processing potential, to the extent that, certain companies (both foreign and local) are becoming increasingly interested in its exploitation.

The issue at stake however, is how to ensure the sustainability of forestry resources and activities given the questionable logging practices carried out by certain forestry exploiters and the non-

compliance with control rules. For instance, sustainable management practices of Gabon's forestry industry are yet to be modified and implemented. To resolve this concern, the African Timber Organisation (ATO), of which Gabon is a member, has recently put in place a number of sustainable forest management criteria to ensure an eco-certification of forestry practices in Africa.

It is worth mentioning that Quebec's expertise in forestry management and development, and the dynamism of Quebecois forestry entrepreneurs constitute a reason for the development of business relations between Gabon and Quebec that has led to the involvement of Quebecois entrepreneurs in Gabon's forestry industry.

As far as employment is concerned, despite the oil industry's significant contribution to State revenue, its contribution to job creation is little (1581 jobs in 1999, which according to the IMF has been declining steadily since 1996) compared to the other industries such as the timber industry (9232 jobs in 1999, which according to the IMF has been increasing steadily since 1995), the construction industry (5365 jobs in 1999), primary agriculture (2168 jobs in 1999), the agro-industry (2270 jobs in 1999), etc.

3.2.3 The agro-industry and other secondary industries in Gabon

The food processing industry is dominated mainly by the sugar industry (one factory), mineral water industry (one factory), breweries (five factories), cigarette industry (one factory) and the flour-milling industry (one factory).

Most of the companies in this sector were established by the State and are currently either on the list of companies to be privatised or have already been privatised.

In addition, the only cement factory which is being run by Norwegian investors produces 130,000 tonnes of cement per annum.

Finally, important road investments have attracted many construction companies, especially the French companies.

3.2.4 Gabon's Fishing and Fish-farming Industry

With its 800km maritime coastline, its many rivers covering a land area of 10,000km² and its exclusive economic zone of 150,000km², Gabon's **maritime and continental fish stocks** are estimated at more than 210,000 tonnes and 24,000 tonnes respectively. The domestic demand for fish was estimated by the Ministry of Planning at 47,000 tonnes in 1993 and 61,500 tonnes per annum at the turn of the year 2000 (actual local needs currently stand at about 40,000 tonnes per annum). Total domestic production (artisanal and industrial) is about 30,000 tonnes per annum. To reduce Gabon's dependence on other countries for food, the government has for some time now made the fishing industry (or the agro-industry in general) a priority.

Fish and shellfish produced in Gabon are not all consumed locally. A proportion is exported to Europe and other African countries. The main exporting companies are *Amerger Sigapêche*, *Océan* and *Socol*.

Currently, Gabon has an industrial fleet of about 17 ships (of which 9 are owned by *Amerger*). 25 other ships from different countries such as Nigeria, China, Korea, Spain, etc. also have fishing authorizations. Industrial fishing is estimated at 10,000 to 11,000 tonnes per annum. Turnovers realised by these foreign watercrafts are estimated at about 40 billion FCFA, equivalent to 80 million Canadian dollars. Yet, royalties paid to Gabon amounts only to 130 million FCFA.

Gabon needs to adopt a new resource management system. It would, thus, be desirable to revisit the subject of fishing licences and review the fiscal and regulatory framework which seems to put local entrepreneurs at a disadvantage. The State will also have to consider the local processing of fish. In this case, the operational costs system should be revised (reduction in fuel prices, fiscal charges, custom charges, etc.) so as to encourage investments in the highly promising fishing sector. In addition, more Gabonese ought to be trained in the field of fishing.

Artisanal fishing is difficult to assess due to unavailable reliable statistics. This type of fishing mainly concerns lagoons, rivers and the maritime area of the coastline. It involves about 2000 canoes of which at least half were registered in Libreville. **This type of fishing is mainly engaged in by foreigners** such as Nigerians, Togolese, Sao-Tomeans and Equatorial Guineans. Only about 20% of Gabonese engage in artisanal fishing. Artisanal fishing production is estimated at about 23000 to 24000 tonnes per annum.

The Ministry for Merchant Navy is studying the establishment of an action plan to improve artisanal fishing. There is **no clear policy on resource management** and certain areas are basically banned from fishing due to oil activity. Other areas are also not suitable for trawling because they have rocky bottoms, etc. Moratoriums should be declared on the production of certain species such as shrimp to enable the rebuilding of stocks. By contrast, there are some resources that are still unexploited.

Aquaculture could be associated with the fishing industry. In Gabon, fish farming in stagnant water is a tradition, especially in the Woleu-Ntem province in the north. Yet, its production quantity and economic impact are still overlooked, given their low productivity. Freshwater fish farming produces species such as carp, tilapia, catfish and shrimp, which are highly appreciated by local consumers.

Aquaculture production constitutes only 230 tonnes per annum compared to the 9000 to 10000 tonnes produced by fishing carried out in rivers and lagoons. This figure could, however, be improved and could shoot up to 10,000 tonnes (according to estimations by the FAO and Gabonese authorities) to meet the needs of a million consumers who obviously prefer **freshwater fish that are sold fresh** to the usually frozen sea fish.

Fishing experts in Gabon argue that the country's needs are many and fish farming could contribute immensely to help meet them. However, the lack of financial and human resources is hindering its development. Fish farming has advantages in the environmental, consumer, public health and

employment sectors. It helps to recycle agro-industrial waste (for example, wheat bran, brewing residues, palm oil production and poultry farming, etc.). Cost of land, energy, transport equipment and fish farming equipment is estimated at tens of millions of FCFA (a few thousand Canadian dollars), an amount which not all small local producers are able to afford especially where banks are reluctant to lend.

With the support of the French Co-operation Mission and the Institute of Forestry and Agricultural Research, **8 Tilapia farming projects** have been launched. Two other shrimp farming projects are being planned for at off Pointe-Denis and at a few kilometres from Port-Gentil at Batanga. Other processing projects such as **a tuna factory** (German-Asian investment) and a fishing and fish processing unit (by Gabonese-Mauritanian Fishing Company) are being considered.

All things considered, Gabon's fishing and fish farming industry could develop faster, given its numerous strengths, if the right policy decisions are made and if investors come on board.

