



Defying The Odds

**A Conversation
With Ghana's VP
Dr Mahamudu
Bawumia.**



- *Kenya: A Beacon Of Hope For Lamu*
- *Nigeria: Who succeeds Buhari?*
- *Mozambique: The Return of TotalEnergies*
- *Burkina Faso-Sunset For Democracy*
- *Cameroon: An AFCON Like No Other*



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Reflections Of A Changing Continent In AfCON 2021

By Ajong Mbatndah L

For an AfCON shrouded in controversy, it was a happy ending with closing festivities that made the continent proud, and the crowning of a new champion in Senegal as the West African nation defeated Egypt to clinch its first title. While Senegal deserves congratulations for its hard fought victory, and Cameroon deserves great credit for the immense sacrifices incurred in hosting the tournament, we must equally underscore the African victory that the success of AfCON 2021 was.

From the infrastructure, you could tell Cameroon spent a fortune, and with a few exceptions notably the stampede that claimed 8 lives at the Olembe stadium, the gladiators made ample use of the infrastructure as evident in some of the upsets. Who would have thought at the beginning that hot favorites and reigning champions Algeria will be humbled out of the competition in the first round with three defeats including to a country like Equatorial Guinea? Who would have expected that continental giants Ghana will equally make an early exit including a shock defeat to the Comoros, a little-known Island in East Africa with a population of less than one million?

Indeed, one of the lessons from the tournament is that the game may no longer be a respecter of big names or just soccer pedigree. All countries need to work hard for their victories. In the exploits of countries like Equatorial Guinea, Malawi, Comoros, Burkina Faso, and others, that renewed spirit of competitiveness could only bode well for Africa. It was therefore befitting that Senegal, the country that eventually won the tournament was doing so for the first time.

The victory of the Teranga Lions as the Senegalese national team is called is feted by many football lovers across the continent because the country is one of the few that has made the choice of investing in an indigenous coach Aliou Cisse. Coaching at the national team level is one domain where for some reason most African countries prefer to bring in foreigners, sometimes at ridiculous amounts to handle things. While in a number of cases some of these foreign coaches have brought positive results, the bulk of them have been abysmal failures. The continuous obsession with foreign

coaches at a time when Africa has abundance of its own names with global respect in the world of soccer is baffling. At the last AfCON in Egypt, despite the prevalence of foreign coaches, the finals was between Algeria and Senegal, two sides managed by Africans. Of the final four teams in the recent AfCON in Cameroon, two of them Burkina Faso and Senegal were managed by indigenous coaches. That Cisse won it for Algeria should remind other nations that investing in African coaches and giving them decent working conditions similar to what the foreigners get might be a game changer.

That the success of AfCON 2021 is been heralded today should not make us lose sight of the challenging circumstances under which it took place. With the world still under the spell of COVID -19, the health risks were formidable. If the European nations cup took place, if major leagues are taking place in Europe, it was disingenuous to question the capability of an African country to host the biggest tournament that beams spotlight on the continent. By successful hosting the tournament, a message is sent to the world on the capabilities of the continent navigate major challenges. In 2015, when Morocco reneged on hosting the tournament under the pretext of the Ebola outbreak in some West African countries, Equatorial Guinea stepped in and bailed out the continent from global embarrassment. Had the tournament failed to take place or ended in a fiasco, beyond Cameroon, it would have been an African embarrassment in the eyes of the world.

As we pointed out in the January issue, football today is more than a game. It is profound political, economic and social ramifications on a global scale. With AfCON, the entire world is literally watching Africa and not just for entertainment but learning about developments in the continent. For the curious, they may discover that the victory of Senegal has a dose of poetic justice. Cameroons first President Amadou Ahidjo who ruled the country for some



Ajong Mbatndah L, Managing Editor

25 years died on exile in Senegal in 1989 and was buried there. Ironical that Senegal should win its first AfCON trophy in Cameroon.

It was great to see the rivalry, it was great to see the passion amongst the supporters of different countries, the banter in the stadia and social media spiced up the tournament and going forward, it will be great for Africans to display the same passion on other crucial issues affecting the continent. Talking of critical issues, democracy remains one of them with recent developments in West Africa raising fresh concerns.

Caught in the football frenzy, a military coup ousted the democratically elected President of Burkina Faso. The coup was third in West Africa within a span of two years after Mali and Guinea. There was an attempted coup in Guinea Bissau. In Mali there is a very serious standoff between Mali and France. Hitherto considered as the bedrock of democracy in Africa, the resurgence of coups in West Africa should be of grave concern to the rest of the continent.

The complexity of the coups lies in the fact that there are hugely embraced by the people. Be it in Mali, Guinea or Burkina Faso, the coups have been warmly embraced by the people. Assimi Goita in Mali is literally a cult figure in Mali and his compatriots have so far been unflinching in support to him during the standoff with France and the international community. The popularity of the coups should therefore be a wakeup call to other African

leaders. Coups should be abhorred, coups should be condemned but when the people who form an important corner stone of the democracy we all cherish jubilate when there are coups, then there is a disconnect somewhere, there is something we are missing and that has to be figured out and figured out fast before coups become the norm again in Africa.

Fun as the AfCON was, the world could equally tell all was not well in Cameroon. While the worst predicted by some did not happen, instead of doing any chest-thumping, President Biya should speedily get to work in putting the country in better shape. There is clear indication that Cameroonians have serious questions about the management of the AfCON by the government and local organizing committee and will be screaming for answers. In addition to this, the post AfCON Cameroon will have to grapple with the simmering crisis in the English speaking North West and South West, and other political developments that will start overheating the polity again. The impossible is not Cameroonian President Biya has said multiple times in the past. The third-place game where Cameroon came from three goals down within 15 mins left to down Burkina Faso speaks volumes on the kind of mindset that should guide President Biya. Regime apparatchiks credit him for transforming the sports infrastructural landscape in Cameroon and making it possible to have an AfCON for the ages. Fair enough, but it is back to reality, and Cameroonians will probably be more interested in seeing solutions to the multiple crisis and seeing what country President Biya in power for over forty years and counting will leave behind.

In addition to stories on the AfCON, this edition of PAV brings you an exclusive interview of Ghana's Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia who shares perspectives on seminal issues in Ghana and Africa. The issue also has stories on the race to succeed President Buhari in Nigeria, growing Russian interest in Africa, the resolution of the Rwanda -Uganda border feud, battling security challenges and the return of Total to Mozambique and more....Happy reading!!



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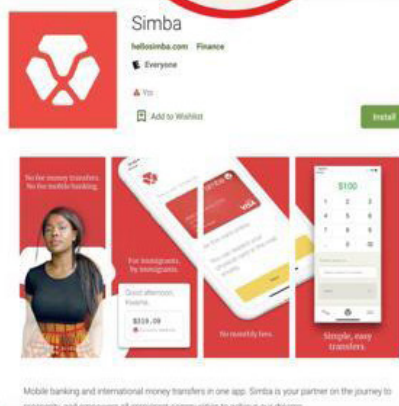
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Nigeria: Who succeeds Buhari?

By Richard Mammah

With January coming to a close, a frenzied run of contending political activities coming to the surface, the majority of Nigerians continuing to grapple with economic and security challenges, and with labour and civil society activists approaching the barricades, the Buhari administration knew it had to act fast. On January 24th, the Finance Minister announced that the scheduled removal of fuel subsidies had been suspended. This was corroborated by the Minister of State for Petroleum, Timipre Sylva and the President of the Senate, Ahmad Lawan. Hell had been pacified; for the moment.

Nigeria is in a turbo-charged state. And it is one that is being heavily reinforced by the fact that it is election season in a country where elections do attract a quite heavy dose of public interest, and particularly also, when may of the incumbent leaders, who almost always have their way during their second time trying out for the job, have already played that final constitutionally allowed card, and are therefore no longer eligible to contend again.

The resetting of the stage that comes at this point in time therefore generally attracts a heavy dose of political frenzy and permutations. And lots of it are already being witnessed across the length and breadth of the country.

Mr Jonathan, where do you stand?

For some time now, there have also been rumours that former President Goodluck Jonathan would run for office once again, but this time on the platform of the All Progressives Congress, APC that had defeated him in 2015. While the former President has not come out openly to confirm



Two terms have flown by so fast for the Buhari presidency.

or repudiate the claim, the broader swings in the polity today may very clearly not be favourable to his re-emergence. In the view of one analyst, any attempt by the former President to run at this point would be akin to 'shutting the stables after the horses have bolted.'

Bola Tinubu's early card

One of the first major contenders to formally throw his hat into the ring in the race to succeed Buhari is the National Leader of the All Progressives Congress, APC, Bola Ahmed Tinubu. A two-time Governor of Nigeria's richest state, Lagos, Tinubu had on January 10, paid a visit to President Buhari to formally inform him of his desire to succeed him.

Given his vantage place in the political hierarchy of his party, some had expected that 'the big elephant' who had long worn his ambition on his sleeves would have waited until much later to saunter into the arena.

But this indeed is part of the frenzy in the system at the moment given widespread rumours of all kinds of contending permutations taking place under the radar, including one quite noteworthy one that several

bigwigs within the ruling party may already be lining up behind Tinubu's political protege, Vice President Yemi Osinbajo for the job.

A Vice-President's Dilemma

Though Osinbajo has not formally joined the contest, feelers are quite clear that the likelihood of his running is not in doubt. But sources say that the VP is doing everything within his power to avoid running against his immediate political leader. But given how heavily invested Tinubu is in the process already, it is difficult to see how that will pan out.

Even at this, analysts say that even if the Tinubu camp succeeds in putting Osinbajo 'in his place,' the former's aspiration would still have to contend with two other major preliminary points of contention, namely the continued seeming opposition of a number of principal functionaries of the current administration and Tinubu's religion which places odds on his way in terms of succeeding an outgoing Muslim president, winning votes in parts of the South and Middle Belt as well as choosing an 'acceptable' running mate from the North.

Reprieve for the South East

Away from the South West segment of the APC where both Tinubu and Osinbajo are from, three other contenders have also been identified in the South East APC. They are former Abia State Governor, Orji Uzor Kalu, former Imo State Governor, Rochas Okorocha and the incumbent Governor of Ebonyi State, Dave Umahi. While these aspirations have not exactly attracted the same or a corresponding degree of frenzy as say that of the APC South West contenders, they however cannot be pushed aside given that one of the cross-cutting

front burner political issues in Nigeria at the moment has to do with claims of long-standing marginalisation of the South East and an accompanying clamour to begin to right the wrongs through, very symbolically at this time, the emergence of a Nigerian President of Igbo extraction in 2023.

It is in the main opposition Peoples Democratic Party, PDP where this clamour currently finds its strongest fervour. And one aspirant who presently sits atop the field in this regard is the former Senate President and Secretary to the Government of the Federation, Anyim Pius Anyim. Already, a zonal confab convened in Enugu earlier in the month had thrown its weight behind him but one other big fry, former Governor Peter Obi of Anambra State is also expected to formally announce his bid for the topmost job in the land soon on the platform of the same PDP.

The albatross of being Northern

Outside of the South of the country, three of the more prominent likely contenders on the platform of the PDP from the North of the country are former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, former Kwara State

Governor and Senate President, Bukola Saraki and incumbent Sokoto State Governor, Aminu Tambuwal. Of the three, only Saraki has presently joined in the fray openly but it is clear as crystal that Atiku and Tambuwal are already neck-deep in 'consultations' leading to their anticipated formal declaration of intent.

While any of the three contenders evidently have significant name recognition countrywide, there are however several points of contention that opponents of their bid to clinch power at the highest level are raising, with the most significant being questions of geography and religion. For Atiku, there is one more variable which he shares with aspirant Tinubu of the APC; age.

The Nyesom Wike factor

But still on the PDP field, one other quite significant player in the present dispensation is Rivers State Governor, Nyesom Wike. A stormy petrel of sorts, Wike had served as Chief of Staff to his predecessor, Rotimi Amaechi before both men fell out. Finding themselves on rival sides of the APC/PDP political divide, there remains no love lost between them even with Amaechi serving at the moment as a Federal Minister of Transportation and is also being named on the sidelines as one other possible presidential contender. On his part, while Wike has not indicated an interest in running for the Number



Buhari flanked by Vice President Osinbajo and APC Chieftain Tinubu, two men with political ambitions to succeed him

One position himself, he towers above many others as a leading light and point of influence within the main opposition party at the moment.

What he does or does not do, where he swings or does not swing in the days ahead would be quite interesting to observe. But one point that is almost clear at the moment is that, as things stand now, he could very likely be poised to play a significant spoiler's role in thwarting any declared aspirations from both Amaechi and Atiku. So would he be spoiler-in-chief of the unfolding process or would he somehow also brave the odds and become a contender to be king himself?



Governor Nyesom Wike will be a force to reckon with in the politics of the opposition PDP.

A third force?

Outside of the two more dominant parties, former Deputy Governor of the Central Bank of Nigeria, Dr Kingsley Moghalu has already thrown his hat into the ring at the moment, albeit for the second time running. He had been a candidate in the 2023 polls where he ran on the platform of the Young Democratic Party, YDP. This time, his presently adopted vehicle is the African Democratic Congress, ADC.

He is also at the same time fraternising with the mega opposition party push that the likes of Professor Pat Utomi are spearheading. It however remains to be seen how much real and practical leverage this third party proposition would be bringing to the table in the current dispensation, and whether it would be Moghalu or indeed someone else that would be the dominant champion and most visible flagbearer for this tendency in the days ahead.

A view from history

There is a sense in which the ongoing permutations in the political scene have echoes of the 1978/79 political season in Nigeria's history.

At that time, there was also a lot of jostling and negotiating which led eventually to the

erstwhile dark horse, Alhaji Shehu Shagari emerging as President. Have we been here before?

