

# CITY DIPLOMACY AND MULTILATERALISM IN AFRICA: TOOL AND CHALLENGES OF AFRICAN MULTILATERAL COOPERATION THROUGH THE PRISM OF THE INTERNATIONAL ACTION OF CAMEROONIAN MUNICIPALITIES

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**Abstract:** *This reflection aims to show that city diplomacy constitutes a framework for the expression of a new multilateralism in Africa today. It is part of the last thematic axis of this call for contributions relating to the projects of multilateralism seen from Africa and for Africa. This reflection starts from the premise that city diplomacy has over time contributed to the expansion of the field of competences of state diplomacy. The international action of local governments and cities therefore constitutes a diplomatic tool that complements state diplomacy with regard to the crisis in the effectiveness of this diplomacy. Today's Africa still faces the challenge of its insertion into the global multilateral system. A challenge that has as a prerequisite the strengthening of an inter-African cooperation framework capable of propelling Africa as a player that makes sense within the international architecture. The existence of a pan-African platform of local governments, namely the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), is a tangible illustration of a framework for the deployment of a new multilateralism in Africa. The experience of African municipalities and cities in city diplomacy within the UCLGA is worthy of interest given that it makes it possible to question the relevance and effectiveness of city diplomacy in the construction of a new framework. multilateralism in Africa. The study is based on two theories, namely transnationalism and functionalism, which not only make it possible to understand the dynamics of internationalization of cities and local governments in the face of globalization, but also to assess the contribution of African municipalities and cities. in building a new multilateralism in Africa. From a methodological point of view, this research draws on a mixed-type approach that combines both quantitative and qualitative approaches. The quantitative approach makes it possible to establish the correlation between city diplomacy and multilateralism in achieving the challenges that still face Africa today. The qualitative approach makes it possible to understand and assess the relevance of city diplomacy initiatives in solving Africa's problems through the prism of the AFRICITIES summits. Documentary data made up of scientific works, reports from international organizations and archival documents constitute the main material of this research.*

**Keywords:** city diplomacy, multilateralism, local governments, Africa

## 1. Introduction

International relations are characterized today by a relative rise in power of the cooperative phenomenon of local governments. The latter has contributed to making the continental international landscape more complex. As in other continents, international action municipalities has greatly contributed to the expansion of the field of diplomatic skills state in Africa. Conscious that the promotion of international solidarity South-South goes through the implementation of cooperation initiatives at the local level, African towns and cities have over time undertaken to promote inter-African cooperation. Thus, was born in Africa a new framework of multilateralism carried by the United Cities and Local Governments of Africa (UCLGA), framework of expression of a diplomacy of the cities centered on the resolution of many problems which undermine present-day Africa. The international platforms of

municipalities and local governments are privileged places for consultation and dialogue with a view to implementing development at local level.

Promoting cooperation as well as African unity constitutes a cardinal principle of the policy of most states on the African continent, in particular Cameroon. It therefore influences the deployment of municipalities and African cities in international relations. This is undoubtedly the reason why the promotion of municipal cooperation at the African level is based on this foundation. The conduct of interstate relations based on peace is for African States a necessity for the promotion of African unity. City diplomacy has been able to find a place in the international architecture based on a simple reflection by researchers on the international transactions observed between cities and other local authorities. African unity, which requires the total and effective liberation of the continent, is a creed set out not only in the Agenda 2063 of the African Union (AU) but also in the founding texts of UCLGA. African local governments subscribe to this credo insofar as they have never ceased to attach an interest to cooperation Inter-african. Diplomacy of local governments is an important tool in the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. Conventions cooperation decentralized and the twinning initiatives between African towns and cities sufficiently illustrate the interest accorded to intra-African cooperation. These conventions, which are somewhat different from the Western approach to cooperation, reflect a vision embodied by the AU and relayed by UCLGA.

More than a decade after independence, the record of African States in the field of multilateralism is not at all satisfactory with regard to the many twists and turns that have often characterized diplomatic practices in Africa. Thus, with regard to Agenda 2063 of the AU, the cooperation of local authorities constitutes a tool which should promote the integration of the African continent. This makes local authorities important players in the implementation of a new framework for multilateralism in Africa. In light of this finding of a crisis of multilateralism in Africa due to the ineffectiveness of state diplomacy, there is reason to question the relevance and effectiveness of city diplomacy in implementing establishment of a new multilateral cooperation framework in Africa. How can city diplomacy help meet the challenges of multilateral cooperation in Africa? This is the main question around which this reflection revolves, which first sets out to show the global context that has led to the rise of city diplomacy in the field of international cooperation in order to show how this is a tool for building a new multilateralism in Africa. The experience of Cameroonian municipalities joining international African local government platforms and their participation in the AFRICITES summit are illustrative examples of our argument.