3.2.5 Gabon's Tourism Sector

Like other sectors of Gabon's economy, **the tourism sector is one sector that has long been abandoned**. The country has a number of important assets which could make the tourism sector a vibrant and productive sector in national economy.

Currently, Gabon has about seventy-five hotels (most of which are world-class hotels), eight travel agencies and about a hundred and fifty restaurants. Moreover, the country has more than 800km of coastline that provide **several kilometres of beach** which Europeans, North-Americans, Japanese, etc. adore. There is also a luxurious forest abounding in animal and plant species that serves as a tourist site. In addition, Gabon has five wildlife reserves namely, *la Lopé*, *Moukalaba*, *Wonga-Wongué*, *Setté-Cama* and *Iguela*. The last two serve as sites for sport fishing activities.

Tourism, however, is still an insignificant economic activity in Gabon. Hotel clients are mainly businessmen. A study funded by Africa Development Bank (ADB) has made the creation of a

Tourism Development Plan possible. Investments of almost 40 billion FCFA (about 80 million Canadian dollars) were projected (by the Ministry Of Tourism in collaboration with ADB) over 15 years to improve Gabon's tourism sector whose economic and financial potential cannot be overlooked.

4.3 Trade balance and business partners

Gabon's trade balance has generally been positive since independence. The trade balance also presented a highly positive balance of 1,159 billion FCFA (about 1.6 billion U.S dollars) which is equivalent to a coverage rate of 257% according to the French Directorate of Foreign Economic Relations (DREE). There was however, a constant deterioration in trade balance from 1996 to 1999 due to a fall in exports caused by a shortage in oil and wood. Meanwhile, imports continued to soar from 1994.

Table 3.2

Evolution of Gabon's Trade Activity			
<i>In millions of FCFA, except (*)</i>	1999	2000	2001
Exports	1325616	1901667	1895822
Imports	554453	680032	737092
Balance	771164	1221636	1158731
Coverage Rate (*), %	239	280	257
Balance of payments (*)	41	77	8
<i>(in millions of FCFA)</i>			

Source: DREE, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (France), April 2002

Gabon's imports were within the range of 737 billion FCFA in 2001 (about 1 billion U.S dollars), representing an increase of 8.4% from that of year 2000. Exports, on the other hand, decreased slightly by 0.3% in 2001 compared to that of year 2000, moving from 1902 billion FCFA (about 2.7 U.S dollars) to 1896 billion FCFA (about 2.6 billion U.S dollars).

Table 3.3

Distribution of Gabon's Imports					
<i>(Amounts in billions of FCFA)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001 (%)
Food products	91528	98312	95138	114581	123510 (17)
Beverages	11094	12713	11673	11645	13253 (2)
Other consumer products	90533	109633	76704	90157	112320 (15)
<i>Total consumer products</i>	<i>193156</i>	<i>220658</i>	<i>183515</i>	<i>216384</i>	<i>249084 (34)</i>
Steel products	36466	33488	27876	28221	33355 (4)
Tools, mechanical appliances	115773	128968	95356	121123	135252 (18)
Machines, electrical gadgets	37195	39376	32279	64375	58377 (8)
Vehicles	66607	78124	41325	57593	63255 (9)
Intermediate products for construction	19726	24221	15322	17243	23023 (3)
Others	109141	190195	158780	175092	174747 (24)
Total imports	578064	715031	554453	680032	737092 (100)

Source: DREE, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (France), April 2002.

N.B. Here are the average exchange rates of the US dollar against the FCFA from 1999 to 2001. In 1999, the dollar was equivalent 615 FCFA; in 2000, it was equivalent to 710 FCFA and in 2001, it was equivalent to 732 FCFA. In 2001 for example, total imports stood at 1.006 billion U.S. dollars.

It is worth mentioning that there are occasional confusing differences in available statistical data on Gabon, especially between those published by the Trade Statistics Directorate of the International

Monetary Fund (IMF) and those published by other institutions such as DREE, Gabon's Customs and Gabon's Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance. For instance, data from the IMF showed that Gabon's exports went up by 8.9% in 1997 compared to 1996, which is in contrast with data provided by DREE revealing a 5% decline, moving from 1631 billion FCFA in 1996 to 1369 billion FCFA in 1997.

By importing 72% of Gabon's oil exports in 2002, the **U.S has become Gabon's major client**. The devaluation of the Franc CFA, as well as demands for oil by refineries on the U.S East Coast that prefer Gabon's oil, have further strengthened the U.S' position as Gabon's most important client. **On average, U.S accounted for 61% of Gabon's exports in foreign currency from 1998 to 2001**. This figure fell slightly to 56% in 2001. The European Union is Gabon's second major client, importing about 19% of Gabon's exports, 14% of which went to France (second most important importer of Gabon's exports) in 2001. The U.S has gradually overtaken the EU as Gabon's major client mainly because of the oil being sold there. It is important to note that black gold is Gabon's main source of foreign exchange. Gabon's other clients include China, which is the leading importer of Gabon's timber, Switzerland, South Korea, India, Japan, Senegal, etc.

Trade between Gabon and other African countries is nothing to write home about (3% average sales between 1998 and 2001), especially when it comes to trade with other members of Central African Economic and Monetary Community (0.7% average sales between 1998 and 2001). This shows a weak economic integration in the sub-region and Africa at large despite the presence of many African organisations that have economic integration as their objective.

Table 3.4

Destinations for Gabon's exports by country or commercial zone				
<i>In millions of FCFA</i>	1998 (%)	1999 (%)	2000 (%)	2001 (%)
United States	1028500 67%	750800 59%	1157900 63%	1040882 56%
France	173500 11%	108800 8%	82900 4%	255802 14%
China	53600	98500	124700	94720
Switzerland/Lichtenstein	4000	40100	102100	70432
South Korea	32500	30800	68800	65389
TOTAL	1534700	1271600	1849341	1849656
Africa	30300	26600	27000	95031
CEMAC	4600 0.3%	7300 0.6%	10530 0.6%	21749 1%
European Union	278100 18%	196000 15%	186100 10%	348508 19%

Source: DREE, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (France), April 2002.