Whichever way things pan out, it is clear that the 2023 polls process in Nigeria would involve significant doses of drama, surprise and adjusting. It is also one in which the ultimate winner would very likely be one who kept back a few of his strategic details close to his chest unlike the Nigerian National Football Team, the Super Eagles who played their best game at AFCON 2022 in the first round of the tournament only to quite unfortunately run out of new manoeuvres when the tournament progressed on to the more decisive knock out phases.

As if to corroborate this point, President Muhammadu Buhari in a recent interview on Channels Television declined giving any hints as to who his preferred successor would be because as he put it, he does not want to provoke a backlash that would endanger any such prospect of his. On their part, groups like Miyetti Allah and the Arewa Consultative Front, ACF are also staying far away from being seen to be linked to the aspirations of any of the declaring aspirants. With attitudes like this, it's clearly a long walk yet for the emergent contenders.

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Gambian President Promises Economic Turnaround Following his Re-Election

By Prince Kurupati

President Adama Barrow officially started his second term as Gambia's president on January 19, 2022. Adama Barrow won comfortably his second term in office during the presidential election held in the last month of 2021. He garnered 53% of the first-round vote.

President Adama Barrow who first came to power in 2017 after defeating long time leader Yahya Jammeh promised to implement a raft of economic policies that will benefit each and every Gambian citizen. The president made the promises during his inauguration speech delivered at the Presidential Palace in Banjul, Gambia.

The Gambian president when he first came into office in 2017 took over a country which was battling several ills on all fronts – political, economic and social. Though the economic fortunes of the country were in a dire state when he took over, Adama Barrow saw it fit to prioritise the country's political relations with several foreign countries. Gambia during the reign of Yahya Jammeh had severed ties with many foreign countries owing to his autocratic tendencies which he refused to let go. Looking back at Barrow's first term, it's safe to say that successes were recorded as Gambia now has cordial relations with most foreign countries. Nothing demonstrates this more than the fact that several foreign delegations attended the inauguration ceremony. Amongst the delegates were eight heads of states majority of whom are from West Africa.

As Barrow starts his second



Gambians will be expecting more from President Barrow's second term.

term, he is hoping to emulate his political success on the economic front for the betterment of his country's populace. As he assumed office for the second time, president Barrow assured the country that the projected growth rate of 5% set for 2022 will be achieved and going forward, the country can expect to witness an economic turnaround. "Today we can comfortably conclude that my election to another five years is a vote of confidence in my government,

a vote of acknowledgement of my achievements... 2022 to 2027 is a period to press on for accelerated growth, expansion and advancement. The focus now centres on economic development," President Barrow said.

The president went further stating that his administration will work around the challenges of the past in ensuring that economic success is achieved in the next few years. The tourism industry is one of Gambia's key industries which brings in a

lot of the country's forex. However, the past few years have been challenging as the novel corona virus outbreak brought the whole industry to a standstill. The numbers of tourists coming into the country plummeted significantly and for a considerable time, the country's beaches were closed owing to the pandemic hence there was zero revenue coming in. owing to this, the country saw its growth rate decrease. In 2021, the country's economic ministry said that the growth rate bounced back by 5%.

Though he stated that the country's focus going on from now is turning around Gambia's economic fortunes, President Barrow did assure the nation that he will continue with his political reforms as he wants the country to be a beacon of hope in a region where democracy is under threat owing to numerous coups. On this front, President Barrow promised that the new Constitution will be finalised in the coming months and the people will be able to vote for

it or against. He did allude to the fact that the Constitution will be progressive hence the possibility of it being rejected is next to zero. The key provision that's going to be enshrined in the new Constitution is the introduction of presidential term limits. At the current moment, the Constitution is silent on the issue of presidential term limits meaning a sitting president can seek re-election at will for as long as s/he wants to retain power.

The issue of the new Constitution and the looming presidential term limits has necessitated lots of debates in



President Barrow says the work of the Truth and Justice Commission will continue.

the country. Comparisons have been drawn with the situations prevailing in Ivory Coast and Guinea pre-2020 where the sitting presidents ushered in new Constitutions but at the same time, they reset their tenures meaning they could extend their terms beyond the two-term limit. While many people are welcoming

the idea of presidential term limits, there is concern that Barrow might end up resetting his stay in power under the guise of implementing the Constitution. During his election campaign in 2016, Barrow pledged to serve only three years and relinquish power. However, his re-election is a clear testament that he reneged

on his promise hence the scepticism regarding his intentions with the new Constitution.

Barrow went on to state that he will continue seeking justice for the victims of Jammeh's 22-year autocratic rule. The president said the Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC)

established in 2017 for the purpose of healing the nation and bringing to justice the perpetrators will keep going. "One thing we want to assure, there will be justice and reconciliation, reparation – it will all happen but we have to be patient," he said.

SADC Joint Military Force Continues Working for Peace and Stability in Mozambique

By Kester Kenn Klomegh

The Southern African Development Community (SADC) has collectively decided to extend its force mission mandate in Mozambique for three months to provide military support in fighting terrorism in Cabo Delgado, the northern seaside provincial district that suffered frequent militant attacks displacing thousands out of their homes.

Reports explained that Islamic-State linked militants wreaked serious havoc in the area when it broke out in 2017. The grave situation attracted international concern when they attacked the key port town of Palma in March 2021, killing dozens as thousands fled into surrounding forest. The violence and attacks further threatened the economy including both local and foreign businesses in Cabo Delgado and, of course, the entire Mozambique.

For instance, the violence forced France's Total Energies to declare force majeure and evacuate staff from a nearby multi-billion-dollar natural gas project located about six kilometers away from the city. Valued at €20 billion, it is the largest ongoing private investment in Africa.

That however, Total expresses its solidarity with the government and people of Mozambique and wishes that the actions carried out by the government of Mozambique

and its regional and international partners will enable the restoration of security and stability in Cabo Delgado province in a sustained manner.

This 16-member regional organization, with its unique and clear goals took up the challenge to enforce and bring back durable security necessary for promoting economic growth and socio-economic development as it is one of the goals, among others. With the common goals at hand, the Southern African countries jointly put together a standby military force that is effectively working, besides the special force from Rwanda. The forces are contributing to defend Mozambique.

The Southern African Mission in Mozambique (SAMIM), according to the final communiqué released after the leaders of the southern African countries gathered to review significant issues, among them the operations of the joint military force dispatched last year as attacks reached its greater heights to Mozambique.

Chairperson of the SADC's Organ on Politics, Defense and Security and South African President, Cyril Ramaphosa told the gathering in Lilongwe, capital of Malawi, where the regional bloc held its extraordinary summit and reviewed progress in Mozambique, described SAMIM as highly successful in defeating the militant groups particularly in Cabo

Delgado.

"I would like to express my appreciation and commend SAMIM for its work on the ground, as well as recognize the member states that have supported this work financially and in the deployment of military personnel and equipment," the final report quoted Ramaphosa.

SADC cannot allow terrorism to spread to other provinces in Mozambique and to the region, and it is imperative to promote a spirit of unity among member countries as terrorism and violent extremism threaten the stability and development that the region has achieved over the past four decades, says the report.



A strong commitment from the SADC to stand with Mozambique.

The communiqué also approved the framework for support to Mozambique in addressing terrorism outlines, among others, comprehensive strategic actions for consolidating peace, security, and the socio-economic recovery of Cabo Delgado.

The Maputo daily Noticias wrote after the SADC summit that a budgetary allocation of US\$29.5 million has been set aside for the three-month extension, after high-level consultations and this would mean until at least mid-April. The second phase of the SAMIM extension set from mid-January.

Addressing the opening session of the summit, the current SADC Chairperson, Malawian President Lazarus Chakwera, urged

regional bloc member states to stick together and ensure that SAMIM remains multidimensional and comprehensive. He entreated SADC member countries not to relent, regress or even retreat on their commitments.

“What remains now is for us to stay the course and stick together. We cannot relent. We cannot regress. We cannot retreat. Our approach to this mission must continue to be multidimensional and comprehensive. It must not only focus on neutralizing the threat, but also have post-conflict plans to rebuild,” said Chakwera, added that the collective mission is paramount and the stakes for all the Member States are high because what they are fighting for is regional stability, and the sustainability of the quest for the bloc’s integration and socio-economic development.

Chakwera welcomed the comprehensive Cabo Delgado Reconstruction Plan launched by his Mozambican counterpart, Filipe Nyusi, and his government, which, among other issues, seeks to provide humanitarian support to the affected population, including internally

displaced persons, and uplift their living standards.

Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi however expressed high optimism about the current military situation in Cabo Delgado. He said that all the bases from which the terrorists used to plan their actions are now in the hands of the Mozambican forces, and 2022 would be a decisive year to support the regional standby force in the final fight against terrorism in Mozambique.

For Mozambican President Nyusi, the extension of the SAMIM mission demonstrates the spirit of unity and solidarity that the Southern African Development Community members have readily and warmly shown with the people of Mozambique.

According to a press release issued by SAMIM, the forces expressed preparedness towards creating the conditions necessary for a return to normal life in the province, which is now on its way to full-fledged recovery. The Force Commander, Major General Xolani Mankayi, has urged them to continue exhibiting military professionalism and courage as they assist Mozambique in fighting

terrorism and violent extremism, and in bringing stability to Cabo Delgado.

Chief of South Africa National Defence Forces, General Rudzani Maphwanya and the Force Commander of SAMIM, Major General Xolani Mankayi have received warm praises for their leadership for conducting successful operations and for the achievements recorded since the deployment of the mission in July 2021.

In their interaction, they pledged their unwavering commitment to collaborative work towards regional peace and security. They further mentioned that it was the responsibility of the forces in the operational area to plan jointly and expeditiously carry out operations to free the people of Cabo Delgado province and the SADC region from terrorism and violent extremism.

In the meanwhile, the Centre for Democracy and Development (CDD), a Mozambican NGO, has advised strongly that Mozambique should prepare security strategies that would be useful after the final withdrawal of foreign troops in Cabo Delgado. The CDD believes that “violent extremism will not be defeated only with the

military front” and therefore “Mozambique should study alternative ways” to prevent young people from joining insurgent groups.

Experts, both inside Mozambique and inside Africa, have repeatedly suggested that the government makes consistent efforts toward improving social infrastructure, support industrial hubs and other employment generating sectors in the province. Arguing further that increasing dissatisfaction and discontent are also contributing to conflicts in society. Resources have to be used to develop Cabo Delgado.

Mozambique has grappled with an insurgency in its northernmost province

of Cabo Delgado since 2017, but currently fast improving after the deployment of joint military force with the primary responsibility of ensuring peace and stability, and for restoring normalcy in Mozambique.

SADC has consistently maintained that all problems especially relating to conflicts and crises should be resolved largely based on the approaches of Africans, and of course with moral, political and material support from regional blocs such as SADC itself and the continental organization – African Union, and the involvement of United Nations with its UN Security Council.

With an approximate population of 30 million, Mozambique is endowed with rich and extensive natural resources but remains one of the poorest and most underdeveloped countries in the world. Mozambique is a member of the Southern Africa Development Community (SADC).

Mozambique is a country located in Southeast Africa bordered by the Indian Ocean to the east, Tanzania to the north, Malawi and Zambia to the northwest, Zimbabwe to the west, and Eswatini (previously called Swaziland) and South Africa to the southwest.



We are all in this together President Chakwera of Malawi declared at the Summit.



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A Conversation With Ghana's VP Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

By Ajong Mbapndah L

From piloting the digitisation program, launching the Pan African Payment and Settlement System, PAPSS, representing President Akufo-Addo at the United Nations as Ghana was elected to the Security Council, addressing the UNSC and meeting with Secretary General Guterres, dashing to Washington DC to meet with Secretary of State Blinken and the State Department's African Bureau, before making the return trip home, it has been a hectic first month of 2022 for Ghana's Vice President Dr Mahamudu Bawumia.

The schedule of Vice President Bawumia speaks volumes not only on his work rate but also on the trust that President Akufo-Addo has in him. It has been an honour working alongside President Akufo -Addo, a leader who is an embodiment of hard work, public service and generosity of service, says Dr Bawumia.

"We have always worked very well with one another, and we share the same hopes and dreams for Ghana. The President is the boss, and my role is to assist him implement his vision," says Dr Bawumia.

One of the President's visions that VP Bawumia is chaperoning is the digitisation program. It is at the forefront of the President's agenda for Ghana and great strides are being made to upgrade Ghana's technological capabilities, says Dr Bawumia.

In an exclusive interview with PAV, Dr Bawumia sheds light on progress with key segments of the agenda of President Akufo Addo under his purview, COVID 19, and other seminal developments across the continent.

Vice President Bawumia - Thanks for accepting to answer our questions, could we start with a synopsis of how Ghana is doing politically, economically, and socially?

The last two years during the



VP Bawumia is a key actor in implementing the vision President Akufo-Addo has for Ghana.

COVID-19 pandemic have been difficult for countries across the world, regardless of their level of development. Despite these challenges, I believe that Ghana's political, economic, and social foundations are relatively strong, and our future is bright.

Politically, we are a robust multi-party democracy (we have been since 1992) with free and fair elections and peaceful transitions of power. Despite our political differences, Ghanaians have experienced authoritarianism in the past and we place too high a value on our democratic and human rights to give them up now.

In terms of our economy, we remain, irrespective of the damage of the pandemic, an attractive destination for foreign investment and a pioneer in the fields of digitisation and the democratisation of technology. The government of H.E. President Akufo-Addo has a plan in place for reducing the deficit, fostering public-private commercial partnerships, and improving tax collection. A stable economic environment will support rising living standards and our

exceptional public services.

In the face of a deadly pandemic, Ghanaians have demonstrated the strength of our country's social contract. Lockdown rules were respected by the vast majority of the population and every effort was made to comply with social distancing guidelines and government advice to wear masks. As a result, society was able to open gradually over the course of 2021, allowing Ghanaians to not only return to their livelihoods, but also to reconnect with their loved ones.

How has it been like working with President Akufo-Addo for the past six or seven years now?

