

AFRICAN SYMPOSIUM BY ASPET, FAPET & CINET

ANALYSIS AND REFLECTION ON PROFESSIONAL TEXTILE CARE

3-5 July last, under the impetus of the **Cameroon Association of Textile Care Professionals** (ASPET), the strategic mentoring of the **African Federation of Textile Professionals** (FAPET) and the **International Committee of Textile Care** (CINET), was held in Yaoundé, the political capital of Cameroon, the very first African symposium whose theme is: **"ORGANIZATION, REFORM OF TEXTILE MAINTENANCE ACTORS IN AFRICA: AN OPPORTUNITY FOR YOUTH EMPLOYABILITY AND ECONOMIC GROWTH"**.

This structuring activity, which saw the effective participation of 230 people (Experts, promoters and employees of dry cleaners, public figures, parliamentarians and some curious people)¹ from several countries, was placed under the technical support of the **Ministry of Small and Medium Enterprises, Social Economy and Handicrafts** (MINPMEESA).

Promoting Eco Responsible companies

The objective was to lay the markers for the sustainable development of the above-mentioned sub-sectors. During this inspiring event it was concluded that a focus on developing Eco Responsible companies offers an attractive perspective for all stakeholders. In spite of difficulties encountered at this first symposium, participants and organizations were committed to develop further plans, projects and events, to stimulate business development, hence opportunities for all.

The full document reports on the activities developed in chronological order. It includes recommendations likely to improve the living and working conditions of the various actors interested in this field of services.

I. ACCOUNT OF THE ACTIVITIES DEVELOPED

3 July 2025 : Introduction, Training & Perspective

The first day of the symposium was the baptismal day, ***the training day***, the target of which, chosen on the spot, constitutes the first incubator of 19 trainers of trainers.

It should be noted that this day responds to the need previously expressed by the practitioners of laundromats, dry cleaners and laundromats, members of ASPET; active in Cameroon. The *Urban Space* (Hippodrome - Yaoundé) was chosen as the setting to host the aforementioned training. It was therefore 9 o'clock when the conscripts met there, whose trainer was Mr. Frédéric WHECLER, on behalf of CINET, of French nationality.

In a two-step methodological approach, the trainer addressed, in turn, the issues related to the knowledge of textiles and those related to the textile care processes.

Training

On the first aspect, the participants were edified on the nature, origin and challenges related to each type of textile. This was followed by a fruitful interaction (questions and answers).

In relation to the second, more practical aspect, the presentation was enriched with case studies relating to the treatment of each category of textile; The notions of spinning, dirt, choice of machines, finishing, armor ... etc. Not without mentioning the chemical processes, the composition and the effect (desirable and undesirable) of the products used in the laundry care process.

Further advice was given by the experts: Célestin-Arthur YOBOUE and Jean-Michel NDOUSSA concerning in particular the dangers, risks and obstacles that amateur practices carry in the sub-sector in Africa.

Although sufficiently structured in the West, the contribution of Mr. Frédéric WHECLER pointed out that the textile sub-sector occupies the second rank of the most polluting activities in the world. Professional Textile Care introduces a tremendous improvement. Far from being paradoxical, these data reveal the nature of the issues and challenges facing current and future practitioners, both in Africa and around the world. Hence the need to create and organize frameworks for exchange and consultation.

After a fraternal feast reserved for the occasion, it was 4:30 p.m. when the meeting was adjourned and the appointment was made for the next day in the conviviality room of the National Museum.

4 July 2025 : Promoting Eco-Responsible Companies

By its content, its audience and its structure, this day is the backbone of the symposium.

Organized in two phases, one called **protocol** and the other called **technical**, the participants as well as the many guests were delighted to have witnessed and advocated a wind of change in the offer of service and alternative training specific to the textile care sub-sector.

Opening

The reading of the authorization for public demonstration allowed the General Moderator of the Symposium, Dr. François Désiré MBESSE, to introduce the performance of the National Anthem of Cameroon; before inviting the audience to listen to the opening remarks of the Symposium delivered by the Honourable Célestin TABOULI Vice-President of **the Network of Parliamentarians for the Promotion of Private** Entrepreneurship, personal representative of the President, the Honourable Roger MELINGUI, held by agenda constraints.

Among other things, the speaker made a point of proposing that the initiative carried out by ASPET cannot be limited to the structuring of economically viable companies. It should extend its claims and effects on related health and environmental aspects; The aim is to promote the emergence of eco-responsible companies. This orientation seems to him to be the prerequisite for supporting the objectives and purpose of this association with promising ambitions.

In his speech Mr. Jean Michel NDOUSSA; Vice-President of FAPET and President-Founder of ASPET, expalined the contextual biases to the development of corporate citizens in Africa in general and in Cameroon in particular.

Despite the presence of actors interested in the subsector, he believed that willpower alone was not enough to achieve performance. He also emphasized to draw the attention of promoters to the dangerous and non-standardised exercise of an activity that has an impact on public health. Finally, he expressed the hope that the Symposium would have a transformative effect in this wasteland sub-sector.