N.B. Here are the average exchange rates of the US dollar against the FCFA from 1999 to 2001. In 1999, the dollar was equivalent 615 FCFA; in 2000 it was equivalent to 710 FCFA and in 2001, it was equivalent to 732.5 FCFA. In 2001 for example, total exports stood at 2.5 billion U.S. dollars.

In 2001, the European Union was the leading supplier of Gabon's imports with a market share of 63.5%. It has maintained this position for a long time. France alone possesses 40% of the Gabonese market. France's market share stood at 48% before the devaluation of the FCFA in 1994. It dropped to 40% that same year. It further dropped to 39% in 1997 after rising in 1995 and in 1996. The U.S came next to EU which supplied 11% of Gabon's imports, and Japan which

supplied 6%. Other suppliers of Gabon's imports include Holland, Benelux, Morocco, Cameroon, Ivory Coast, South Africa, Thailand, India, China, etc. the whole of Africa hardly provides 8% of Gabon's imports.

Table 3.5

Sources of Gabon's imports				
<i>In millions of FCFA</i>	1999	2000	2001	% 2001
France	308100	258600	296761	40.3
United States	95200	65300	78847	10.7
Japan	42700	29100	42003	5.7
Holland	23600	19200	29548	4.0
Belgium and Luxembourg	23900	16000	28962	3.9
TOTAL IMPORTS	715000	554500	737092	n/a
Africa	43600	34800	58030	7.9
CEMAC	10100	12000	23052	3.1
European Union	476200	374400	468386	63.5

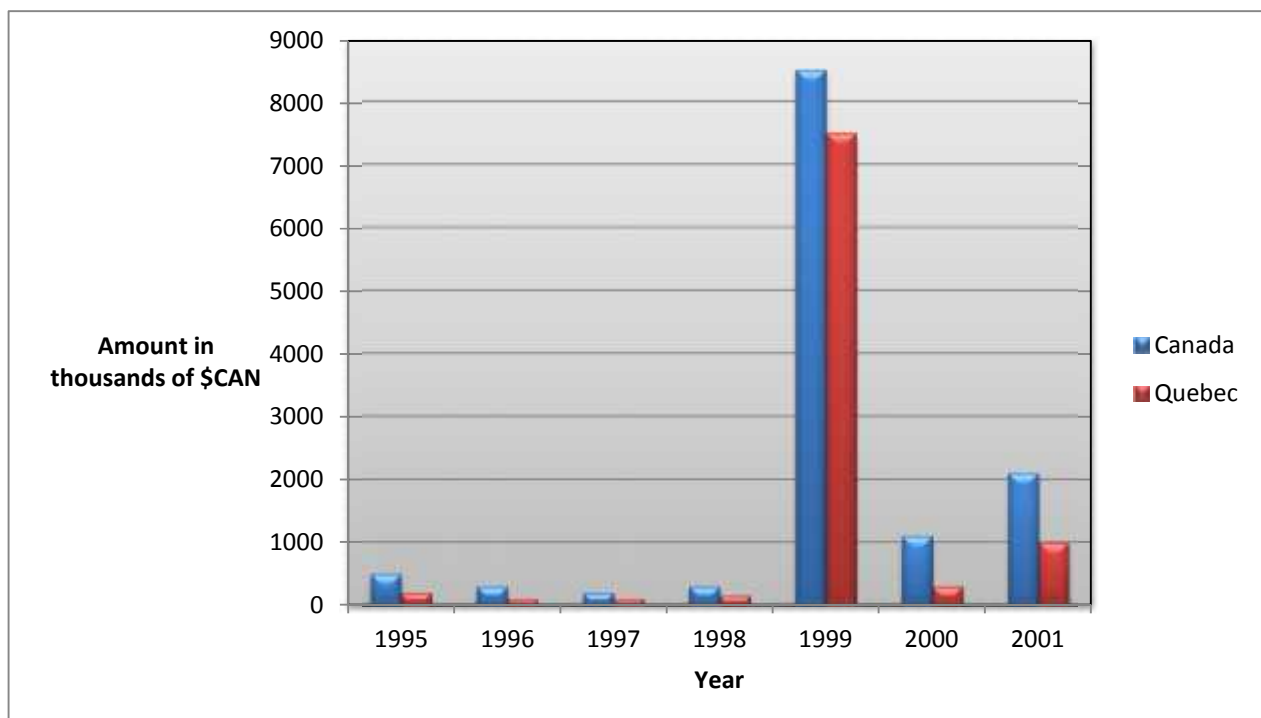
Source: DREE, Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance (France), April, 2002.

N.B. Here are the average exchange rates of the US dollar against the FCFA from 1999 to 2001. In 1999, the dollar was equivalent 615 FCFA; in 2000 it was equivalent to 710 FCFA and in 2001, it was equivalent to 732.5 FCFA. In 2001 for example, total imports stood at 1.006 billion U.S. dollars.

3.4 Trade with Canada and Quebec

Canada and Quebec's importation of Gabon's exports is relatively small. Indeed, in 2001, Gabonese exports to Canada (or Canadian imports from Gabon) stood at 2.3 million dollars. 1.2 million (52%) of this amount accounted for exports to Quebec. Exports from Gabon to Canada have declined compared to 1999 when they stood at 8.6 million dollars. They however, remain well above their levels before 1999. Canada's importation of Gabonese exports attained its climax in 1999 due to a sudden rise in the sale of Gabonese petroleum products such as crude oil and bituminous minerals in Canada. Meanwhile, the price of oil saw a sharp decline. There have not been any oil sales since then.