It has been an honour working alongside H.E. President Akufo-Addo, a leader who is the embodiment of hard work, public service, and generosity of spirit. We have always worked very well with one another, and we share the same hopes and dreams for Ghana. The President is the boss, and my role is to assist him implement his vision.

Under H.E.'s leadership since 2017,

Ghana has experienced significant economic success, with annual GDP growth surpassing 6% in the lead up to the pandemic and with the World Bank predicting a return to this rate later this year. As one of the first countries to ratify the African Continental Free Trade Agreement (AfCFTA) in 2018, we have signified our commitment to free trade as the best way of generating increased FDI and fostering diplomatic relations with countries around the world. Indeed, our capital, Accra, is the Secretariat of the AfCFTA and is the base of operations for officials implementing the agreement. The President's position as Chairman of ECOWAS also signifies our administrations dedication to regional trade and co-operation with our neighbours.

Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the President and his government's sheer determination to protect our citizens certainly helped us to steer the country through the worst of the crisis. Fortunately, the road ahead looks far more positive than it did in 2020, largely as a result

of our government's early action in mitigating the effects of the virus, as well as our successful vaccination programme.

I look forward to working with the President in the years to come, ensuring that our policy platform continues to result in beneficial outcomes for all Ghanaians.

On COVID 19 and the new Omicron variant, what is the situation like in Ghana, and what extra measures have been taken by the administration to cushion its effects on the economy, and national life in general?

In 2020, during the initial onset of the pandemic, the government followed WHO guidelines in instituting lockdowns, implementing contact tracing, and social distancing, and encouraging basic public safety measures such as the use of facemasks.

By April of last year, the pandemic had subsided somewhat, and we gradually reopened the country, with the government's official advice to wear masks and maintain social distancing remaining in place.

The importance of these exact same public safety measures was of course reiterated after the emergence of the Omicron variant.

In terms of our economy, along with the rest of the world, COVID-19 hit Ghana hard, but the monetary relief and economic recovery programs instituted by the government, such free water and electricity, provision of PPEs to schools, and the availability of 'soft loans' to individuals and small businesses, cushioned the blow to ordinary Ghanaians.

Moreover, with the Ghanaian state having thrown its arms around the economy during these past two years of economic uncertainty, the IMF has forecasted that GDP is now set to return to pre-2020 levels later this year.

VP Bawumia has been at the forefront of a digitisation agenda for Ghana, can you shed light on what this means for the country and progress made since its launching?

Digitisation is at the forefront of



President Akufo-Addo is the embodiment of hard work, public service, and generosity of spirit, and we share the same hopes and vision for Ghana, Says Dr Bawumia.

Encouragingly, the card has seen an impressive take-up thus far with over 85% of the adult population enrolled.

While the spirit and innovation of the private sector is crucial, our government knows that world-class public services are essential for speedy economic development. When we came into office 5 years ago, only 4% of the adult population had a Tax Identification Number. We took the decision to make the unique Ghanacard number the TIN for all citizens and residents. By so doing we now have 85% of the adult population with TINs. This has broadened the tax base and will improve our domestic tax collection, providing us with the revenues for sustained investment.

Healthcare, education, commercial infrastructure – these are the basis of our society and this government's digitisation agenda will drive them forwards.

Last year you made an announcement at a public lecture that efforts were underway to get the GhanaCard recognised globally as an e-passport, could you shed light on what progress has been made in this direction?

We have made great strides with the rollout of our Ghana Card. To date, over 85% of the adult population

throughout the world.

As a result, Ghana will be one of only a handful of countries where a national identification card also constitutes an e-passport, an illustration of the opportunities of digitisation.

I will of course update citizens on developments concerning the activation of the e-passport feature, but discussions are positive. For the time being, I urge travellers to, as always, bring their passport and other forms of required documentation with them. Additionally, citizens should continue to apply for their own Ghana Card so that they can be part of this digital revolution.

What is your response to some critics of the administration who say the digitisation agenda led by yourself is lacking in coherence and may not be transformative for Ghana?

In politics, criticism from opposing parties and their supporters is to be expected and you need to have a tough skin to just get on with delivering the people's priorities. As such, whilst I welcome robust debate, the cornerstone of any successful democracy, I strongly disagree with the notion that the digitisation agenda is incoherent, and I am sure that the programme will result in a

slipped through the net with essential government services, financial institutions and making them readily identifiable when they travel domestically or even abroad.

I have been pleased with the endorsements of our agenda from a number of experts, such as the CEO of the Ghana Association of Banks, John Awuah, who has praised the technology for assisting with the recovery of loans. We have implemented the national ID card, digital property address system, mobile money interoperability, Ghana.Gov, National E-Pharmacy, Digitised public services like passports, ports, drivers' licence, Motor insurance, births and deaths, Social security, Ghana revenue authority, etc. We are pursuing a very coherent digitisation strategy. In sum, I have no doubt that as the impacts of digitisation become more widespread, criticism will turn to praise.

In terms of delivering on electoral promises may we know some of the other important milestones attained by the Akufo-Addo/Bawumia administration since the second term started?

During our first term in office, we delivered on or were delivering on

about 80% of our promises. Subsequently, the government of H.E President Akufo-Addo was re-elected for a second term in the midst of the pandemic and dealing with the corresponding public health and economic crisis was our first priority. Fiscal stimulus and support for individuals and small businesses shielded the livelihoods of working Ghanaians, but this came at a cost - notably the expansion of our national debt. We promised to consolidate and continue with the flagship programs that we started in the first term like Planting for Food and Jobs, One District One Factory, One Constituency one Ambulance, Year of Roads, Free Senior High School, Digitization. We also promised to undertake new initiatives such as Agenda 111 hospitals, You Start Jobs Program, so far, the fulfilment of these promises are on course.

Our government is also fostering public-private partnerships to boost production in Ghana's oil fields, ensuring we meet the highest environmental standards for drilling and extraction.

Increased oil exports will help Ghana to rebuild its foreign exchange reserves after the impact of the pandemic and this will allow the country to pay back the debts it has incurred over the past two years.

The government of H.E. the President is also working hard to increase the competitiveness of our gold industry by attracting foreign investment, ensuring that the Ghanaian people and their public services reap the rewards of the country's natural resources.

On the One Teacher-One Laptop Programme you launched in September 2021, how is the initiative going and do you think the desired impact has been felt already?

The One Teacher-One Laptop programme has been a success. Less than three months after the programme launched, I am informed that 80% of the laptops available had been distributed to high school



Economic progress and general development will pick up pace again as COVID 19 recedes , says Dr Bawumia.

teachers around Ghana. We have also ensured that our teachers will receive the technical support they need, with 260 GES District ICT co-ordinators having been trained to help them integrate this new technology into the classroom. Free Wi-Fi has also been provided to over 700 Senior High Schools across Ghana.

This government believes that digitisation is the future, and this means modernising our resources in education so we are able to deliver the best outcomes for our youth. We must ensure that no student is left behind and this government continues to strive towards the attainment of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (the UN target to ensure inclusive and equitable quality education) which is an aim that the President and I hold close to our hearts. I am looking forward to the continuation of the programme in 2022 with the provision of laptops to junior and primary school teachers.

Any message from Vice President Bawumia to Ghanaians who think that enough is not done by the administration to impact

positively on their lives?

As we hopefully exit the tumultuous years of the pandemic, it is important that Ghana is united and does not descend into discord. We as a government continue to put our citizens first, which is why we are continuing to roll out vital policies such as our aforementioned digitisation programme, alongside our tireless efforts to source more COVID-19 vaccinations from around the world.

While the pandemic was certainly a major setback in terms of the rapid economic growth that we have seen in recent years, this government has both the plan and the policies to deliver a full economic recovery from the pandemic. Indeed, swift state action during the pandemic has meant that we are now in an excellent position to move forward as a nation.

Recently, you helped launch the Pan African Payment and Settlement System, PAPSS - May we know the dividends expected for Ghana and the continent as a whole from this new body?

PAPSS, in essence an intra-African payment system, has come about thanks to the immense hard work and dedication of those at the AfCFTA Secretariat, Afreximbank and African central banks. The system is a major leap forward for the continent, reducing our overall reliance on global supply chains when it comes to trade.

PAPSS addresses the historic challenges of making payments across African borders, adding value through a common African market infrastructure for all stakeholders, from governments, banks and payment providers to corporates, small enterprises, and individuals.

Prior to PAPSS, over 80 per cent of African cross-border payment transactions originating from African banks had to be routed offshore for clearing and settlement using international banking relationships. This needless mechanism was detrimental to overall efficiency and cost people time and additional expenditure.

The system will save Africa more than US\$5 billion annually in payment transaction costs. It will play an increasingly significant role in accelerating the continent's transactions, underpinning the operationalisation of the AfCFTA to which Ghana is the Secretariat. Pilots of the system in the six countries of the West African Monetary Zone (including Ghana) proved to be very successful. The efficiency of monetary transactions increased dramatically, and increased oversight of cross-border payments by central banks will also ensure an added layer of security to transactions.

Of course, the next step now is for all central banks in Africa to join up and ensure the seamless transfer of funds via state-of-the-art financial market infrastructure. This will integrate African markets with one other, thereby enabling instant cross-border payments in respective local African currencies.

Any Ghanaian seeking to send

money across Africa will benefit from this new technology as it will reduce the costs of sending money, improve efficiency (no more weeks of needless delay), and strengthen security measures.

This interview is being done in the wake of your presence at the UN in New York, what was your mission and what was the message you presented?

My mission has always been to represent the people of Ghana. There is no greater global stage than that of the United Nations to do so, and I was honoured to represent H.E. Akufo-Addo as Ghana was once more elected to the UNSC.

During my trip to the US, I met with officials in both New York and Washington D.C. In New York, I spoke with UN Secretary-General António Guterres after my address to the Security Council on the pressing matter of urban warfare and the toll this places on civilians. It has never been more important for nations to pool their resources and work with each other to bring about meaningful change.

In Washington D.C. I met with US Secretary of State Antony Blinken and the US State Department's Africa Bureau. We discussed the ongoing pandemic and the requirement of further vaccine deployment throughout Africa, as well as how we can collaborate with one another to ensure regional stability and the deepening of economic ties.

How is the administration viewing the disturbing resurgence of military coups in West Africa with Burkina Faso being the latest to join Mali and Guinea as countries under military rule?

The resurgence of military coups in West Africa is of grave concern. H.E. President Akufo-Addo and I, along with the rest of the administration, are saddened to see our neighbouring countries fall victim to military violence and extremism.

As I discussed at the UN Security



VP Bawumia in the company former Presidents Issoufou of Niger and Obasanjo of Nigeria at the launching of PAPSS

Council meeting in January, urban violence represents an unacceptable risk to the lives of civilians and must be prevented at all costs.

Our government is committed to cultivating a society of tolerance in Ghana, and as a result the country is ranked as the second most peaceful nation in Africa. Indeed, Ghana is proof that democracy can be successfully upheld, and we must work together with our neighbours and international bodies to reach

peaceful conclusions to the issues we face in the region.

Like most Ghanaians, you are a football fan - What is your take on performances of the Black Stars at the 2021 AfCON?

I'm always proud of the Black Stars for going out and representing Ghana, regardless of the result, especially during the pandemic which has been a difficult time for all.

It was of course a disappointing

AfCON tournament for us, and I know that we are capable of achieving much more. Now it will be important to work together as a team especially as our focus turns to the vital World Cup qualifiers in the coming months.

I am also looking forward to the announcement of the new team coach and their future successes - I will always be cheering them on!

A last question on projections for 2022, how do you envision the year for Ghana and for Africa as a whole?

I believe that 2022 will be a year of continued recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. With our vaccination programme, we are hoping to leave the worst of COVID-19 behind us and this is a significant step forward.

As our economy continues to recover at pace from the pandemic, Ghana should be back on the path to prosperity and our government has the ideas, the ambition, and the political will to continue to improve the living standards of all Ghanaians.

Beyond the politics, the drive and ambition of Ghanaians is reason enough to believe that a bright future lies ahead.

In terms of Africa's prospects for 2022, our government is committed to supporting the radiation of economic growth throughout the continent and we're doing this through our work in the African Union and our resolute commitment to the AfCTA.

In addition, the policies that H.E. President Nana Akufo-Addo is implementing in Ghana, such as facilitating foreign investment, ramping up nation-wide digitisation, and improving tax collection, are policies that would benefit every single African economy.

For both Ghana and our African neighbours, it is modernisation, a strong relationship between the public and private sectors, and an embrace of free trade that will raise living standards and this government is a flag bearer for each of these causes.



Great to consult a key partner on global and regional security, U.S. Secretary of State tweeted after a recent meeting with VP Bawumia

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Burkina Faso : Military Coup Takes Democracy South

By Prince Kurupati

On 23 January, 2022, the Burkina Faso military deposed the country's democratically elected president Roch Kabore via a coup. The military forces were led by Lieutenant Colonel Paul-Henri Damiba who has since assumed power as the country's interim president. Though coups are generally resented by the country's populace, most Burkina Faso citizens did welcome the coup saying the old was unbearable and the new can usher in new and effective leadership such as the one they experienced during the tenure of the charismatic Thomas Sankara.

When the Burkina Faso military forces announced the deposal of the president, they cited the president's failure to combat and deal with the Jihadist insurgency as the primary cause of his downfall. Burkina Faso just like its surrounding neighbours has for sometime now been battling with jihadist security crisis. In Burkina Faso, the security crisis fuelled popular anger amongst the general populace while the security forces felt like they were being sent out on death missions to fight against the extremists as they were not properly armed, paid and fed to sustain the struggle against the



Lt. Col. Paul-Henri Sandaogo Damiba is now at the helm in Burkina Faso.

extremists. The resentment towards the government by the military forces intensified from 14 November, 2021 onwards following a jihadist attack on the Inata Gandarmerie garrison in northern Burkina Faso which left 53 of the 120 troops on the ground dead.

