Confronted with increased congestion of seaports recently exacerbated by Covid-19, many nations and Regional Economic Communities in Africa are launching dry port development projects that aim at shifting customs, logistics services and cargo handling activities to inland terminals situated in locations far from ports. However, in order to maximize efficiency of such structures, their connection to seaports need to be ensured by short and fast access lines that should be integrated in their design. In this regard, railway transport is unsurpassed in terms of its speed, time savings and ability to travel long distances. Unfortunately, this mode of transport is also inadequate or non-existent in many parts of Africa, often constrained by difficult morphological conditions of the territories where railway tracks must be laid.

Dry ports are recently gaining traction especially in West Africa. In January 2022, Togo opened the Adetikopé industrial platform (PIA), while the Nigerian government announced in the same month the project of revitalization of 6 dry port projects previously planned and subsequently abandoned mainly because of lack of funding for their construction (read our post ).

Now it is the turn of Central Africa. In early April, Cameroon's government announced the acceleration of the construction works of a dry port in the town of Ngaoundéré, located in the northern part of the country, which is expected to decongest the Douala and Kribi seaports.

The CEMAC commission has more recently announced the launch of feasibility studies for the development of a new dry port in Ebebiyín, a town located at the crossroads between Gabon, Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Once the feasibility studies will be completed, contract award and physical construction works will follow, for an estimated cost of about USD 1.2 million.

This preliminary phase, that is projected to last 11 months, aims at designing a multifunctional platform that will allow the provision of integrated customs, logistics and cargo handling functions, with additional structures such as administrative buildings, weighing stations and terminal facilities.