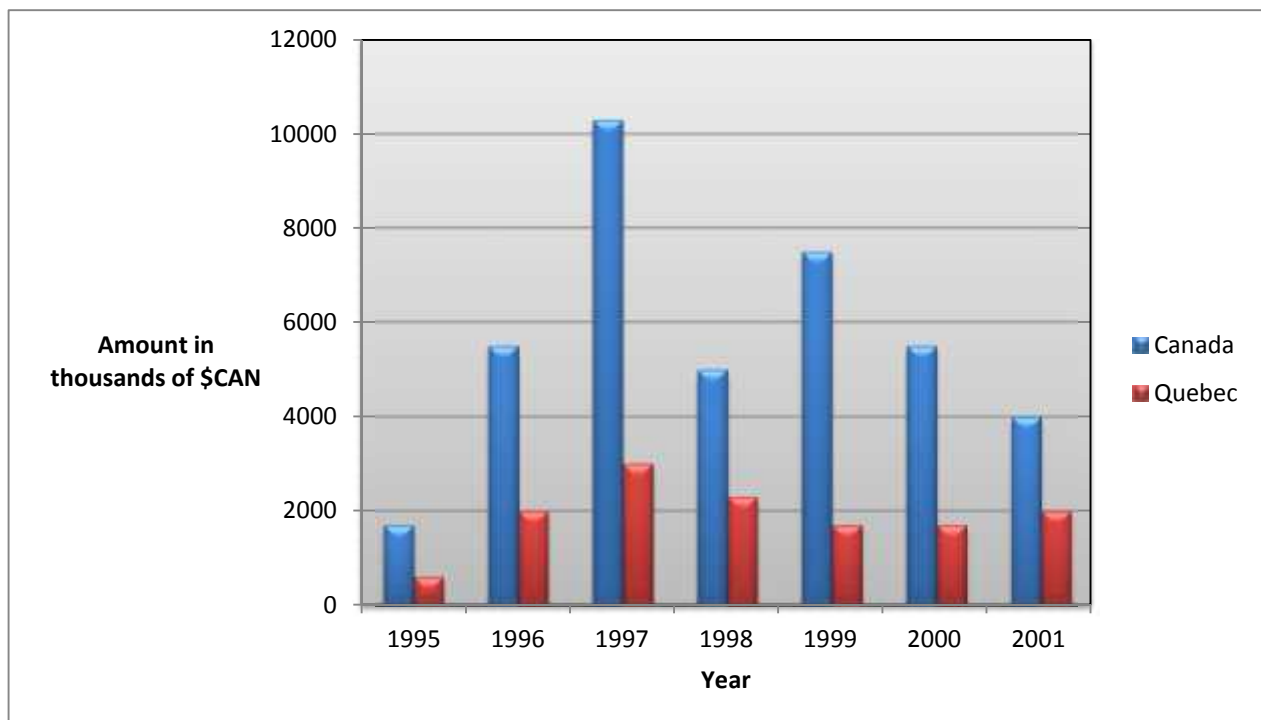
Graph 3.1 **Canadian and Quebecois imports from Gabon**



Gabon's imports from Canada and Quebec represent less than 1% of Gabon's total importations. In 2001, Canadian exports to Gabon were worth about 4.3 million Canadian dollars, 2.1 million dollars of which were exports from Quebec, representing 49% of total Canadian exports to Gabon).

These exports from Canada have been declining almost constantly since 1997 whereas they once reached 10.4 million Canadian dollars.

Graph 3.2 Canadian and Quebecois exports to Gabon



In terms of products, major importations from Canada in 2000 and 2001 include different types of capital goods (tractors, land vehicles, equipment parts, materials, electrical machinery, etc.), food products, furniture, etc. Gabon's exports include wood products, vegetables, medicinal plants, electrical equipment, etc. Compared to other years, we notice that products exchanged in the trade between Gabon and Canada varied greatly year by year. This shows that no particular niche has been developed in the trade between the two countries. It also shows that trading varies depending on opportunities that are not identified in advance. However, the recently developed wood sector is a business area that both countries could exploit. The ICT and electronic sector is another area that could be tapped.

Table 3.6

Canadian exports to Gabon by product group		
<i>(Amount in Canadian dollars)</i>	2000	2001
		\$ 538990
Tractors	\$ 2090064	839136
Meat, poultry offal	239558	183696
Cars/ other vehicles and accessories	263299	524759
Various resins	86436	140000
Data-processing machines	49390	518492
Parts of non-usable equipment	36870	56200
Printed materials, engravings, photos	19785	28715
Offal of cattle, pigs	13218	64799
Photo laboratory equipment	7956	361775
Furniture and accessories	-	141708
Frozen fish	-	135500
Prefabricated constructions	-	111476
Heterocyclic compounds	-	

TOTAL OF OTHER PRODUCTS	\$ 2610272	\$ 620899
TOTAL OF ALL PRODUCTS	\$ 5416848	\$ 4266145

Source: Strategis (industry Canada).

Table 3.7

Canadian imports from Gabon by product group		
<i>(Amounts in Canadian dollars)</i>	2000	2001
Veneer, sawn or sliced wood	\$ 588469	\$ 1752674
Electrical capacitors	629405	253147
Carrots, turnips, beets, edible roots	26101	6864
Fresh or refrigerated leguminous vegetables	10574	23128
Plants, grains or medicines for perfume and medicine	1313	606
Vehicle accessories	370	4303
TOTAL OF OTHER PRODUCTS	\$ 47604	\$ 233046
TOTAL OF ALL PRODUCTS	\$ 1303836	\$ 2273768

Source: Strategis (Industry Canada)

In summary, commercial relations between Gabon and Canada are still very weak and have been staggering since 1995 as shown in the table below. Gabon's trade balance with Canada has always been in a deficit except in 1999 where Gabon posted a trade surplus of 1.1 million Canadian dollars with Canada and 5.9 million with Quebec.