With the general populace restless and resentment against the government increasing among the military forces, it was only a matter of time before then President Kabore would face a stern test. Unfortunately,

for him, he did not have any answers for the test that came his way as he vacated his position with no fight whatsoever.

In the aftermath of the coup, the general populace which had become restless during the reign of Kabore was instilled with hope and confidence for a better future. Most of the citizens who were interviewed by foreign news outlets poured praises on the military saying their actions had basically unshackled

the country from the chains of gross incompetence. Owing to the jihadist attacks, the UN estimates that more than 1,000 schools were closed while over 1.5 million people fled from their homes in search of safety and security. Over 2,000 people lost their lives. Some of the displaced people were forced to become beggars on the streets of Ouagadougou as they had nowhere to turn to. To such people, the coup comes as a welcome development as it renews their hope for a better future and it presents them with an opportunity to return to their homes.

While the Burkina Faso coup has been hailed by the local citizens as a positive step, the regional and international community castigated the military forces for undermining democracy and derailing the efforts being undertaken to ensure that the west African region returns to the democratic path. In recent times, the West African region has witnessed several coups – in Guinea, President Conde was deposed from his position while in Mali, two coups occurred in quick succession. The coup in Burkina Faso thus paints a worrisome picture which several regional and international actors are worried



The ouster of President Kabore has raised concerns for democracy in West Africa.

about.

West Africa regional body ECOWAS quickly organised an emergency virtual summit where the Burkina Faso situation was discussed. It was agreed by the member states present to suspend Burkina Faso from the grouping because of the coup. The body also called for the immediate release of the country's president and other detained officials. Speaking at the start of the virtual summit, Ghana President Nana Akufo-Addo said, "The resurgence of coup d'états in our region is in direct violation of our democratic tenets. It represents a threat to peace, security, and stability in West Africa." The UN Secretary General supported the stance taken by ECOWAS saying he "strongly condemns any attempt to take over a government by the force of arms".

The UK through UK Minister for Africa Vicky Ford echoed the same sentiments as those of ECOWAS saying, "The UK condemns the coup d'état by military forces in Burkina Faso. We call for the immediate, safe and unconditional release of all members of the civilian government who have been detained, including the President of Burkina Faso, Roch Marc Christian Kaboré. It is vital that all parties remain calm and respect human rights, and for Burkina Faso to return to democratic civilian and constitutional rule without delay. Dialogue between parties is required to tackle insecurity across Burkina Faso, and respond to the needs of the Burkinabe people. The UK stands with our partners in addressing these developments including ECOWAS, the African Union and the G5 Sahel."

The US issued a statement saying that though they understand the concerns of the general populace and military forces with regards to the security situation posed by



A call from UN Secretary General António Guterres on soldiers to restore constitutional authority was not heeded.

the jihadist extremists, they call upon the military forces to return to the barracks and let all concerns be addressed via dialogue. "We acknowledge the tremendous stress on Burkinabe society and security forces posed by ISIS and JUIM but urge military officers to step back, return to their barracks, and address their concerns through dialogue," U.S. Department of State.

The South African government weighed in saying, "The South African Government agrees with the views of the Economic Community for West African states (ECOWAS) that soldiers should return to barracks and utilise dialogue with the authorities to resolve all problems. There can never be a military solution to issues of this nature, dialogue and negotiation are the only means of resolving conflict

and arriving at lasting solutions... Loss of lives must be avoided at all costs and all stakeholders should commit to dialogue."

During his speech he delivered when assuming the role of interim president, Lieutenant Colonel Damiba promised that the country will soon return to constitutional democracy. He said that the military will work with all actors both from within the country's borders and external actors to ensure that civilian rule quickly returns. "When the conditions are right, according to the deadline that our people will define in all sovereignty, I commit to a return to a normal constitutional order... I call on the international community to support our country so it can exit this crisis as soon as possible," Lt-Col Damiba said.

In his call for international support, Lt-Col Damiba did not specify the international actors he is seeking help from. This has thus led many political analysts to conclude that the security situation in West Africa may heighten the new Cold War between France and Russia. France's support in West Africa is eroding quickly as she is withdrawing many of her troops from West African nations at a time when jihadist attacks are on the rise. Russia on the other hand is engaging several states looking to offer military and political support in the fight against extremism. This, therefore, makes the whole situation in West Africa precarious as the region might just become a playground for external actors with own self interests.

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How President Museveni's Son Visit To Rwanda Led To The Border Reopening

By Jean d'Amour Mbonyinshuti

Antoine Mungwakuzwe, a Rwandan was excited as he boarded Trinity Bus that was to take him together with other passengers to Uganda, almost three years without crossing the Katuna border.

He is among the first Rwandan passengers to cross since the government of Rwanda announced the re-opening of Gatuna/Katuna Border which separates both countries from North-East of Rwanda.

"I am so excited as I am going to Kampala again, the re-opening of the border is so exciting, I hope it is the resumption of the business," says the businessman.

The borders between Uganda and Rwanda have been closed since 2019 as both countries accused each other of invading the sovereignty of the other. Rwanda protested against the harassment, abduction, illegal detention and torture of Rwandan nationals in Uganda.

Uganda on the other hand accused Rwanda of sending spies in the country to carry out espionage activities.



President Kagame of Rwanda met his counterpart President Museveni of Uganda at Gatuna border last year to discuss issues that led to the border closure and others. Courtesy.

Despite several meetings between the heads of State for the two countries and the efforts by Angolan President Edgar Chagwa Lungu to mediate the two parties, there were no tangible results for at least three years.

Museveni's son visit triggered the re-opening

The decision for border reopening comes a few days after Lt General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, the Commander of the Land Forces of Ugandan People Defence Forces (UPDF) visited Rwanda and held talks with President Paul Kagame over strained relations.

The government of Rwanda has welcomed General Muhoozi's visit and described it as a bold step towards normalization of relations between the two countries.

General Muhoozi also doubles as Senior Presidential advisor on Special Operations.

Urugwiro Village said the president Kagame and Muhoozi "had cordial, productive and forward looking discussions about Rwanda's concerns and practical steps needed to restore the relationship between Rwanda and Uganda,"

And days later, the government of Rwanda announced the reopening of Katuna border which is the busiest border for traders

and people.

"Following the visit to Rwanda of Lt Gen Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Senior Presidential Adviser on Special Operations and commander of Land Forces of the Uganda People's Defence Forces (UPDF) on 22nd January 2022, the government of Rwanda has taken note that there is a process to solve raised by Rwanda as well as commitments made by the government of Uganda to address remaining obstacles," reads the statement released by the government of Rwanda in part.

"The Government of Rwanda wishes to inform the public that the Gatuna border post between Rwanda and Uganda will be re-opened from 31st January 2022," added the 28 January 2022 statement.

"The Government of Rwanda remains committed to ongoing efforts to resolve pending issues between Rwanda and Uganda and believes that today's announcement will contribute positively to speedy normalization of relations between the two countries," concluded the statement.

According to Yolande Makolo, Rwanda's Spokesperson trucks and residents were allowed to cross



Meeting between Lt General Muhoozi Kainerugaba and President Kagame was part of the border diplomacy that helped to bury the hatchet.



described it as a boost to regional integration.

He also noted that strengthening bilateral ties between the two EAC Partner States will revitalize social, economic and political relations.

«Re-opening this strategic trade route is in line with the provisions of the EAC Common Market Protocol and is set to accelerate economic and social development of the Partner States by reviving the free movement of goods, persons, capital and labour,» said Mathuki.

People like Mungwakuzwe who used to find it hard to cross to either side are now happy that the business as well as social relationship will significantly increase.

“It is a bold decision to reopen the border of Gatuna/Katuna border as it was hard for us truck drivers to ferry goods as regional drivers, I always used the Cyanika border whenever I wanted to ferry goods from Uganda to DR Congo,” said Fred Mwesigye, a truck driver.

The World Bank estimates that Uganda exports to Rwanda mainly cement and food commodities totaled more than \$211 million in 2018 while Rwanda exported goods worth \$13 million in the same year.

Reopening the border will bode well for the people and economies of both countries. Photo courtesy.

the Gatuna border with respect of COVID-19 protocol.

“Trucks, Rwandan citizens/returning residents are crossing to Rwanda at Gatuna like at other border points, as per EAC COVID-19 protocols,” she said.

“As noted in the communiqué, Rwandan & Ugandan health officials are working on joint COVID-19

protocols, which will enable all to cross on both sides,” she added.

There was no official opening of the border but officials hailed the reopening and said that it will allow free movement of goods and people as stipulated in the EAC protocols.

“I thank great leaders, President Kaguta Museveni and Paul Kagame for fully opening our borders! This

is a wonderful achievement. Now our people can freely move, trade and interact as Almighty God always intended, God bless East Africa” Muhozi tweeted.

EAC laud border reopening

EAC Secretary General, Peter Mathuki, has hailed the move to reopen the border of Gatuna and

Kenya: A Homeland Of Political Hypocrisy

By Samuel Ouma

A degree in political science is not needed to understand that politics are rife with hypocrisy. There are two forms of hypocrisy: the one in which politicians pretend to care about something while doing nothing, and the type in which they pretend to believe something while doing the exact opposite of what they believe.

All societies have a long history of political hypocrisy. Raila Odinga's Azimio La Umoja and William Ruto's Kwanza Alliance are two of Kenya's most prominent political alliances. Allies of Kwanza accuse Azimio of doing and saying the same things they did and said in the past, and the reverse is also true.

The gap between politicians and



Opposition leader Raila Odinga and Vice President William Ruto are in a succession war of sorts to replace President Uhuru Kenyatta. Photo courtesy.

the rest of Kenyans isn't that wide regarding hypocrisy. Their cover is provided by religion, but at the same time, they develop ethnic alliances, which serve as a powerful instrument for mass mobilization. According to the 2019 Census report, Christianity is the most popular religion in Kenya, with 80 per cent of the population identifying as Christians. However, Christianity is only depicted on paper and not in practice.

When the leaders of the «Christian» movement steal and pillage public funds, they pack churches on Sunday and Saturday. A large sum of ill-gotten money is then given to priests in exchange for religious festivities from many Christians. They are referred to as god-fearing men and women and people after God's heart.

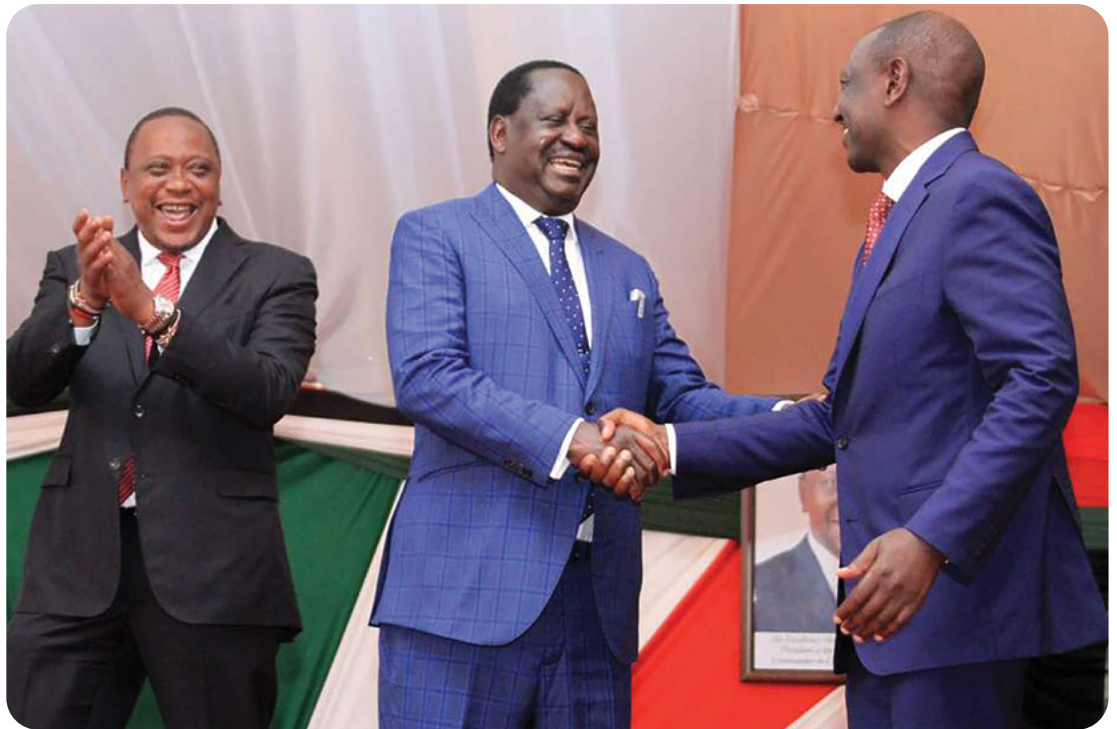
In 2018, William Ruto defended his massive church donations by claiming that he invested in Heaven.

«Some have chastised me for going around and soliciting donations at various churches. To whom it may concern: I'm putting my money where my mouth is. That is your right,» added Ruto, if you wish to invest somewhere else.

Although the second in command is facing corruption allegations, including the maize scandal and land grabbing allegations, his social media presence is well-known for sharing scriptures. The way he also hurls insults at his opponents during political rallies makes one question his Christian faith as well.

Ruto's claim that the present government has failed Kenyans is particularly disingenuous because he has been part of the failed government since 2013. He has promised to improve the economy if elected President during his campaigns, even though he is part of the Jubilee government's disaster.

During the election, President Uhuru Kenyatta and his deputy Ruto promised to build nine stadiums and provide jobs for youths, among other things. As a result of these promises, millions of Kenyan youths are unemployed today. Kenya's National Bureau of Statistics has reported that the jobless rate rose to 6.6% in the first quarter of 2021.



President Kenyatta laughing in the background as the two front runners to succeed him opposition leader Raila Odinga and Deputy President Ruto share a handshake.

During an interview with former Kiss FM Presenter on March 25, 2021, the United Democratic Alliance (UDA) party leader branded ANC, Wiper and Ford Kenya as village parties that cannot outmatch his UDA. He reiterated that the two parties' leadership does not think outside their constituencies, yet they want to become national leaders.