## **2. Global context and rise of city diplomacy in the field of international cooperation**

One of the illustrative facts of the transformation of the international action of local authorities is the shift from decentralized cooperation to city diplomacy (Mamoudou, Iguigui, 2021: 7-8). Two major elements have contributed to the emergence of new fields in diplomacy local governments. These are wars and climate change. These new fields have therefore emerged in a context marked by the resurgence of conflicts and the proliferation of threats to the ecosystem, which has caused the acceleration of climate change. As planet earth is now faced with a double vulnerability, namely wars and climate change, the need to challenge people through local communities has emerged as an appropriate solution (Iguigui, 2020: 262). It is in this perspective that the establishment of intergovernmental platforms for negotiations on the climate has favored the rise and evolution of a diplomacy of development sustainable. The organization of Earth Summits has made it possible to challenge local authorities on the possibility of adjusting their international action based on these new fields of diplomacy. The birth of city diplomacy who followed this movement enabled the municipalities Cameroonian to experience these transformations in their own way. Thus, the emergence of sustainable

development issues and their appropriation by local authorities have been catalyzed by the dynamics of internationalization of cities and local governments in the face of globalization.

### **Statement of city diplomacy and emergence of sustainable development issues on the international agenda of local governments**

The expansion of the field of competence of diplomacy state has caused the entry into the scene of sub-state entities what are in particular the local authorities, regional entities or federated states. The latter are at the origin of an intense diplomatic activity which aims to be both competitive and complementary to that of the States. City diplomacy, since it is about it, could find a place in the international architecture starting from a simple reflection of the researchers on the international transactions observed between the cities and other territorial collectivities.

### **City diplomacy: between the search for a definition and the consecration of the diplomatic action of cities and local governments**

The first attempts to define diplomacy cities have been sketched by scholars who have tried to theorize the external action of sub-state entities. This is Professor Panayot SOLDATOS who, in 1990, proposed the concept of para-diplomacy to allude to international action federated entities (Soldatos, 1990: 34). His work was thus taken up by many academics specializing in international relations seeking to understand the international deployment sub-state entities. This work has been reappropriated by other researchers, in particular Yves VILTARD, Brian HOCKING and Roger Van Der PLUIJM. It was in 2005 that the concept of city diplomacy emerged with the creation within the United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG) organization of a commission called "City diplomacy". A year later, that is to say in 2006, meetings of this commission held in Washington and Perugia will propose an initial definition of the concept. This first definition sees city diplomacy as:

A tool for local governments and their associations to help local governments caught up in conflicts and wars, through cooperation immediate and concrete city to the city with a view to creating a stable environment in which citizens can live together in peace, in democracy and prosperity (Viltard, 2008: 512).

After these initial academic stammerings, international local government organizations have set about finding a definition for diplomacy cities. In 2007, Professor Roger VAN DER PLUIJM proposed a definition of city diplomacy as "the institutions and processes through which cities engage with actors on the international stage, with the intention of representing themselves and their interests therein, and reciprocally" (Van Der Pluijm, Melissen, 2007). With regard to these definitions, it shows that city diplomacy has experienced a consecration in its practice starting from a simple search for definition at the start. Today, the spokespersons of local governments gathered within platforms such as UCLG are working to give recognition to their international activities, and to endow them with a singularity. It is in this sense that they attempt to appropriate the issues of sustainable development.