Graph 3.3

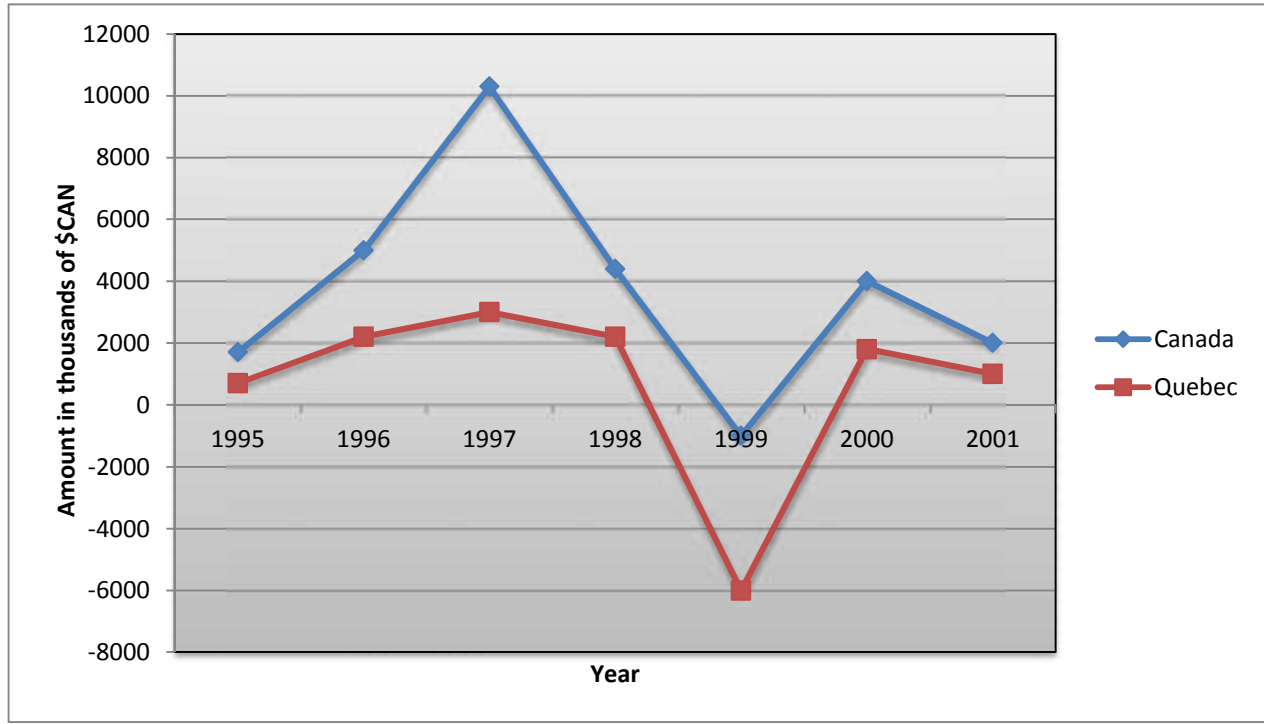
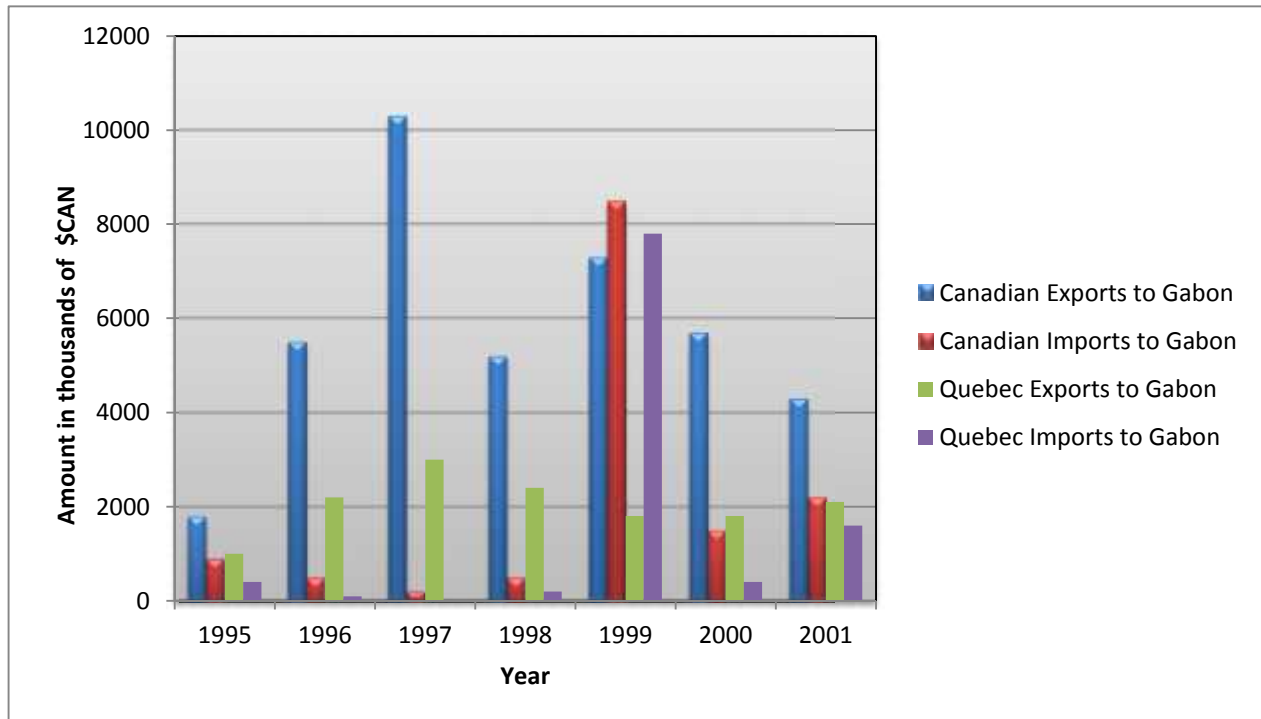
Canada and Quebec's trade balance with Gabon

Table 3.8

Canada-Gabon Trade Data					
<i>(Amounts in thousands of Canadian dollars)</i>	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001
Imports from Gabon					
Canada	107	326	8569	1304	2274
Quebec	7	107	7653	244	1245
Exports to Gabon					
Canada	10432	5050	7445	5417	4266
Quebec	3027	2554	1782	1839	2147
Trade balance with Gabon					
Canada	10325	4724	-1124	4113	1992
Quebec	3020	2447	-5871	1595	902
Source: Strategis (Industry Canada)					

Graph 3.4

Evolution of trade between Canada and Gabon

Finally, it is important to note that in November 2002, Canada and Gabon signed a tax treaty to prevent double taxation and tax evasion. This convention could impact positively on Canada's investment in Gabon since it would reassure investors. Both countries could benefit if commercial relations are strengthened but this could only be achieved if both countries become more aggressive on the Gabonese market as French investors and entrepreneurs would certainly want to maintain this relatively lucrative market.