«There is no way Ford-Kenya or the African National Congress (ANC) can win an election outside Kabuchai, so how do you compare these village entities with a party that represents the entire country?» Ruto said.

On January 23, 2022, ANC and Ford Kenya entered into an election pact with UDA and Ruto's hypocrisy was blatantly displayed. He described the two outfits as national parties noting they will work together in this year's polls.

On the other hand, ANC party leader Musalia Mudavadi has pledged to work with Ruto to win the Presidency on August 9, 2022. Lest Kenyans forget, Mudavadi ruled out teaming up with the former Eldoret North Member of Parliament, claiming he is a crucial architect of the economic crisis bedeviling the nation.

«He has asked me to support his 2022 presidential bid, yet he is the same man who has been in the forefront in subjecting our country to debts... that is not possible,» Mudavadi said at Nairobi's PAG Church in Kibera in 2019.

AU infrastructure envoy Raila Odinga will be vying for the country's top seat for the fifth time, and this is the last stab at the presidency due to the age factor. The 77-year-old Odinga has vowed to jail leaders who stole from public coffers when elected to State. Many Kenyans wonder how he will solve the menace after joining the league of those defending corrupt leaders.

Odinga and President Kenyatta allies in the Senate united to reinstate Governor Anne Waiguru after Members of Kirinyaga County Assemblies impeached her over corruption charges. Governor Waiguru was accused of abuse of office and misappropriation of public funds. Before becoming the Governor, Waiguru was dismissed as the Devolution Cabinet Secretary after being linked to massive misappropriation of funds at the National Youth Service (NYS)-a programme to empower youths.

In the fight against corruption, Kenya's President Uhuru Kenya has been hypocritical. The President has engaged in many public outbursts, threatening to punish corrupt officials no matter how close they are to him, regardless of their position. However, the administration has taken no action against any officials who have been suspected of embezzling money. The Kenya Medical Supplies Authority – KEMSA scandal occurred more than a year ago, yet no one has been prosecuted.

Every Kenyan knows billions of dollars were stolen from the Ministry of Health, Energy, the NYS, and the Arror and Kimwarer scandals, among many others, and the perpetrators are still on the loose. Where is President Kenyatta's surprise shocker he has been promising Kenyans? In what time frame does he want to put corrupt leaders behind bars? Despite officially admitting that the country loses more than \$17 million a day to corruption, no action has been taken.

«People are stealing Sh2 billion every day,» President Kenyatta lamented.

Foreword by Samuel Eto'o Fils

HOW TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER

THE 4P'S TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER



EYONG ENOH

PR Disaster for Ramaphosa as Minister Defies President's Directive

By Prince Kurupati

One of the worst things that can happen to any world leader is to get in a public spat with a subordinate. Such a situation leaves the leader in a catch 22 situation – continue with the spat and the world views it as a weakness for failing to rein in the subordinate. At the same time, if the leader chooses to ‘silence’ the subordinate by any means necessary, then the world views him/her as someone who does not take criticism kindly. This unfortunate dilemma is the situation that South African President Cyril Ramaphosa currently finds himself in.

On January 7, 2022, South Africa’s tourism minister and presidential hopeful Lindiwe Sisulu in an article (Hi Mzansi, have we seen justice?) published under her name by local news outlet IOL castigated the country’s Judiciary particularly black judges and the Constitution for being subservient to colonial white interests. In the article, Minister Sisulu said:

“Today, in the high echelons of our judicial system are those mentally colonised Africans, who have settled with the worldview and mindset of those who have dispossessed their ancestors.

They are only too happy to lick the spittle of those who falsely claim superiority.

The lack of confidence that permeates their rulings against their own speaks very loudly, while others, secure in their agenda, clap behind closed doors.”

Immediately after the article was published, debates and discussions regarding the content of the article dominated all social media platforms in the country. A great number of the citizens agreed that the minister had attacked the country’s judicial system.



An awkward exchange between the President's office and Minister Sisulu. Picture credit IOL.

Disagreements however emerged with regards to the response to be taken by the executive and the judiciary. Some argued that the executive had to admonish the minister for her remarks, others called upon the judiciary to respond to the allegations while others thought it was better for the matter to be left as is as the views in the article were just personal views.

After a week had passed since the publication of the article, the presidency department issued a statement saying that the president and the minister met in a meeting in which the president “specifically admonished the minister” about her attack on the judiciary. The statement went further to state that the Minister agreed to retract her “unsubstantiated, gratuitous and deeply hurtful comments” on the judiciary. In a surprising turn of events, the Minister moments after the statement by the presidency department was released, disavowed the statement’s content saying she did not at any point during the meeting with Ramaphosa agree to retract her words saying:

“I have just been informed of a media alert issued by the Presidency that apparently claims that I Lindiwe Sisulu retracted my original expression. I wish to categorically disown this statement in its entirety as a misrepresentation of the said

meeting I had with the president. The president and I met on Wednesday at 9pm at his house. The president proposed an intermediary that would focus on the one line about the judges to resolve that. I awaited such to be communicated which would do nothing to the entire article.

Under no circumstance did I commit to any retraction or apology since I stand by what I penned. The content of the president’s statement in its current form is unfortunate as it is not what we agreed on. In this regard, I wish to distance myself from such.”

The exchanges quickly turned into a ‘circus’ when the Minister in the Presidency Mondli Gungubele issued another statement saying “The Presidency stands by its statement earlier this evening, 20 January 2022, on a discussion between President Cyril Ramaphosa and Minister of Tourism Ms Lindiwe Sisulu... The Presidency has nothing to add to the earlier statement.” Minister Sisulu remained mum after the statement something which suggests that she is still undeterred.

In addition to drawing the attention of the general public (who express their feelings via social media platforms), the exchanges between the president and the minister have necessitated the ruling party ANC to weigh in on the issue. The party’s

spokesperson Pule Mabe said that the ‘public spat’ narrative is just a creation of the media. There is actually no such thing as the president and the minister are on the same wavelength. “We will not speak into a media narrative that suggest a spat. We do not believe there was a public spat. I am going to leave the media to make its own interpretations of what would have happened out there,” Mabe said. Mabe went further to suggest that the ANC

National Executive Committee did not deliberate about the ‘issue’ as a “self-respecting organisation like the ANC” can’t discuss an individual NEC member.

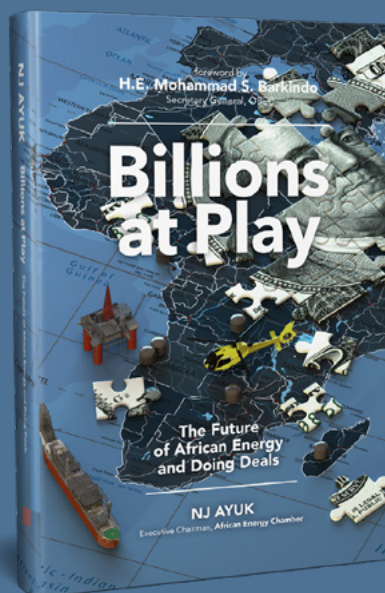
The deputy president of opposition party Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), Floyd Shivambu weighed in on the issue saying Minister Sisulu stated “facts” in her article. As such, there is no need for her to apologise hence President Ramaphosa’s statement that the minister retracted her words is untruthful. For this, Floyd Shivambu described the president as ‘Ramaliar’ for being a lying.

At the end of the year, ANC will hold party elections to choose the next party leader. For her defiance, some ANC leaders and supporters are calling upon Cyril Ramaphosa to show his strength by firing the minister. However, there is concern by some that Minister Sisulu herself is eyeing the party presidency post hence her dismissal from work might just work in her favour as she will become a victim of circumstance. Former president Jacob Zuma used the victim card to win the party presidency in 2007 and it seems that it’s the same playbook that Sisulu is looking to use. Ramaphosa thus finds himself in a tough position, any decision that he takes might be a lose-lose scenario.

Billions at Play

The Future of African Energy and Doing Deals

by NJ AYUK



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The Corruption Puzzle Disrupting Malawi's Development Plan

By Joseph Dumbula, Blantyre Malawi.

Two years ago, corruption watchdog Transparency International ranked Malawi 129th out of 180 countries in public sector corruption earning 30 out of 100 points on the global Corruption Perceptions Index. This meant one thing: That the Southern African nation has a stumbling block to its development agenda.

Further, an Economic Development Document for Malawi by the World Bank has previously indicated that a gross national income of \$320 per capita in 2016 was one of the lowest in the world and a per capita income growth of little more than 1.5 percent between 1995 and 2014, below the average of 2.8 percent for non-resource-rich African economies.

The documents further state that Malawi continues behind when compared to other countries that are geographically and demographically similar and were at a similar stage of development in 1995.

Now, issues of corruption have started turning sour with the current administration of Lazarus Chakwera having to the last two years of office, sacking three ministers for alleged corruption.

Just two of them, Kezzie Msukwa who was lands minister and Newton Kambala who was energy minister are facing the law while Ken Kandodo who was labour minister faced a presidential exoneration but remains axed from his role.

All the three are alleged to have used their position for corrupt acts.

Msukwa, stands accused of profiting of land deals involving a Malawian businessman based in the U.K while Kandodo, has before been accused of siphoning COVID-19 funds; and Kambala, is accused of



Kezzie Msukwa was the second cabinet minister in the Lazarus Chakwera led administration to be arrested on corruption related cases.

illegally manipulating fuel import deals.

President Chakwera said that he had taken the decision to keep accused persons out of his cabinet for investigations.

His aide, Chris Chaima Banda along with Enoch Chihana AFORD President, one of the alliance parties and Kambala are alleged to have taken roles to influence the acquiring the fuel supply deals.

They are currently denying the charges.

But President Chakwera insists his government is taking right steps in taming corruption.

"I want all the thieves hiding in the civil service to mark my words: If the finger of evidence points to you as one of the thieves who stole COVID money for saving lives while hundreds of our people were dying of COVID, you are going to prison," said the President

during a statement earlier last year over revelations of looting of Covid19 funds.

Earlier last week, the Public Affairs Committee told Chakwera that there is a public doubt about political will in the fight against corruption challenging him to demonstrate utmost interest to end the vice which the grouping said is posing a huge risk on national development.

«Your Excellency, the current term of office is five years. Swift decision-making process is required. Indecisiveness on reshuffling the Cabinet, the revelations that your daughter assumed duties at

the Embassy in UK, 7 failure to make public Public Sector Systems Review Report submitted to you by the Vice President, and failure to fire Ministers allegedly involved in corruption as you acted on Hon. Ken Kandodo has led Malawians to brand your leadership as tainted with lies and corruption.» said Monsignor Patrick Thawale, chairperson of PAC.

According to the Anti-Corruption Bureau, corruption and theft of public funds has seen the country from 2009 and 2014, losing around \$723 million to fraud and corruption.

There also revelations that some controlling officers in the country's COVID-19 response misused \$7.9 million in COVID-19 funds.

By extension, the ACB had in its report admitted that Malawians have been denied their right to development due to officers involved in loot.

During the swearing on new ministers, Chakwera warned them against indulging in corruption saying his leadership will no resist on cracking down corruption.

However, the Episcopal Conference of Malawi has



Fighting corruption is one the issues bedeviling the Chakwera administration.

outrightly told Chakwera to desist from mere rhetoric and have close allies that are of good repute.

The Southern African nation is amongst the smallest countries on the African continent as well as one of its

most densely populated.

It is one of the world's poorest countries, with nearly three-quarters of its population living on less than \$2 (€1.77) a day. Malawi has suffered massive floods, prolonged

drought, crop-destroying pests and the coronavirus pandemic leaving 15 per cent of its population in desperate need of food aid.

With massive looting, across public institutions, Chakwera is facing a

stern test with Malawians heavily using the social media to detest looting.

Malawi: Restoring Public Faith And Trust In The Fight Against Corruption

By Atupele Muluzi*

Our Nation is facing significant challenges at the moment. Challenges that have resulted from the ugliest of human traits; greed. Greed is a very dangerous motivation as it seems to find new ways to justify itself.

I am sure that there is wide acknowledgement by those that follow current affairs that we are again facing a political and economic crisis that has left the leaders of our country in a state of paralysis. This at a time when the President has declared a national disaster in several districts following cyclone Anna and the loss of 4 Malawian lives, the worsening economic situation and the ongoing challenges presented globally by COVID – 19.

President Dr. Lazarus Chakwera in his inauguration speech promised to “clear the rubble of corruption” in Malawi. We now find ourselves deep in the rubble. There is alleged corruption within the office of the Secretary to the Cabinet, at the State House and other organs of Government as revealed by the existing investigation and now the prosecutions related to events at NOCMA. The embezzlement of Covid-19 funds for which as yet, no one has been prosecuted.

When the President addressed the nation on 24th of January 2022 he made every effort to say the right things to try to clarify the situation, especially concerning the leaked audio recording of the Director of the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) that brought the looming political crisis into sharp focus.

There are many commendable elements of the President's speech, however there are still questions that remain unanswered, for instance the President presented himself as



Atupele Muluzi is a Malawian politician and businessman

a crusader against corruption, yet soon after the speech, ministers suspected of corruption have been re-appointed into the Cabinet and the government's chief prosecutor, the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP), is withholding consent for the ACB to proceed with its investigation.

In dissolving the cabinet, the nation believed that this was clear action. That he was removing from his administration individuals tainted with corruption till such time a full investigation could be completed. The question we must ask is why has he reappointed to the Cabinet persons who are under investigation?

Furthermore, he makes mention of “dangerous cartels of corruption that have milked our country dry for decades, including foreign ones that donate to us the crumbs leftover from the bread they steal from us”. Given

the ambiguity of this statement I hope that this is not an attempt to find scapegoats in this crisis. The impact of the allegations goes well beyond the shame we must feel as a nation, it undermines our financial standing internationally further damaging our commerce and industry and further weakening our ability to develop as a country.