### **The emergence of sustainable development issues on the international agenda of local governments**

The issues of sustainable development emerged in the field of international cooperation after the Second World War in a perspective of multilateral state cooperation under the aegis of the United Nations (UN). Originally, sustainable development was discussed during the Earth Summits organized with a view to finding solutions to the multiple threats facing the entire planet. The emanation of an intergovernmental will driven by the aegis of the UN, the earth summits are meetings initiated with the aim of developing a policy international public in development sustainable. They are held according to a cyclical period of ten years since 1972, date of the first summit organized in Stockholm in Sweden. The second was held in

Nairobi, Kenya in 1982, the third in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 1992, the fourth in Johannesburg in 2002, and the fifth to qualify for Rio+20 was also held in Rio in 2012 (Laville, 2013: 23-45). These Earth Summits have given a new impetus to international action local authorities, inviting them to include the promotion of sustainable development in their agendas. Since then, sustainable development has been on the international agenda local communities. Well before the 1992 summit held in Rio de Janeiro, the milestones of international commitment of local governments in promoting sustainable development had already been raised. In 1990, during the World Congress of Local Authorities, the International Council for Local Environmental Initiatives was created (Boutaud, Brodhag, 2006: 155). It was this institution that led the way for local authorities at the Rio summit in 1992. The objective was to arouse a massive mobilization of local governments in order to support the States and the UN in the implementation of 'a politic global approach to promoting sustainable development. During this Rio summit, ICLEI clearly showed the fundamental role of local public actors in the implementation of sustainable development through the formula "Think global, act local".

To this end, Chapter 28 of Agenda 21 of the United Nations invited local authorities to put in place, as early as 1996, development strategies sustainable at the scale of their territories. This is how the first local approaches to sustainable development were developed and numerous actions carried out within the framework of cooperation international local authorities. Since then, many communities have drawn up local Agendas 21 in order to stimulate, from the local level, a global dynamic of environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development. Decentralization started in some African countries since 1996, has facilitated the linking of local authorities to the recommendations resulting from the Rio de Janeiro summit of 1992. The Rio summit provoked profound transformations because it allowed the concept of biodiversity to leave the sphere of biologists to integrate into that of the human and social sciences (Blondel, 2005: 333). Results achieved in local development promotion policies sustainability have remained relatively mixed as many countries have struggled to meet this requirement. However, the local communities that are committed have been able to give satisfaction through the development of their local Agenda 21s. It was not until the Copenhagen summit that new impetus was given in terms of the commitment of local authorities to the promotion of sustainable development. If sustainable development is a catalyst for the rise of city diplomacy, it must be emphasized that it has provoked many dynamics of internationalization of cities and local governments in the context of globalization

### **The dynamics of internationalization of cities and local governments in the face of globalization**

Metropolisation is today considered to be a major factor in the recomposition of territories (Viltard, 2010:598). This is how cities and other local governments try to project themselves within the framework of globalization. Even if this projection is controversial in view of the difficulties of ownership of African local authorities, particularly Cameroon, of city diplomacy.

### **The internationalization of cities in the context of globalization**

Diplomacy cities has caused a reconfiguration of urban spaces in the world's major cities. We have witnessed the emergence of the concept of "city global". These are large metropolises with an international dimension such as Paris, London, New York, Tokyo, Hong Kong and even Geneva (Viltard, 2010:597). They are then carriers of many dynamics of territorial reconfiguration at the time of globalization and the redeployment of capitalism. Like the regional and federated entities, the local authorities have been able to develop strategies of resistance and integration into globalization. Thus, these cities implement capital attraction strategies as major stock exchanges, as the headquarters of multinationals or international

institutions (Viltard, 2005: 131). The internationalization of cities has been at the origin of the phenomenon of metropolization. This metropolitanization is encouraged by local authorities. Some countries like France have initiated reforms along these lines. Many networks of sub-state entities have been set up as a result of the internationalization of cities, thus intensifying the vast movement of globalization. Many of them have launched a fairly significant diplomatic offensive, a question of marking their presence on the international scene. Examples include Quebec, which had 28 international representations in 2005, and Catalonia, which had around fifty (Paquin, 2005: 131). Some cities have been awarded UNESCO World Heritage status due to their ever-increasing internationalization. Thus, we understand that today's globalization is strongly marked by the diplomatic action of local governments and other cities which have, over time, established themselves as major players in international relations. If the phenomenon seems banal for European communities and cities, African cities seem to find it difficult to adapt to this situation. This is why diplomacy cities in the Cameroonian context remains in search of its bearings. It therefore oscillates between appropriation and adaptation.

