

U.S. Position on AfDB's Kumba-Mamfe Road Development project in Cameroon
November 21, 2012

The United States remains very supportive of the Bank's investment in transport infrastructure in the central African countries. In this particular instance, however, the United States has some concerns about the impact this project will have on the local environment and the AfDB's/Cameroonian authorities' ability to mitigate against it.

The United States is concerned that the environmental impact assessment (EIA) does not adequately analyze the direct and cumulative impacts and project alternatives. In particular, the United States believes that impacts on biodiversity are not sufficiently analyzed and did not find the analysis on noise, water quality or impact on the protect areas to be rigorous enough. Given the sensitive ecosystems and endangered species in the near vicinity, this is all the more important. While mitigation measures are proposed, the United States is concerned that they will not prove adequate enough. Capacity building and strong political will are needed as well to ensure that these mitigation measures have the intended impact.

While the United States is a strong supporter of using feeder roads to stimulate rural productivity, it would have liked to have seen an environmental assessment of the impacts of those roads, particularly given the tropical forest environment. Furthermore, the United States expected a greater analysis of or comment on the environmental impact of the increased economic activity that is expected given that palm oil plantations and other agricultural expansion will likely increase with improved road networks to markets.

Despite some mitigation measures, the United States is concerned about a possible increase in poaching, and urges the Bank and the authorities to be sensitive to this risk. The United States recommends that an effort be made to measure the amount of illegal poaching now, at the end of the project and five years afterwards, so that appropriate mitigating measures can be put in place, based on statistical information.

While the United States remains fully committed to the infrastructure needs of Cameroon and all African countries, it is concerned that in this instance the environmental consequences were not adequately analyzed. The United States cannot support, therefore, this project; it abstains on this project, in keeping with existing legislative mandates.