ACB DIRECTOR MARTHA CHIZUMA

Let us acknowledge the difficult conditions in which the director of the ACB Ms Martha Chizuma found herself, and recognise that the recording was essentially her first error of judgment ever since she took on such a difficult role. She was definitely indiscreet and that is unacceptable, however fighting corruption is not easy, it requires

determination and resolve. Support must therefore be given to those that lead this challenging task and Ms. Chizuma needs all our support.

The recording in question seems to have been made and deliberately leaked by State agents and it seems that there is very little interest in knowing who was responsible for this arguably criminal operation meant to compromise the Director of the ACB and obstruct the course of justice.

RECOMMENDATIONS TO RESTORE TRUST

Moving forward and in order to restore public trust in our Government, I propose the following concrete actions, and ask that the Government provide a direct response;

Government and international development partners need to immediately strengthen the capacity of the ACB with the necessary capacity and resources to conduct their role effectively.

A credible international expert or organisation with experience in investigating and combatting corruption needs to be identified and seconded to the ACB. Their role, to embolden the existing team, strengthen capacity, and be a «fresh pair of uncompromised eyes» for the ACB leadership.

Establish a fully independent auditing body which conducts regular checks of the Register of Interests, to ensure that declaration of assets is accurate.

An annual publication of lifestyle audits for all elected officials and senior public servants.

Amend the Corrupt Practices Act (CPA) on the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions withholding

consent to prosecute.

Amendment of sections 5 and 7 of the Corrupt Practices Act (CPA) to enhance the independence of the ACB by trimming presidential power on appointment.

Finally, I would like to assert that, if we are to decisively deal with corruption, we must change the very culture that has been established – As

I am on record for saying many times, this takes leadership at every level of our society, but particularly at the top. There cannot be any hiding places. If you are in a position of leadership or supporting that leadership, then you must be exemplary. Any allegation must be properly investigated by the relevant independent authorities and to prosecute any person accused of

wrongdoing.

To be clear, I do not define leadership by the trappings of office – but by the vital role of providing clear guidance, example and understanding to drive a stated direction. In sum, corruption is a symptom of weak leadership and has no place in Malawi.

* Atupele Muluzi is a Malawian

politician, businessman and was a Member of Parliament for Machinga North East constituency from 2004 until May 27, 2019. He is also the President of the United Democratic Front and was a presidential candidate during the 2019 election.

Cameroon: Former CRTV Director-General Amadou Vamoulké Marks 2000th Day in Detention

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

January 19, 2022, marked a milestone for former Director-General of the national broadcaster Cameroon Radio Television, CRTV, Amadou Vamoulké, who has been in detention without trial for two thousand (2000) days, and counting. He has so far spent five and half years without being convicted.

Human rights groups and other organizations have constantly accused the Cameroonian authorities of using Operation Sparrowhawk to quash dissent in the country and water down the opposition party.

Lawyer for Vamoulké, Alice Nkom, says his trial has been “unequal” and has “unfounded accusations”. She said: The evidence against him has almost all been dismissed. There are not enough charges to allow a debate.”

The trial of Amadou Vamoulké has been adjourned ninety times, making it the longest of such trial as part of Operation Sparrowhawk launched by the Cameroon government in 2016. The journalists’ detention according to Reporters Without Borders (RSF) has broken all records for the longest detention of an African journalist without being convicted.

“Two thousand days in prison and 90 trial adjournments – these are dizzying figures behind which lies the life of a journalist broken by five and a half years of totally illegal provisional detention,” said Arnaud Froger, the head of RSF’s Africa desk.

“He has several chronic ailments including a neurological condition described as “severe” by two



Amadou Vamoulké, former DG of CRTV accused of misuse of public funds.

neurologists who have examined him or seen his medical file and who agree that he needs medevacking for treatment abroad.”

“This journalist, who has been held for years in a completely illegal manner, is now in danger of dying because of his age and poor state of health,” Arnaud Froger added. “Keeping him in detention in these conditions cannot be justified on any grounds. We urge the Cameroonian authorities to free him before it is too late.”

“We reiterate our appeal to the Cameroonian authorities to end this judicial persecution, which is breaking all records, which is arbitrarily depriving a journalist of his freedom, and which is discrediting all of the Cameroonian institutions involved.”

Amadou Vamoulké was arrested back on July 29, 2016, and has

been charged with the misuse of public funds as Director-General of Cameroon Radio Television, CRTV. Vamoulké has denied these charges and in court, no evidence or a witness has been produced by the prosecutor to back up the claim for his detention.

In a letter on 29 December to the Secretary-General of the Prime Minister’s office, Vamoulké’s French and Cameroonian lawyers called on the authorities to free him to comply with the decision issued on 12 July 2020 by the UN Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

The Working Group issued an unambiguous determination that Vamoulké’s provisional detention has “no legal basis” and that the violations of rights to due process are “of such gravity” that they confer an “arbitrary character” on Mr Vamoulké’s detention.

It also voiced concern about the

health of Vamoulké, who will be 72 in February and who suffers from an illness described by medical experts as «severe». He has never been given the test and treatment required by his ailment according to RSF and he is in great danger of COVID-19 because of his age and pre-existing conditions due to overcrowding in the prison.

In its 2020 Country Report, the US Department of State highlighted the poor prison conditions with harsh and life-threatening situations due to food shortage and poor quality food, gross overcrowding, physical abuse, and inadequate sanitary conditions and medical care.

Cameroon has been constantly ranked in the lower-tier of countries that respect human rights. Significant human rights issues include unlawful or arbitrary killings, including extrajudicial killings by security forces, armed Anglophone separatists,

Boko Haram, forced disappearances by security forces, torture and cases of cruel, inhuman, or degrading treatment or punishment by the government and more.

Overcrowding remained a significant problem in most prisons, especially in major urban areas. Prison overcrowding was exacerbated by a sustained increase in the number of arrests related to the conflict in the Anglophone regions and the September 22 protests by the opposition MRC party. Officials held prisoners mostly in dilapidated prisons and pre-trial and convicted prisoners are in the same cells.

The criminal procedure code of Cameroon provides for a maximum of 18 months detention before trial, but many detainees wait for years to appear in court. The 2014



Amadou Vamoulke sits with his lawyers in court as they call on the government of Cameroon to release him.

antiterrorism law provides that a suspect may be held indefinitely in investigative detention with the authorization of the prosecutor. Of the 22,430 detainees as of October 31, a total of 14,973 were pretrial

detainees.

“Amadou Vamoulke, a former general manager of state-owned Cameroon Radio Television, who was arrested and detained in 2016 on embezzlement charges, continued to

await trial at the Kondengui Central Prison. After at least 30 hearings as of July 15, the Special Criminal Court failed to produce strong evidence to support the charges against him,” the US Department of State said. —

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DR Congo: Severe Economic Hardship Following The Covid-19 Pandemic, What Solutions?

By Badylon Kawanda Bakiman

Institutions, traders, families, individuals... so many social categories in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in Central Africa, continue to experience the negative economic impacts following the whips of the Covid-19 «pandemic». Even if some categories find some avenues for solutions, the improvement of economic conditions in this country will still take time.

The store of the «Bikie ya Kie» establishment located in the «Plateau» of Kikwit city, Kwilu province, in the south-west of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is still bankrupt and closed. There are no more sundries business despite the concerted efforts to get back on track. The lifting of the «State of health emergency» that the President of the Republic had made in August 2020 could allow this economic operator to revive, but in vain.

Jean-Marie Kosongiato, initiator of this store which employed seven people is still worried: «I lost a turnover of 9000 dollars. The situation is explained by the fact that the President of the Republic, during the state of health emergency which lasted six months because of



My business is suffering , says Jean-Marie Kosongiato.

coronavirus, had cut off the capital Kinshasa from the other provinces. No entry, no exit. This reality has put the activities on the ground», he testifies.

He claims that the stocks were already finished and that the receipts were used more to solve certain social

problems: to pay the arrears of wages of his four agents who had urgent family situations; pay the rent for the house where the store is housed etc.

«I am struggling to resume these activities. I don't know when it will be effective,» he said.

In Kinshasa, the capital, mother

Pauline Ebaka, 55, in the commune of Ndjili, district 7, is among the licensed agents of «Kin Express», one of the travel agencies that connects Kinshasa - Bandundu, Kinshasa - Kongo central.

She lost her three-year-old son last September: «I had no money to take him to the hospital. My son had a case of severe diarrhea. People I have approached to borrow money have not responded positively. Catering at the family level had become complicated,» she regrets.

In Kinshasa itself, the central government had lowered the budget for 2021 because of the effects of covid-19 on the country's economy. This had gone from 11 billion in 2020 to 6.8 billion US dollars for 2021. In 2022 the country's budget amounts to 11 billion dollars. Will it solve the economic problem?

In Mbuji-Mayi, Kasai Oriental province, central DRC, a divorce nearly took place between John Tshimanga and his wife in August 2020.

«My wife did not believe that I



Many industries are operating below capacity , says Kimona Bononge, managing director of the Federation of Congo Enterprises

could run out of money. However, the trips I made to Kinshasa to get by were no longer taking place because of the state of health emergency and the exclusion of Kinshasa from the provinces,” he said.

The aforementioned facts are among many others. The different social categories in the DRC continue to experience the negative economic effects of the Covid-19 “pandemic” in a kind of immeasurable stoicism.

Situations in a crucial context

According to Jonas Kibala Kuma, a Congolese economist, “The standard of living of the population in the DRC is low compared to GDP (Gross Domestic Product) per capita, which has been low and declining since 1960. High poverty rates (63.4 %).”

“To date, many industries are operating at 3/4 of their capacity. I’m worried, I don’t know what’s going on. The economy is at its worst. Many companies have laid off staff, they are struggling to turn. The banks have restructured 25% of their credit potential», recognized, a few days ago, Kimona Bononge, managing director of the Federation of Congo Enterprises, the largest trade union of economic operators in the DRC on the antennas of Top Congo FM, one of the radios broadcasting in Kinshasa.

According to the World Bank, in Africa, the «pandemic» of Covid-19 is a crisis that comes on top of many other crises, including invasions of desert locusts, drought, climate change, fragility, conflicts, violence and the underdevelopment of food markets.

This institution adds: “Africa is characterized by the precariousness of most jobs, the large size of the informal sector (i.e. 89% of total employment), the limited coverage of pension and unemployment



Basankusu market in the DRC.

insurance schemes , and the predominance of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (i.e. 90% in business activities)”.

In a document entitled “Measurement of the impact of Covid-19 on economic units” published in July 2020 in Kinshasa, the National Institute of Statistics of the DRC writes: “The companies most affected were those in the city of Goma, with 98% of the companies having answered to have experienced a fall in their turnover. Less than 6% of companies in three major cities in the DRC (Kinshasa, Goma, Lubumbashi) have put employees on technical leave since April. In Goma, 13% of economic units have given technical leave to their employees, 59% of whom are women”.

Covid-19 has not yet ended in the DRC, especially with the Omicron variant. Since the start of the pandemic declared on March 10, 2020 in Kinshasa, the cumulative number

of cases, as of January 24, 2022, is 85,019 confirmed cases, including 85,017 and 2 probable cases. In total, there were 59,347 people cured and 1,278 deaths (1.5% lethality).

A few ideas for local solutions

Faced with this situation, many Congolese resort to the system called «AVE» (Village Savings and Credit Association), a kind of microfinance that takes place in a group whose number varies between 10 and 25 people.

These members of a «VSLA» make a contribution that the organizers call «initial capital». The amount is chosen according to the financial possibilities of each member. Members apply for loans that help them carry out income-generating activities. The solicitor pays the money back with 10 percent interest, the practitioners explain.

«I, for example, thanks to this system, I had 150 dollars which

helped me to resume my sales activities which were on the ground», testifies mother Nzuzi Kingata, one of the women of Kikwit in the province of Kwilu.

Another local solution is that linked to the creation of relief funds. This is the case with the journalists of the «CJKDH» (Kikwit Journalists’ Club for Human Rights) who created, last October, a «Professional Relief Fund» to help journalists to have the means to help them to do their work independently.

For its part, the government has taken the decision to grant some subsidies to private and approved schools which are economically suffocated by the Covid-19. Solution that is running.

Awiji Mambu, a Congolese economist, offers government subsidies, tax and other exemptions (relief in charges related to the payment of certain basic services: water, electricity, etc.).

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Kenya: A Beacon Of Hope For Lamu -Q & A With Umra Omar

By Ajong Mbatndah L

Since her return to Kenya from the USA, Umra Omar has spared no efforts in bringing succor to the needy especially in the Lamu region where she hails from. With Safari Doctors, a community based social enterprise she founded in 2015, Omar has elevated rural health realities to the frontline of development.

Omar and her team at Safari Doctors provide innovative, community-driven health care solutions to marginalized populations with a current reach of circa 2000 patients monthly across some 24 remote villages.

The groundbreaking work of Umra Omar has garnered global recognition from some of the most prestigious quarters. In 2016, she was selected as a CNN Hero for her work. In 2017, Ms. Omar won an Africa Leaders 4 Change award, featured in Business Daily's Top40Under40 Women list, and won the United Nations in Kenya Person of The Year award. In 2019, Ms. Omar was among three finalists for the Robert Burns Humanitarian Award. She is a 2019-2020 Aurora Forum Goodwill Ambassador and a 2019-2023 World Economic Forum Young Global Leader. She is also part of the Western Indian Ocean Conservation Leadership Initiative, is a Segal Family Foundation Africa Visionary Fellow, and was recognized as a Real-Life Hero by the United Nations during the 2020 World Humanitarian Day and most recently as Kenyan National Hero on National Heroes' Day in October 2020.

In the following Q & A with PAV, Omar shares insights into her beloved Lamu, its political relevance in the groundswell of Kenyan politics, her humanitarian work, nascent political ambitions, and more.