### **Diplomacy cities in the Cameroonian context: between appropriation and adaptation**

Diplomacy cities is a relatively recent tradition in the Cameroonian landscape, even if it must be recognized that the international commitment municipalities cameroonian, meanwhile, is old. It contributes to the influence of the Cameroonian model of decentralization (Mbeng Dang, Iguigui, 2017: 279-282). It has brought out a new category of diplomats in the Cameroonian diplomatic landscape, namely the mayors who, through their actions, strive to implement municipal foreign policies. This diplomacy is characterized by its difficult freedom from state supervision and the quest for benchmarks and international affirmation remains a real challenge. The difficult emancipation of diplomacy cities of state influence can be explained both by the lack of political will, and a narrow vision that government authorities have of non-governmental diplomacy. The fact that the state, as part of the implementation of decentralization policies, rises as a policeman for decentralized communities somewhat slows down the enthusiasm of local elected officials. Given the often very long administrative procedures, mayors often find it difficult to develop and implement projects in line with international deployment of their cities. For example, we note the attitude of the prefects who ensure the supervision of the State over the municipalities in Cameroon (Iguigui, 2015: 84). The latter have a hold on both the organs and the acts of the municipality..

The internationalization strategy cannot be based solely on the needs of local government without taking into account the possibilities offered by the context (Zapata, 2008: 40). In which case, local governments that opt for this approach run the risk of never having benchmarks, and by extension, an international affirmation. To know its international potential, the community must identify the threats to which it is subject and the opportunities available to it. For this analysis, the community must know, as exhaustively as possible, the history and current situation of international relations of its territory, without being limited to public institutions. Far from being a simple view of the mind, this is a major challenge to be taken up by Cameroonian cities which are in search of benchmarks and international affirmation. To achieve this, they must carefully scrutinize the current international situation. The evolution of the system international in all its components, and through taking into account certain economic, political, social and cultural indicators obliges the Cameroonian authorities to think about the external action of their local governments. This then assumes that the issues both manifest and latent of diplomacy cities Cameroonians deserve to be re-examined with regard to the shift observed around the general philosophy of the para-diplomatic phenomenon. Fundraising international and visibility which, until now, constitute the main challenges of the internationalization of municipalities Cameroonian are then faced with an imperative to adapt

to the upheavals experienced by the international system. Despite its lack of appropriation by Cameroonian municipalities of city diplomacy, it is now positioned as a framework for the expression of a new multilateralism in Africa.

### **City diplomacy as a framework for the expression of a new multilateralism in Africa**

As one of the chessboards in the game of global influence, partnership is accompanied by a considerable transformation of African international relations (Chouala, 2003: 69). These relations are now undergoing a reconfiguration that reveals a new multilateralism supported by local governments and expressed through city diplomacy. The expression of a new multilateralism in Africa is manifested in the case of Cameroon by the adhesion of its municipalities and cities to the African international platforms of local governments and the participation in the AFRICITIES summits which constitute for Africa the anchor point of this new multilateralism carried by local authorities and African cities.

### **The membership of Cameroonian municipalities and cities in African international platforms of local governments**

The international platforms of municipalities and local governments are privileged places for consultation and dialogue with a view to implementing development at local level. To this end, there are African platforms of cities and local governments to which Cameroonian municipalities have joined in order to enhance the cooperation inter-african. This membership obeys a logic that ties in with one of the guiding principles of the policy foreigner from Cameroon namely the promotion of African cooperation. For Cameroonian municipalities, the promotion and enhancement of inter-African cooperation requires membership in African platforms of local governments.

### **The promotion of inter-African cooperation as a basis for the adhesion of Cameroonian municipalities to African platforms of local governments**

Promoting cooperation as well as African unity constitutes a cardinal principle of the policy exterior of Cameroon. It therefore influences the deployment of municipalities Cameroonian in international relations. This is undoubtedly the reason why the promotion of municipal cooperation at the African level is based on this foundation. The conduct of interstate relations based on peace is for Cameroon a necessity for the promotion of African unity (Nganmondi, 2011: 25). African unity, which requires the total and effective liberation of the continent, is a creed set out in the guiding principles of Cameroon's foreign policy (Mouelle Kombi, 1996: 46-95). Politics foreigner from Cameroon oscillates between two logics. The first concerns an African and sub-regional deployment whose objective is to strengthen African solidarity. The second logic is that of a global deployment characterized by a diversification of the poles of action beyond the African continent with the backdrop of openness to the world and the achievement of its development objectives economic. The cities Cameroonian subscribe to this principle insofar as they have always shown an interest in cooperation inter-african. Diplomacy of local governments is an important tool in the promotion of peace and conflict resolution. Conventions cooperation decentralized and twinning initiatives between municipalities Cameroonian and other African municipalities sufficiently illustrate the interest accorded to intra-African cooperation. These conventions, which are somewhat different from the Western approach to cooperation, reflect a vision embodied by the AU and relayed by the African platforms of local governments, the main one being UCLGA.