3.5 Employment and Entrepreneurship in Gabon

Unemployment rate in Gabon is estimated at 20%. The rate of unemployment amongst young adults below age 30 is even higher. The Gabonese government is one of the major providers of employment. It provides employment through its parastatals and civil service. Foreign labour accounts for a little over a quarter of its active population. According to IMF reports, the tertiary sector accounted for 75% of the formal sector workforce in 1999 while public administration, both

central and local, accounted for 65% of tertiary sector employment. The secondary sector, which is still a weak area in terms of job creation, provided 12% of jobs created in 1999 (see the following table).

With regard to businesses, **we find more than 6,000 businesses in the formal sector and 10,000 in the informal sector.** 78% of businesses in the formal sector are SMEs/SMIs, 5% are micro-enterprises and 17% are large firms, a majority of which belong to foreign entrepreneurs such as French entrepreneurs. Gabonese run about 40% of these SMEs/SMIs and West African and CEMAC nationals are the main founders of micro-enterprises in the informal sector. These West African and the CEMAC nationals account for 70% and 90% respectively of operations in the informal sector.

It is also important to note that the French presence in Gabon is marked not only by their businesses in Gabon but also by the level of economic and financial cooperation. In fact, in 2001, **more than 60% of Gabon's external support, in terms of funding and expertise, was provided by the French.** In the same vein, **French investors accounted for 70% of Gabon's foreign investment,** 75% of bank deposits, the majority of insurance companies (i.e. French subsidiaries) and a greater percentage of commercial activities and other businesses. The leading contributor to Gabon's revenue is the oil group TotalFinaElf. Gabon is also the 2nd African Country in which France has been investing. The strong French presence in Gabon could be explained by historical ties between France and Gabon, the presence of many French nationals (about 10,000) in Gabon, similarities that exist in the legal frameworks of the two countries, and the numerous air and sea communication routes between the two countries.

Table 3.9

Distribution of wage-employment by business sector, 1995-1999					
(Number of employees)	1995	1996	197	1998	1999
Primary sector	12619	13442	13332	13492	14400
Agriculture	2216	2090	2075	2162	2168
Oil industries	1742	1799	1733	1797	1581
Mining industries	1842	1796	1575	1531	1419
Forestry industries	6819	7757	7949	8002	9232
Secondary sector	12263	12792	13224	13338	13042
Agro-industries	2669	2483	2202	2249	2270
Other industries	3221	3572	3566	3532	3486
Electricity and Refinery	2022	1911	1912	1921	1921
Construction	4351	4826	5544	5636	5365
Tertiary sector	72983	75330	76898	81748	81725
Transport	9550	9804	9530	9763	9494
Financial institutions	1995	2003	2076	2141	1990
Public administration	47715	48484	49476	53620	53188
Trade	5338	5577	5689	5979	5867
Services	8385	9462	10127	10245	11186
Total employment	97865	101564	103454	108578	109167

Public sector	66503	66735	65709	69516	68718
<i>Including State-owned businesses</i>	18788	18251	16233	15896	15530
Private sector	31362	34829	37745	39062	40449
(as a percentage of total employment)					
Primary sector	12.9%	13.2%	12.9%	12.4%	13.2%
Secondary sector	12.5%	12.6%	12.8%	12.3%	11.9%
Tertiary sector	74.6%	74.2%	74.3%	75.3%	74.9%

Source: Gabonese Ministry of Economic Affairs and Finance, cited by: The IMF, 2002.

Finally, the economic crisis in the last four years has forced the government to review its development policies and prioritize the development of the private sector, especially SMEs and other forms of businesses (at least rhetorically). A ministry for Small and Medium-scale Enterprises has been created and a new *Investment Charter* (ex. Investment Code) took effect in 1998. This Charter is guided by act 15/98 of 23rd July 1998. The Charter listed series of objectives and mechanisms that would encourage investment and create new businesses in Gabon. In the area of finance for example, the Charter prescribed an exemption from the payment of tax during the first three years of a company's operation. The company was expected to be exempted from the payment of tax when negative results were reported in subsequent years. Tax credits were to be given for technological research and corporate tax rates were to be reduced, etc. Administratively, the Charter prescribed mechanisms which would reduce_cumbersome administrative procedures. The mechanisms include the establishment of a **one-stop service to promote investment and register companies**; the decentralisation of the issuance of licenses; the setting of license delivery deadlines at a maximum of fifteen days. With regard to the funding of SMEs, **an SME development and expansion fund** was created for investment projects which do not exceed 150 million FCFA. In addition, an **Aid and guarantee fund** (available since 1981) was created for

investment projects not exceeding 15 million FCFA. The management of the SME promotion agency, **Promogabon**, under the supervision of the Ministry of SMEs, is being reorganized after years of inefficiency during which the SME sector staggered. At the international level, companies that wish to invest and/or export abroad (in this case, Gabon) could access assistance programs depending on provisions made by each country.

3.6 Conclusion and business prospects

Gabon is a small country with great economic and business potentials. Like Africa, it has been suffering some sort of marginalisation in international trade relations. Many countries like France however, have been able to tap Gabon's enormous wealth mainly because of pre-existing colonial ties and also because of an in-depth knowledge of the French terrain. North America (especially Canada) is still not engaged in the development of Gabon mainly because of distance and international geopolitical negotiations which have turned Gabon into a "French stronghold". In addition, Africa's negative image in Canada does not help in arousing Canada's interest in Gabon and Africa. Events such as civil wars, famine, floods have painted a negative picture of the entire continent. Much of Africa, however, is in an era of growth (with the highest growth rates in the world) and has been attracting foreign investors for some time now. Moreover, returns on investment in African projects far exceed those of the world (including Asia and Latin America) with an estimated rate of return of 29% being realised by American firms between 1990 and 1997 (C.f., DFAIT, Canada, 2000). Since the late 1990s, Africa became the largest market for Canadian exports, beating popular markets such as India, Russia, Chile and Argentina.

Gabon must therefore develop in this ambiguous context that prevails at the presentation of African Economies in North America. The development of other economic sectors, besides the oil sector such as forestry, fishing industry, tourism, new information technologies; improvement in education and healthcare; and the creation of new viable businesses, etc. will aid Gabon's developments. Such diversification would be achieved with a coherent local development policy, a

diversification of foreign business partners, especially in the transfer of technology and knowledge, co-management of businesses and direct investment in Gabon.