Need for Professional Training

Witnessing on the one hand the commitment of working populations in the textile maintenance trades and, on the other hand, the qualitative leap observed in this area in some countries from Africa south of the Sahara, the President of FAPET Mr. Célestin YOBOUE comforted the project leaders and promoters of dry cleaners on the correctness and necessity of their actions. As much as the speaker who preceded him, he elevated training to the rank of pillar of the development of the textile care sector in Africa.

For his part, Mr. Frédéric WHEELER, representative of the President of CINET, Mr. Peter N.M. Wennekes, welcomed the diligence of ASPET, under the leadership of FAPET, to take place, in a speed defying all records so far. The very first African Symposium, in Yaoundé.

After identifying some strategic areas of reflection on which the participants will have to focus, the speaker concluded with a note of hope and an invitation to mutualize on a permanent basis.

The intervention of the Honourable David MANFOUOU, Promoter of the group *Elegance Drying*, leader in Central Africa, will allow them to put their foot in the stirrup to give hope to practitioners to see, qualitatively and quantitatively, their companies, which are certainly embryonic but undeniably voluntarist, transformed.

Punctuated by joyful areas, delicately distilled by the sound booth, the event photography, the taking of prints and the opening of the stands served as a transition for the second phase.

Key-Topics

For two hours, in an approach that was both interactive and participatory, the following four presentations formed the backbone of the exchange between the participants and the invited experts:

- *Skills development and certification in the textile sector in Africa*
- *Challenges of structuring the textile cleaning sub-sector in Africa*
- *African Youth and Textile Entrepreneurship: Opportunities and Growth Potential*
- *Challenges and method of securing the linen circuit in hospitals.*

The development of the themes listed above was led by the experts:

Frédéric WHEELER, Thierry SENEVAT, Jean Michel NDOUSSA; Célestin YOBOUE and Dr. François Désiré MBESSE AKAMSE.

From this phase on the presentations, the essence of the symposium's resolutions were derived. The session was adjourned and the participants met in the catering area for fraternal feasts.

5 July 2025: Closing Ceremony

Mainly reserved for the **Closing Ceremony**, this day began with a reflective aperitif around the project to create a chain of hospital laundries in Africa. In light of the experience already effective in Côte d'Ivoire, the experts, Célestin YOBOUE and Jean Michel NDOUSSA explained the relevance of this project and highlighted the opportunity. They will develop the method and dissemination strategy of the suggested initiative. This was followed by the presentation of the general symposium report, the presentation of training certificates and participation diplomas. At 2 p.m., immersed in the emotion, but full of satisfaction, the first symposium was finalized.

II. DIFFICULTIES ENCOUNTERED

As any human work can be improved, the first African symposium on textile maintenance, experienced, in its organizational phase, some structural difficulties, namely:

- *Its implementation in a hurry*
- *The difficulty of mobilizing, under these conditions, all the sectors that could have enhanced its lustre*
- *The low mobilization of human and financial resources at the national level*
- *The burdens linked to the conflict of agendas, in a socio-political context marked by the preparation of a presidential election*
- *The lack of experience in this area of ASPET members.*

Despite these obstacles, the participants committed to better prepare for future events.

III. RECOMMENDATIONS

Meeting in Yaoundé on 03, 04 and 05 July 2025, in the **Conviviality room** of the National Museum, the participants whose names, signatures and organizations are included in the list attached hereto, have agreed as follows:

- At the political level,

1. Taking into account the involvement of the Cameroonian public authorities in the technical support of the symposium, they thank the Head of State H.E. Mr. PAUL BIYA President of the Republic as well as the members of the government under the leadership of HM. Joseph John GOUTE his Prime Minister. These thanks extend to the Cameroonian Parliament through the **Network of Parliamentarians for Private Entrepreneurship**.

- At the strategic level,

2. Welcoming the brilliant initiative of organizing an African symposium on textile trades and textile care, the participants recommend:

- The inclusion of the symposium in a programmatic logic, in Cameroon, with a frequency of 2 years.
- The formalization of the collaboration between ASPET and the Cameroonian public authorities in order to participate in the structuring of the textile cleaning sub-sector.
- The implementation of a platform for healthy collaboration: ASPET, FAPET and CINET; from which the boost of activity and professionalization will derive.

- At the operational level:

3. In order to participate in a concrete way in the structural transformation program of the Cameroonian economy, in the sub-sectors of MSMEs, SMEs and SMIs, the participants mistakenly expressed the wish to:

- The creation of a multi-stakeholder pooling platform.
- The creation of a professional center for the development of textile trades and textile care in Cameroon.
- The creation of a hospital laundry in Yaoundé, with the possibility of replication in each regional capital.
- The activation of a process of standardization, structuring and enhancement of the textile and textile care professions.

Finally, because of the relevance of the issues raised by the symposium, the participants welcome the organization of new initiatives and events. They are committed, alongside the public authorities, to participate in a civic way in the development of a productive, fair, inclusive and equitable economy.

Done in Yaoundé on 05 July 2025
For the Organizing Committee,
The President of the Scientific Commission and General
Moderator
Dr François Désiré MBESSE AKAMSE