### **The adhesion of Cameroonian municipalities to African international platforms of local governments as a tool for the promotion of a new multilateralism in Africa**

The cities Cameroonian are members of African local government platforms. Their membership follows a common vision driven by the States within the AU who, aware of the importance of decentralization have adopted the African charter of values and principles of decentralization, local governance and development local. This is a legal instrument which has contributed to the establishment of many African local government platforms, the largest of which is UCLGA. Ratification by Cameroon of this charter has encouraged a massive membership of its municipalities within African platforms such as CGLUA, the Covenant of Mayors of Africa (CMAS), the Association of Mayors of Central Africa (AMAC), the African Conference on Decentralization and Local Development (CADDEL), the Network of Locally Elected Women of Africa (REFELA) and many others (Le Communal Hors-Série, 2018: 28).

Beyond simple membership, municipalities Cameroonian stand out through the responsibilities that their leaders exercise within these platforms. For example, Cameroon chaired CADDEL and REFELA (Le Communal Hors-Série, 2018: 28). This shows a certain efficiency international deployment Cameroonian municipalities. Diplomacy cities which is gradually expressed through this membership of African platforms and the exercise of responsibilities within them finds its extension in participation in international meetings of African local governments. This is particularly the case with the AFRICITY Summits in which Cameroonian municipalities take part to demonstrate their attachment to the ideals of promoting cooperation inter-African communal pledge of a new multilateralism in Africa.

### **The establishment of the AFRICITIES summits and the advent of a new framework for multilateral cooperation in Africa**

One of the modalities through which cooperation Association of Local Governments promotes a new multilateralism in Africa is the participation in the AFRICITIES summits. This is a process of internationalization of cities (Viltard, 2005: 600) which share experience in local governance. African cities, which are generally municipalities or even local governments, align themselves with this situation, hence the existence of platforms within which they meet within the framework of inter-African summits. Thus, gathered within CGLUA, African municipalities are trying in their own way to build international relations from a sharing of the experience of decentralization and local governance. As for the Cameroonian municipalities, their participation in the inter-African local government summits can only be better understood in the light of the context in which these meetings were set up and the issues that underlie them in order to better understand their participation in these meetings.

### **The context and challenges of setting up AFRICITIES summits**

The establishment of inter-African local government summits took place in a context marked by a global legitimization of international action cities and other local authorities decentralized. The rise of diplomacy cities in the West and its extension in Africa has aroused enthusiasm on the part of local governments, more than ever engaged in a battle for recognition of their existence by the other players in the system international. Globalization and ever-increasing economic interdependence have contributed to broadening the scope of action of local authorities and other sub-state entities (Pasquier, 2012: 168). In 1996, during the United Nations Habitat (UN-HABITAT) Habitat II Summit held in Istanbul, Turkey, local and regional authorities were recognized an important role in the development. At the same time, their emergence as international players was reiterated. It is on the basis of the recommendations of the Habitat II Summit that the AFRICITIES summits were born. The first edition was held in 1998 in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire. Many issues under pin the establishment of these inter-African meetings of local governments. These issues are both geopolitical and geoeconomic.

On the geopolitical level, it is for the municipalities and African cities to build not only an African international entity, but also to project themselves on the international scene as meaningful actors. In light of the competition between the various players in the system *international*, African municipalities are trying to seize the opportunities offered to them to obtain international recognition from the major entities such as the UN, the AU, the European Union (EU) and the Bretton Woods Institutions. It is also for African cities to position themselves as international territories whose governance mechanisms obey the channels in force. By analyzing urban action from the transnational (Russel, 2006: 21), we understand that the establishment of inter-African summits of local governments in Africa tends to make African municipalities real spaces for the production and distribution of transnational dynamics.

From a socioeconomic point of view, the inter-African summits of local governments like AFRICITIES aim to establish a new partnership for the development economy at the local level. It is a question of multiplying the ways and means of including African cities in the field of economic competitiveness. This requires the enunciation as well as the implementation of a diplomacy cities focused on economic influence and territorial development. Given that metropolisation has become a structuring element in the recomposition of territories (Viltard, 2005: 598), economic competition is therefore at the heart of the battle for the international positioning of cities. For Cameroon, the AFRICITIES summits constitute a reservoir of economic opportunities (Le Communal Hors-Série, 2018: 27). They are often given the opportunity to meet technical and financial partners who can support them in achieving decentralization. This is the main motivation for the participation of municipalities Cameroonians at the AFRICITIES summits between 1998 and 2018.