With its enormous mineral and geological resources, Gabon is still a very attractive country for international trade. In addition, the government's intention to diversify Gabon's oil-dependent economy and business partners will aid future development of economic relations between Gabon and other countries such as Canada which includes Quebec. Moreover, the stable political climate, the *per capita* income which is among the highest in Africa, viable infrastructure as well as trade laws that favour foreign investment are few facts which have made Gabon a suitable country for business in Africa. Furthermore, Gabon could serve as a central location for businesses with a more favourable regional vision for business in Africa.

Despite the recent difficult years, Gabon still has encouraging prospects for economic growth (growth rate was estimated at 5.5% for 2000-2001). However, government must continue to control public spending, ensure proper management of public funds, provide good governance, fight against corruption and ensure a better distribution of national wealth amongst the populace. This will not only strengthen grassroots development but will also enhance Gabon's credibility before international clients and potential investors.

Finally, in order to develop Gabon-Canada and/or Gabon-Quebec relations, it would be necessary to begin establishing a network of contacts between Quebecois regions such as Estrie, Montreal, Quebec, Centre-du-Quebec, Mauricie, etc. and Gabon. Canadian and Quebecois businessmen should be more aggressive on the Gabonese or African Market and should not contract out to a country. We must understand that times are changing, especially with regard to the colonial distribution of trade partners in this old continent. It would be necessary to increase mutual private and official visits of businessmen and other economic and political stakeholders in the two countries. We might even suggest for example, the organisation of commercial missions such as "the Estrie Group", "the Montreal Group", or plainly put, "the Quebec Group" or "the Canadian

Group”. It is possible to develop Gabonese economic missions in Canada, especially in the regions of Quebec, in almost every sector of the economy such as agriculture or the agro-industry, the mining industry, the oil industry, ICT, financial companies, businesses, cooperatives, the environment, etc. This is certainly not going to be done in a rush. It is all about having a long term goal and planning towards it. In Gabon just as in other countries (especially Africa and Asia), patience is required in developing commercial relations.

CHAPTER 4

ANALYSIS OF PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

The translation into English of “L’Économie du Gabon: Une Économie à la remorque de son pétrole” was not devoid of translation problems just like all translations. However, as Eugene Nida puts it “skilled translators must have a special capacity for sensing the closest natural equivalent of a text”. Thus, in resolving the problems, we applied certain translation techniques that have been addressed by some theories of translation. In this chapter of the dissertation, we shall address the translation techniques that were used in tackling the problems encountered while translating.

4.1 Transposition

In translating the title of the document the technique of transposition, proposed by Vinay and Darbelnet (Fawcett 1997:37) as a translation technique, came into play. Instead of translating the title by the clumsy “an economy that is trailing behind its oil” which has a noun + attribute structure, we found it more appropriate to resort to the adjective/noun transposition “an oil-dependent economy” to achieve equivalence.

Again, in translating, “La production pétrolière n’a cessé de croître”, we found it more appropriate to apply the verb/ adverb transposition “grew steadily” rather than the long structure, “*did not stop growing*”, which clearly demonstrates translation incompetence.

4.2 Reordering

Malone (1988) explains that reordering becomes necessary when source and target languages have different narrative and stylistic structures. In the second paragraph of page 12, the sentence, “Au courant de la dernière décennie, d’abord dans les pays riches, puis dans les pays moins avancés, un fort courant libéral...” was translated as “In the last decade, a strong liberal trend contested the control of the economy by the state, first in rich countries and later in less-developed countries”.

Here, we notice a reordering of the ideas in the English version. This is because if we were to maintain the ordering applied in the French version the meaning would have been altered.

Again, we resorted to reordering in translating the rather long structure:

« Des choix sectoriels pas toujours judicieux ont été opérés sans tenir compte du niveau d'endettement; ce qui a contraint l'État gabonais à s'engager, sous l'instigation des institutions de Bretton Woods (FMI, Banque mondiale), dans un vaste programme de restructuration, appuyé par la dévaluation du Franc CFA (Franc de la Communauté Financière Africaine), la réforme fiscalodouanière (avec les pays membres de la Communauté économique et monétaire de l'Afrique centrale, CEMAC) et l'instauration de la Taxe sur la Valeur Ajoutée (TVA). »

This dense French structure has been simplified into three separate sentences in the English version to enhance meaning and achieve equivalence:

“Sector choices, that were not always beneficial, were made without considering the country’s debt portfolio. This situation has compelled Gabon to submit itself to a comprehensive restructuring program proposed by Bretton Woods’ institutions (i.e. the IMF and the World Bank). This restructuring program was backed by the devaluation of the Franc CFA, tax and customs reform (with member states of the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, CEMAC) and the introduction of Valued Added Tax (VAT).”

4.3 Reduction

Malone (1988:47) defines reduction as the omission of information considered to be unnecessary in translation. The original document had some repetitive structures which we tried to reduce. For instance, the following sentence has the idea of privatisation being repeated in the same sentence :

«on l’observe notamment avec les vastes programmes de privatisation déjà réalisés et ceux en

cours dans le pays alors que l'État a déjà entamé la mise sous contrôle privé des grandes sociétés publiques et parapubliques... » We therefore reduced the sentence in the English version which gave us: “The State has already begun privatizing important state-owned companies and parastatals...”

Again, in translating the rather long and repetitive structure, «le secteur informatique et électronique avec le développement d'Internet et des autres technologies de l'information et de la communication.», we resorted to Malone's reduction technique. Hence the English version: «The ICT and electronic sector».

4.4 Amplification

In his book *Translation and language*, Peter Fawcett (1997) describes amplification as “a strategy for bridging anticipated gaps in target-language audience's knowledge.” This strategy provides an explanation for information in the source language. Baker (1993:243-45, cited by Fawcett, 1997) also suggests that “translated texts will simplify and disambiguate, naturalize and normalize in relation to originals. We notice an application of this strategy in translating the expression “lourdeur administrative” as “cumbersome administrative procedures”. Here the French version has been amplified or explained in the target language.

