



{jcomments off} June 8, 2010 marked our final business luncheon before adjourning for summer. It also heralds farewell to U.S. Ambassador Janet Garvey for her three years as Honorary Board President of Amcham and senior ranking U.S. official in Cameroon.

Ambassador Garvey's first speech centered on the ensuing global financial crisis in November 2007. The second keynote address in June 2009, shed light on the role of Amcham in society with a historical overview. And the final speech summarily addressed the potential albeit missed economic opportunities for Cameroon.

This story gives special emphasis because Ambassador Garvey's findings are so interesting and important for the future of U.S.-Cameroon relations.

Ambassador Garvey has found one correlating factor that keeps Cameroon from forging ahead as an attractive investment environment. It isn't just corruption, the financial crisis or business climate challenges, but rather inertia and corruption.

Today, the United States remains Cameroon's largest investor but as noted by the World Bank Doing Business Report, all indicators lead toward inefficiencies that keep business from getting done. Key measures for a country's ease of doing business are the time and number of procedures it takes to complete transactions. Minimize those time wasters and the environment becomes attractive.

The Ambassador went on to cite grim reports about Cameroon from the International Crisis Group and Foreign Policy magazine. Optimistic notwithstanding, she underlined the notion that if Cameroon is to improve, Cameroonians must lead the way.

Of even greater concern is the role of AmCham Cameroon. Three years since its inception, the American Chamber of Commerce Cameroon can and should play an instrumental role advocating for a better business climate.

Audience members nodded in agreement and quietly reflected on the sobering speech.

To show their appreciation on behalf of the members and Board of Directors; AmCham President Philip Horchler and board member Roland Abeng unveiled and presented as a parting gift, a ceremonial Fang mask. Upon viewing, Ambassador Garvey seemed pleased with the unique sculpture and thanked the Chamber wishing all her very best.

by Charmian Penda