### **The participation of Cameroonian municipalities in AFRICITIES summits**

Between 1998 and 2018, local governments as well as African cities met eight times under the banner of the UCLGA. Some municipalities Cameroonians have always participated in these various summits which each time have addressed a problem related to development of Africa from local initiatives. These include the communes of Douala I, Douala IVth, Yaounde I, Yaounde II, Yaoundé III, Dschang and Bangangte. The first edition held in Abidjan in 1998 was marked by the recognition of the essential role of local communities in the development of Africa. The second edition took place in Windhoek, Namibia in 2000 (<http://www.faapa.info/blog/histoire-des-sommets-africites-encadre> consulted on July 21, 2019). The central theme was "The financing of local authorities for sustainable development in Africa". Cameroon hosted the third edition in 2003 on the theme "Access to basic services within African local communities". The participants pleaded for the acceleration of access to basic services such as drinking water, health, hygiene and sanitation.

The fourth edition held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2006 focused on the involvement of African local communities in achieving the MDGs. The city Marrakech hosted the fifth edition, the discussions of which focused on the response of African local authorities to the global crisis and the promotion of development local sustainability and employment. In Dakar in 2012, African local governments addressed the issues of building Africa from its territories. The seventh edition held in Johannesburg, South Africa looked at the future of Africa through its people. In 2018, African local leaders met in Marrakech for a reflection on the theme "The transition towards sustainable cities and territories: the role of local authorities of Africa" (<http://www.faapa.info/blog/histoire-des-sommets-africites-encadre> consulted on July 21, 2019). The Cameroonian cities that took part in the work are Yaoundé, Douala, Bafoussam and Dschang.

Cameroon always took part in these various meetings and succinctly reaped many benefits. These fallouts are the institutionalization two prizes, namely the "Gibert BIWOLE" prize and the "AMOUGOU NOMA" prize institutionalized during the first edition because of the



importance of Cameroonian cities within this platform. During the eighth edition, the Cameroonian delegation was led by the Minister of Decentralization and Local Development Georges ELANGA OBAM. He was accompanied for the occasion by certain mayors like Emile ANDZE ANDZE, Mayor of the Yaoundé District Municipality I, Jean Jacques LENGUE MALAPA, Mayor of the Arrondissement Commune from Douala I, Beaudelaire DONFACK, Mayor of the Municipality of Dschang and Célestine SHORT KETCHA, Mayor of the Municipality of Bangangté and other administrative officials in charge of decentralization. These ambassadors of the municipalities Cameroonians have contributed to enhancing their image and their visibility within the international architecture. Actions which undoubtedly contribute significantly to drawing a new framework for multilateralism in Africa.

### **Conclusion**

In the final analysis, this reflection sought to account for the new mechanisms for reconfiguring multilateralism in the African context. This reconfiguration takes place through city diplomacy, which is positioned as a tool that is both complementary and competitive with state diplomacy. The internationalization of African cities and local communities in a context of globalization is a catalyst that has contributed to setting up a new framework for bottom-up multilateral cooperation. The example of Cameroonian municipalities through their membership in the inter-African platforms of local governments and their participation in the AFRICITIES summits as a framework for expressing local aspirations in a global perspective, sufficiently illustrates the importance of city diplomacy today. The incursion of new tools into the diplomacy of local governments is indicative of the transformation undergone by the international deployment of Cameroonian municipalities. This incursion took place in a context marked by the emergence of environmental concerns which have risen to the rank of priorities on the international agenda of local authorities. The Earth Summits then fostered the growth and development of city diplomacy in terms of environmental protection and the promotion of sustainable development. As a result, city diplomacy in the Cameroonian context appears as a reality that oscillates between appropriation and adaptation. Partnership as a tool and modality of cooperation should enable Africa to think up a new practice of diplomacy by giving pride of place to African towns and communities. Their ability to address and solve equally crucial issues such as sustainable development, climate change, natural disasters or conflicts testifies to the need to build a new multilateral cooperation framework in Africa based on the external action of cities. and local communities.

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