What is your take on the way successive Kenyan



Umra Omar represents great hope for Lamu.

governments have handled the region of Lamu? Have you seen any changes under the leadership of President Kenyatta?

Since independence in 1963, successive governments have severely ostracized Lamu and particularly the indigenous communities along the coastline, compared to inhabitants on the inland. Today, inhabitants of Lamu from the bordering communities on the north and west, are still suffering the remnants of marginalization targeted towards the Northern Frontier Districts. They face challenges around lack of infrastructure, historical land injustices, processing of national identity documents, insecurity, poor education and more. That said, I recognize that the biggest change or innovation in recent time has been through the devolution exercise under Kenya's 2010 Constitution that has seen services devolved to county governments, a slight reprieve from the past. This alongside the

development of the port city has renewed hope, high aspirations and a re-awakening among the populations of Lamu.

Many Kenyans and Africa watchers continue to be fascinated by the county's politics. How is partisan politics contributing to the challenges of the moment?

We of Lamu enjoy the fascination too. You may remember that Lamu borders neighboring Somalia, Garissa County and Tana River County; it has a long-lasting historical sea-trade culture; and also a richly diverse population. In some ways, the region is significantly bipolar, navigating between the exquisite United Nations World Heritage Site credentials with a vibrant beach holiday culture on the one hand, and extreme poverty-driven identity politics in the backdrop of a perceived terror hotspot to which visits are discouraged by multiple donor country travel advisories.

Historically, there have been

ethnic tensions and competition going back to the Shifita wars, and then the emergence of Al-Shabaab in recent years; so what is the common denominator?

In two words, it would be "colonial borders". The deep-rooted tension between Kenya and Somalia, highlighted by the Wagalla Massacre (1984) can be traced back to the British handover of the Northern Frontier District (NFD) of Kenya. There was an attempt by ethnic Somalis to secede the NFD from Kenya in order to join Somalia. This resulted in the Shifita War (1963-1967). Since that time, Lamu has been caught between a rock and a hard place serving as some sort of a transit battle ground noticeable by a strong military presence out of historic

conflict and now support for what has metamorphosed into a global war against terror.

What is the economic potential of Lamu and the region as a whole, and how can that be leveraged nationally and even internationally?

To date, the heartbeat of Lamu County is Amu town on Lamu Island. This is Kenya's oldest continually inhabited town and the original Swahili settlement in East Africa established as far back as the 14th century. Between the 17th-19th centuries was considered Lamu's golden age, as the region became the epicenter of poetry, politics, arts and crafts as well as trade. Lamu has, from time immemorial, been a major player in the trade route serving as a gateway to the Indian Ocean, to the Middle East, and to India. A natural harbor, the county is home to the Lamu Port-South Sudan-Ethiopia-Transport (LAPSSET) Corridor project, also known as Lamu corridor. Lamu is also home to a \$25 billion

infrastructure project. The region is rapidly crossing new frontiers promising great potential in the development of the Blue Economy. And that explains why we are so proud of what we have and what we can offer the country and rest of the continent and the world.

Lamu's diversity is also a source of strength, so what do you see as the impact of this diversity in the medium to long term?

Lamu is made up of four main indigenous communities: the Bajuni, Sanye, Aweer (Boni), and Orma with the first being the largest in population of the four. Due to its history rooted in trade, Lamu to date is a cosmopolitan county hosting various communities from across Kenya and the world. It is projected that in the next decade, Lamu's population will grow from a mere one hundred and fifty thousand people into the millions. It is therefore incumbent upon those that govern to advance development without compromising the heritage and welfare of the people.

Back to national politics, President Kenyatta is in his last year of Office, what legacy will he leave behind, and what would you say should be the ideal profile of the next president of Kenya?



About 2000 patients get access to health services monthly across some 24 remote villages in Lamu thanks to Umra Omar and Safari Doctors.

President Kenyatta has done very well for Kenya in many aspects. He has overseen devolution carrying the flag as the first president to take office under the new constitution. He has done significantly well in seeing through the legacy of the former President Mwai Kibaki who invested heavily on infrastructural developments; constructing roads, railways, connecting electricity, as well as building and expanding airports and seaports.

On the other hand, this has been perhaps one of the most unfortunate transitions in Kenya's politics as

the disastrous and costly Building Bridges Initiative spearheaded by President Kenyatta almost consumed the country through an unconstitutional process that would have undermined the integrity of the Nation by attempting to pre-determine his successor. The ideal profile of his successor, in my opinion, would be a sober development-driven leader with the capacity of creating an inclusive agenda for all of Kenya as opposed to an ethnic agenda to only benefit some parts of the country and not others. I hope the next president has a global outlook and works to reposition Kenya as the

socio-economically sound heartbeat of Africa.

A few years ago, you launched "Safari Doctors". What impact has this initiative had in Lamu and the region?

The largest impact that Safari Doctors (www.safaridoctors.org) has had in Lamu and the region is to clearly chart a model around what Universal Healthcare could look like. The award-winning community-based social enterprise founded in 2015 has amplified that WE are the solution for the challenges that we face in access to healthcare. We have been able to reach over three thousand people and domestic animals every month, in remote villages – a contrast to the colonial model of centralized healthcare services that shut out many indigenous people. Our First Mile Healthcare model is to healthcare what Mpesa is to banking.

Having been recognized by the American network CNN as one of their global heroes, alongside other awards that have come your way, how do you plan to continue impacting lives in Lamu and across Kenya?

My plan is to continue serving the people of Lamu and across Kenya by opening up opportunities in healthcare, education, sports and bringing on board partnerships that



Umra Omar says she will be in the race to be the next Governor of Lamu.

are keen to explore the potential that we have as the gem of the Blue Economy agenda. It is my hope that serving as the next Governor of Lamu County will be the key in crafting the new golden age for Lamu County and uplifting the living standards of our people

As a youthful, indigenous, woman politician, do you see a role for yourself and your peers in shaping electoral politics in Kenya this year, 2022?

As young voters and as women, we stand to shape the 2022 political narrative in Kenya. We must disrupt the status quo and make room for our large voting block on the table where decisions are made; to help craft the decisions that affect us more than they affect those making them.

You mentioned being Governor of Lamu; would you consider running for public office if nominated by one of the country's major political



The groundbreaking work of Umra Omar has garnered global recognition.

parties?

There are a lot of conversations along those lines, and the major political parties and coalitions know what I represent and can bring to

the table. It's also obvious that with or without a nomination from the country's major political parties, I will be vying for the Lamu County gubernatorial seat come Tuesday

9th of August 2022. I look forward to making history for our people, for Lamu County, and for Kenya. —

Russia's Summit on Africa: Challenges, Implications and Beyond

By Kester Kenn Klomegah

With highly expected symbolism, Russia's primary focus at the forthcoming November summit in St. Petersburg with African leaders, corporate business directors, representatives from the academic community, civil society organizations and media will largely be renewing most of its unfulfilled bilateral agreements, and making new pledges that will, as usual, be incorporated into a second joint declaration.

Brilliant speeches reminded of long-standing traditions of friendship and solidarity, how Soviets assisted African countries in their struggle to attain independence and established statehood, and further highlighted neo-colonialism tendencies wide spreading on the continent. That Russia stands with Africa on matters of strengthening peace and stability on the continent and ensuring regional security. Next is absolute readiness to engage in broadening



Putin and African leaders at the 2019 summit in Sochi, Russia. Photo credit Mikhail Svetlov Getty Images.

vibrant cooperation in all economic sectors.

While the first summit was described as highly successful due to its spectacular blistering symbolism and has offered the necessary solid

impetus for raising to qualitative level the multifaceted relations, especially in the economic spheres with Africa, much has still not been pursued as expected. Behind the shadows of the bilateral agreements, some of

the projects were simultaneously assigned to either Western or European investors.

Long before the historic summit, African foreign ministers and delegations had lined up visiting

Moscow. Those frequent official visits were intended to show off that Russia is high demand as indicated in a 150-paged new policy released last November by a group of 25 leading experts headed by Sergei A. Karaganov, the Honorary Chairman of the Presidium of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy.

The report vividly highlighted some pitfalls and shortcomings in Russia's approach towards Africa. It further pointed to Russia's consistent failure in honoring its several agreements and pledges over the years. It decried the increased number of bilateral and high-level meetings that yield little or bring to the fore no definitive results. In addition, insufficient and disorganized Russian African lobbying combined with a lack of «information hygiene» at all levels of public speaking, says the policy report.

There are, indeed, to demonstrate «demand for Russia» in the non-Western world; the formation of ad hoc political alliances with African countries geared towards competition with the collective West. Apart from the absence of a public strategy for the continent, there is lack of coordination among various state and para-state institutions working with Africa.

Despite the growth of external player's influence and presence in Africa, Russia has to intensify and redefine its parameters. Russia's foreign policy strategy regarding Africa has to spell out and incorporate the development needs of African countries. Unlike most competitors, Russia has to promote an understandable agenda for Africa: working more on sovereignty, continental integration, infrastructure development, human development (education and medicine), security (including the fight against hunger and epidemics), normal universal human values, the idea that people should live with dignity and feel protected.

Nearly all the Russian experts who participated in putting the report together unreservedly agreed with this view. The main advantage of such an agenda is that it may be more

oriented to the needs of Africans than those of its Western and European competitors. It is advisable to present such a strategy already at the second Russia-Africa summit, and discuss and coordinate it with African partners before that. Along with the strategy, it is advisable to adopt an Action Plan - a practical document that would fill cooperation with substance between summits.

Vsevolod Tkachenko, the Director of the Africa Department of the Russian Foreign Ministry, stated during one of the preparatory meetings, «the African partners expect concrete deeds, maximum substantive ideas and useful proposals.» The current task is to demonstrate results and highlight achievements to the African side. Over the past years, African countries have witnessed many bilateral agreements, memoranda of understanding and pledges.

Russia has to set different narratives about its aspirations and intentions of returning to Africa. The approach has to move from rhetoric and mere declarations of interests. Since the basis of the summit remains the economic interaction between Russia and Africa, «the ideas currently being worked out on new possible instruments to encourage Russian exports to Africa, Russian investments to the continent, such as a fund to support direct investment in Africa, all these deserve special attention,» Tkachenko says.

According to an official report posted on the website, Russia's Foreign Affairs Minister Sergei Lavrov, during the «Government Hour» in the State Duma on January 26, stated that the «cooperation with African countries has expanded to reach new frontiers. Together with African friends, we are working on preparations for the second Russia-Africa summit scheduled to be held this year.» Previously, for instance, Lavrov explicitly indicated: «Russia's political ties, in particular, are developing dynamically. But economic cooperation is not as far advanced as political ties.»

Many experts have expressed concern about the relationship between Russia and Africa, most

often comparing it with other foreign players on the continent within the framework of sustainable development there in Africa. It is about time to make meaningful efforts to implement tons of bilateral agreements already signed with Africa countries.

«Russia, of course, is not satisfied with this state of affairs. At present diplomacy dominates its approach: plethora of agreements were signed with many African countries, official visits proliferate apace, but the outcomes remain hardly discernible,» Professor Gerrit Olivier from the Department of Political Sciences, University of Pretoria in South Africa and a former South African Ambassador to the Russian Federation, wrote in an emailed conversation.

«While, given its global status, Russia ought to be active in Africa as Western Europe, the European Union, America and China are, it is all but absent, playing a negligible role. Be that as it may, the Kremlin has revived its interest in the African continent and it will be realistic to expect that the spade work it is putting in now will at some stage show more tangible results,» Olivier added.

Zimbabwe's Ambassador to Russia, Brigadier General (rtd) Nicholas Mike Sango, who has been in his post since July 2015, expresses his views on the relations between Africa and the Russian Federation. While Russia has traditional ties with Africa, its economic footprints are not growing as expected. It has however attempting to transform the much boasted political relations into a more comprehensive and broad economic cooperation, he noted in his conversation with me.

He pointed to the disparity in the level of development, the diversity of cultures and aspirations of the peoples of the two regions, there is growing realization that Africa is an important partner in the «emerging and sustainable polycentric architecture of the world order» as Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has aptly asserted. But in fact, Africa's critical mass can only be ignored at great risk therefore.

For a long time, Russia's foreign policy on Africa has failed to pronounce itself in practical terms as evidenced by the countable forays into Africa by Russian officials. The Russian Federation has shied away from economic cooperation with Africa, making forays into the few countries that it has engaged in the last few years. African leaders hold Russia in high esteem as evidenced by the large number of African embassies in Moscow. Furthermore, Russia has no colonial legacy in Africa, according to the Zimbabwean diplomat.

Ambassador Sango, who previously held various high-level posts such as military adviser in Zimbabwe's Permanent Mission to the United Nations, and as international instructor in the Southern African Development Community (SADC), also said that «Russia has not responded in the manner expected by Africa, as has China, India and South Korea, to name a few. Africa's expectation is that Russia, while largely in the extractive industry, will steadily transfer technologies for local processing of raw materials as a catalyst for Africa's development.»

While Russia and Africa have common positions on the global platform, the need to recognize and appreciate the aspirations of the common man cannot be overstated. Africa desires economic upliftment, human security in the form of education, health, shelter as well as security from transnational terrorism among many challenges afflicting Africa. The Russian Federation has the capacity and ability to assist Africa overcome these challenges leveraging on Africa's vast resources, Ambassador Sango concluded.

For more than three decades after Soviet collapse in 1991, Russia has had different degrees of political relations and currently looking forward to build stronger economic cooperation. During these years, the relations have also transited through distinctive phases taking cognizance of challenges and fast changing global politics.

In an interview discussion for this story, Shirley Ayorkor Botchwey, the Minister of Foreign Affairs and

Regional Integration of Ghana, explains to this research writer that «Although, for a relationship lasting this long with Africa, one would have expected it to move past where it is now. In short, there is still room for improvement, in fostering particularly stronger economic ties.»