Another structure that had to be amplified to suit the English narrative style is the sentence, «les ressortissants ouest-africains et de la sous-région de la CEMAC sont les principaux fondateurs des microentreprises exerçant leurs activités dans le secteur informel, respectivement 70% et 90% ». Thus, we proposed, “West African and CEMAC nationals are the main founders of micro-enterprises in the informal sector. These West African and the CEMAC nationals account for 70% and 90% respectively of operations in the informal sector.”

We see yet another application of the amplification technique in translating, «**N.B.** Pour une conversion des montants en USD, voici le taux de change moyen de 1USD en FCFA : 1999 : 615;

2000 : 710; 2001 : 732.5. Ex. Pour 2001, les exportations totales gabonaises s'élevaient à 1.006 milliards de USD.» Here, we found it important to clarify the figures given in the French version. Hence the English version:

N.B. Here are the average exchange rates of the USD against the FCFA from 1999 to 2001. In 1999, the USD was equivalent 615 FCFA; in 2000 it was equivalent to 710 FCFA and in 2001, it was equivalent to 732.5 FCFA. In 2001 for example, total imports stood at 1,006 billion USD.

4.5 Borrowing

In translating some names of companies in the document we borrowed the original names in the French version. For instance, we retained “Société Nationale des Bois du Gabon (SNBG)”, “Compagnie Forestière du Gabon” and “Société de la Haute Mondah” in the English version. According to Fedorov (1953:160-61, cited by Fawcett, 1997, p. 34), the borrowing technique is used to “retain the shade of specificity”.

4.6 Condensation

The final problem encountered while translating the document was resolved by applying the condensation technique described by Fawcett (1997:47). This technique unlike the reduction strategy which omits information, expresses the same information in a shorter form. Thus, in translating «l'**épuisement de la mine d'uranium** (i.e. la fermeture de la Compagnie de la Mine d'Uranium de Franceville ou COMUF en juin 1999)», we compressed the French structure into the English structure: “the closure of the Franceville Uranium Mining Company (COMUF) in June 1999 due to **ore depletion...**”

In conclusion, the goal of every translation is to achieve equivalence. Thus, as Nida puts it, a “conscientious translator will want the closest natural equivalent.” In translating the document we strived to achieve equivalence even in structures we found to be complex by applying the translation strategies discussed above. However, as the Chinese scholar Qian Hu explains “Total

compatibility between any two languages is precluded by the very nature of language (1994:427, cited by Fawcett, 1997, p. 8)". Nida also explains in his book *The Theory and Practice of Translation* that "no communication even within a single language is ever absolute (for no two people ever understand words in exactly the same manner) and we cannot expect a perfect match between languages" (1969:4-5).

CONCLUSION

This dissertation has so far attempted to explain the subject, the practice and some problems of translation. In our explanation of the concept of translation we mentioned such factors as linguistic knowledge and social knowledge – (cultural and historical knowledge) - which influence translation. These factors, when considered, ensure that the message of a text is transferred into a target language and has the same effect on both the source language and target language audience. We realized from the introduction that no translation will thrive simply by using a dictionary. The context of the text i.e. setting and scene of writing must also be taken into account.

The dissertation also presented a report on the internship we undertook at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration. We addressed the nature of the internship, the environment in which we worked, our responsibilities and available tools which aided us. We need to say at this stage that the nature of the internship will be improved if the French Department designed a program, with high profile institutions such as United Nations institutions in Ghana, francophone embassies, etc., in which the University would send translation students for internship as is the case with the National Service Scheme. This will enable students undergo on-the-job-training from seasoned translators.

In translating the document which is in the field of Economics, we tried to achieve equivalence between the source text and the target text. There were instances where we amplified, reduced, reordered, condensed or even retained words or expressions in the target language simply because we wanted to achieve equivalence.

By undertaking this project, our knowledge and skills in translation have improved tremendously. We have come to appreciate the value of research in translation especially with specialized texts. Our training in school, the internship as well as the dissertation have proven that translation without research is mediocre if not impossible. In addition, deadlines must be met at all cost, accuracy

ought to be ensured and faithfulness to the source text must be guaranteed so as to earn the confidence of clients. These principles when applied will enhance our career as translators.

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GLOSSARY

FRENCH

ENGLISH

Abats de volaille

Poultry Offal

Acconage

Stevedoring

Administration public

Public service

Agro-industriel

Agro-industrial

Appel d'offre

Tender

Aquaculture

Aquaculture

Assurance

Insurance

Axe fort

Pillar

Balance commerciale

Trade balance

Charte des investissements

Investment Charter

Composés hétérocycliques

Heterocyclic compounds

Créneau commercial

Commercial niche

Constructions préfabriquées

Prefabricated buildings

Déchets

Waste

Déroulage

Peeling veneers

Dettes extérieures

External debt

Disparité

Discrepancy

Eau douce	Fresh water
Equilibre social	Social equilibrium
Exploitation forestière	Logging
Etudes de faisabilité	Feasibility studies
Evasion fiscale	Tax evasion
Fardeau fiscal	Tax burden
Flotte industrielle	Industrial fleet
Fournisseur	Supplier
Grume	Log
Huile brute	Crude oil
Maillon faible	Weak link
Main d'œuvre	Workforce
Matériel piscicole	Fish farming equipment
Minéraux bitumeux	Bituminous minerals
Moratoire	Moratorium
Pêche Artisanale	Artisanal fishing
Pisciculture	Fish farming
Plan directeur du développement	Development plan
Parapublic	Parastatal

Politique d'austérité	Austerity policy
Projet d'exploitation	Mining project
Projet de revalorisation	Rehabilitation project
Raffineries	Refineries
Recette pétrolière	Oil Revenue
Rééchelonnement	Rescheduling
Réforme fiscal-douanière	Tax and customs reform
Réserves de fer	Iron reserves
Réserves fauniques	Wildlife reserves
Réserves halieutiques	Fish stocks
Scierie	Sawmill
Secteur Privé	Private sector
Société Exportatrice	Exporting Company
Solde commercial	Trade Balance
Taux de change	Exchange rate
Taux de couverture	Coverage rate
Taxe sur la valeur ajoutée	Valued added Tax
Usine de traitement du thon	Tuna processing plant
Usine de production de contreplaqué	Plywood production plant

Zone économique exclusive

Exclusive economic zone