It is hoped that Russia continues consistently to catch up with other active foreign competitors, makes attempts to transform the well-developed political relations with broader economic cooperation the coming years. Ultimately, emphasis should also be placed on developing «people-to-people» relations, whereby the peoples of both countries would have better understanding of each other.

Critically not much has been achieved, looking at the Russia-Africa relations from the perspective of regional organizations - especially Southern African Development Community (SADC), when it was headed by Lawrence Stergomena. Regrettably, she explained during discussions with me that like most of the developing countries, Southern African countries have largely relied on multilateral and regional development financial institutions to fund their development projects.

In this regard, SADC welcomes investors from all over the world. In reality, Russia has not been that visible in the region as compared to China, India or Brazil. On the other hand, it is encouraging that Russia is

currently attempting to position itself to be a major partner with Southern Africa, underlined Stergomena, and further explained that the SADC is an inter-governmental organization with its primary goal of deepening socio-economic cooperation and integration in the southern region.

Dr. Babafemi A. Badejo, Professor of Political Science and International Relations at Chrisland University, Abeokuta, Nigeria, argues that many foreign players and investors are now looking forward to exploring several opportunities in the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), which provides a unique and valuable access to an integrated African market of over 1.2 billion people. In practical reality, it aims at creating a continental market for goods and services, with free movement of business people and investments in Africa.

Badejo argues further that Russia's gradual engagement can be boosted by African media popularizing and boosting knowledge on such engagements by Russia. Hosting the next summit would feed very well into popularizing Russia's efforts at engagement with African leaders. However, promoting relations with the continent of Africa would require more than a one-off event with African leaders who have varying levels of legitimacy from performance or lack of it in their respective countries.

Interestingly, and at the current moment, not much of Russia's

image is promoted by the media in Africa. African media should have the opportunity to report more about Russian corporate presence in Africa and their added value to the realization of the sustainable development goals in Africa. This corporate presence can support the building of the media image of Russia in Africa through involvements with people-at-large oriented activities.

In this final analysis, Russia has to make consistent efforts in building its media network that could further play key role in strengthening relations with Africa, the academic professor noted in his lengthy discussions on Russia-Africa, and concluded that it is Western perception and narrative of Russia that pervades the African media. Russia needs to do more in using media to tell its own story and interest in Africa.

President Vladimir Putin noted at the VTB Capital's Russia Calling Forum, that many countries had been «stepping up their activities on the African continent» but added that Russia could not cooperate with Africa «as it was in the Soviet period, for political reasons.» In his opinion, cooperation with African countries could be developed on a bilateral basis as well as on a multilateral basis, through the framework of BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa).

Reports say Moscow has repeatedly promised to provide genuine cooperation but all these seems

illusory over these years. Russia's involvement in infrastructure development has been extremely low on the continent. Despite its frequently boasted impressive relations, Russia has not pledged publicly concrete funds toward implementing its policy objectives in Africa. Its investment efforts have been limited thus far which some experts attributed to lack of a mechanism or structured system of financing. While Russians are very cautious about making financial commitments, the financial institutions are not closely involved in foreign policy initiatives in Africa.

In addition, experts have identified lack of effective coordination and follow-ups combined with inconsistent approach as fundamental factors affecting the entire relations with Africa. While the first summit is still considered as the largest symbolic event in history, many significant issues in the joint declaration have not been pursued and that could lay down a comprehensive strategic roadmap for building the future Russia-African relations.

As publicly known, China, Japan and India have committed funds publicly during their summits, while large investment funds have also come from the United States and European Union, all towards realizing various economic and infrastructure projects and further collaborating in new interesting areas as greater significant part of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Africa.

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Cameroon: Engaging Girls, Women in STEM Vital for 2030 Agenda

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

Stereotypes and cultural norms dampen girls' interest in STEM (Science, Technology, Engineering and Maths), and even unsupportive and even hostile policies and environment at a national level. But officials at the Nkafu Policy Institute are making efforts to counter these disparities that see more men being involved in STEM than women. The irony is that women perform as well as boys when it comes to STEM subjects.

Researchers are still trying to understand if the continuing disparities in STEM reflect the slow pace of societal change, child-rearing expectations or something deeper and more entrenched, such as the way we think about girls' minds. But a lot can be done by teachers to dispel these stereotypes in STEM and get many women and girls into it.

Experts in the domain of gender, women's rights issues have urged girls to study STEM as the efforts continue for more of them to be involved in the science sphere. They were speaking during the second edition of the panel discussion on Promoting Women's Economic Rights in Cameroon (WERC Project) this January 28, 2022, at the S.T Muna Foundation, Yaounde.

The session was organized by the Nkafu Policy Institute, a think tank of the Denis and Lenora Foretia Foundation in partnership with Atlas Network under the theme «Enhancing Young Girls and Women's Access to Education in Cameroon» moderated by Dr Jean Cedric Kouam, Deputy Director – Economics Affairs Division, Nkafu Policy Institute.

«Women face a lot of cultural barriers. Cameroon has about 250 ethnic groups with different cultures and there is the fallacy of boy child preference. More to that there are social barriers like pregnant girls who are not kept in school,» Wazeh Noline Nwenushi Tumasang, Gender/Development Experts/Consultant, Founder and CEO of Pathways for Women's



Panelists at the 2nd WERC organized by the Nkafu Policy Institute this January 28, 2022 say promoting free education for girls is vital.

Empowerment and Development (PaWED) said.

«The crisis in the North West and South West and Far North Regions of Cameroon has greatly slowed down women in these areas and a lot of efforts will have to be put in for SDG 5 to be achieved in Cameroon by 2030 agenda.»

The experts spoke on various thematic such as: Assessing the barriers hindering access to education among young girls and women in Cameroon; outlining the opportunities for young girls and women to access education in Cameroon; highlighting the consequences of girls' and women's under- or non-enrolment in schools on their economic and finally proposed solutions to improve access to women's and girls in education.

«We are here to propose policy recommendations that will promote and enhance girls and women's access to education... Our joint inputs are very important for us to achieve this,» Fri Asanga, CEO of Denis and Lenora Foretia Foundation said in her opening statement.

In Cameroon, girls' access to

education leaves a lot to be desired. They do not have access to quality nursery education or the privilege of completing a full cycle of primary and/ or secondary education. Women's labour force participation remains low and the gender wage gap persists.

To address this situation, the Cameroon government in its new National Development Strategy 2020-2030 (NDS30), plans to put in place a mechanism that would guarantee equal access to education and training for both girls and boys. Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education has implemented a quota for hiring women scientists as university lecturers. The ministry also assists young women who enrol in science and technical studies, including scholarships for young women who excel in science.

At the same time, professional networks and associations in Cameroon such as the Cameroon Women in Science and Technology (CWST), Women Scientists of Cameroon (FESCICA) and Plan International are promoting women

and girls' involvement in science.

«Education remains a development multiplier and for women to put up with the rapidly evolving technological world, they need to be educated especially in ICT,» Wazeh Nwenushi added.

The 2030 Agenda places gender equality and empowerment of women and girls at its core. It recognizes the importance of girls and women not just as beneficiaries, but as contributors and drivers of change. And Etonde Eliot, Founder and CEO of IREBUILD AFRICA thinks that: «We can only attain our objectives of the 2030 agenda if women are allowed to take up the careers they want without any family, cultural or societal norms tying them down.»

«When women get into more jobs, they do not only add to the GDP development of a country but they also help to address women-related issues which are very beneficial.»

Etonde Eliot went further to add that: «There are a lot of women who have pursued careers in fields dominated by men but they are not talked about. If young girls are told

more stories of such women, they will be inspired.»

Other recommendations brought out included: redesigning curriculums to fit women-specific needs; promoting free education for girls and establishing special programmes for girls in rural areas. With all these, the expert hope will be a booster for many women and girls taking up the challenge of studying STEM.

Focusing on the interdisciplinary and problem-focused nature of STEM is key, recommends Dr Jill Marshall, Associate Co-Director of UTeach (a program trying to confront the pipeline problem of STEM teachers from diverse backgrounds) at the University of Texas

Project-based instructions just generally draw in more people because it addresses problems that



Experts attest that the crisis in NW-SW-Far North and the gender stereotypes has greatly hampered Women's involvement in STEM.

people see as relevant. In a 2008 National Academy of Engineering survey, girls were twice as likely

as boys to say no. but when asked if they would like to design a safe water system, save the rainforests,

or use DNA to solve crimes, the girls answered yes.

South Africa To Host Fourth Investment Conference

By Phumla Williams

South Africa will this year continue with concerted efforts to attract new investments into the country to help revive the economy and boost socio-economic development. One of the major events is the fourth South Africa Investment Conference (SAIC) to be hosted in Johannesburg on 24 March 2022, which forms part of our investment drive to attract R1.2 trillion over five years.

This ambitious investment initiative began in 2018 and has already attracted R770 billion in commitments across a wide range of economic sectors. Government has placed investments at the heart of its efforts to achieve its national goal of economic reconstruction and recovery.

New investments stimulate economic activity in South Africa and also hold enormous benefits for Southern Africa as a whole. The country is an economic hub and gateway into Africa for various markets and business opportunities, including attracting potential investors and tourists alike.

Many multinationals investing in South Africa also use the country as a base to serve their customers in Africa and in particular the southern region. As a relatively stable country with a technologically advanced telecommunications network and a secure banking system, South Africa provides support to these global companies so that they can take advantage of opportunities in the country and the region.

South Africa's regional partnerships include participation in the Southern African Development Community, the Southern African Customs Union and the new African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

The AfCFTA makes trade between African countries easier by providing new export opportunities for Southern African products and services to member countries which trade with each other without tariffs or other hindrances.

South Africa is already working with a number of neighbouring countries to grow business, trade and investment. This regional partnership provides a gateway for potential



GCIS Director General and SA Cabinet Spokesperson, Ms Phumla Williams.

vaccine. Despite the most challenging economic environment in the past two years owing to COVID-19, investments in the country have been able to bolster the energy, telecommunications, water and ports and rail sectors. By lowering the cost of doing business in South Africa and encouraging greater private investment in infrastructure development, government aims to advance the country's transformational and deliberately pursue its developmental agenda. Progress has also been noted in the establishment of 13 special economic zones across the country. They provide investors with targeted investment incentives, preferential tax rates and export support, as well as an attractive manufacturing base for companies seeking to supply both local and international markets. As the most diversified economy in the continent, South Africa remains committed to playing an integral role in the region's industrialisation, particularly to aid its recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. It is indisputable that a thriving regional economy after the pandemic holds the aspirations and dreams of all citizens. Countries in the region have the potential and resilience to emerge stronger by mobilising industrial sectors to rebuild their respective economies. Meanwhile, South Africa cordially invites all potential investors from the region to participate in the upcoming fourth SAIC as we partner in a collaborative approach to build a stronger local and regional economy.

French TotalEnergies Sign Agreements to Resume Natural Gas Exploration Projects in Mozambique

By Kester Kenn Klomegha

Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi and French TotalEnergies CEO Patrick Pouyanné witnessed, late January, the signing and exchange of fresh additional agreements that permit prompt resumption of natural gas project in Cabo Delgado, northern Mozambique.

The construction of the gas liquefaction plant, extracted from the seabed (about 40 kilometers offshore) is the largest currently financed private investment in Africa. But, the natural gas project was suspended in March 2021 after an armed attack that left the province devastated, about 3,100 deaths and more than 817,000 residents displaced.

At the modest ceremony, President Nyusi expressed optimism at the steady return of peace and normalcy in the province, and further underscored the fact that the goal was to restart the multibillion project that would generate state revenue and offer employment to thousands of Mozambicans.

Patrick Pouyanné said that a lot of progress has already been made and I want to congratulate the Mozambican authorities who together with Rwanda and SADC [Southern African Development Community] managed to get a lot done.

A joint military force has been fighting insurgent groups in the region. "But there is still some progress to be made in order to have sustained security. We want to see the

population and villages return to their normal lives," Pouyanné stressed.

The agreement reflects the willingness to pursue its investments in Mozambique's energy sector in order to deploy our multi-energy strategy in the country through retailing of petroleum products for mobility, the major Mozambique LNG project and accompanying supply of domestic gas, and opportunities under review in the area of renewable energies. It aims at contributing to the country's sustainable development and give access to energy to as many people as possible.

The signed agreement with the Mozambican authorities will allow

training for a group of 2,500 young people from Cabo Delgado, with a view to creating job opportunities arising from the ongoing investments. "The normalization of social life is part of security, it is not just a matter for the armed forces," he said.

The Mozambican President, for instance, expressed deep satisfaction with the military for the high commitment towards peace and stability in the province. The Cabo Delgado province is rich in natural gas, but has been terrorized since 2017 by armed rebels, with some attacks claimed by the Islamic State extremist group.

Since July, with the military support



Officials from Mozambique government and TotalEnergies sign accord.

of the Government of Rwanda, which was later joined by the Joint Standby Force from the Southern African Development Community (SADC), has increased security, recovering several areas where there was a presence of rebels, namely the town of Mocimboa da Praia, which had been seized in August 2020.

Present in Mozambique since 1991, it operates in the Exploration & Production and Marketing & Services segments. TotalEnergies Marketing Mozambique SA is a major player in the downstream petroleum products market with a nationwide gas stations network, industrial and mining customers, lubricants and logistics.

Prior to this acquisition, TotalEnergies Marketing Mozambique had an estimated market share of 14 %. TotalEnergies EP Mozambique Area 1 Limitada, a wholly owned subsidiary of TotalEnergies, operates Mozambique LNG with a 26.5% participating interest.

During the working visit to the region, CEO Patrick Pouyanné and Rwanda Development Board, a Rwandan public institution responsible for accelerating Rwanda's economic development, have also signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) to develop collaboration on projects related to energies.

The scope of the agreement covers

the energy products distribution (including LPG, and electric charging), the supply of LPG as a substitute for burning biomass, the renewable hydro-electricity generation, the development of power storage solutions for the electrical network, the development of Natural Based Solution for carbon storage, and the implementation of education and training programs on new energies and the energy transition.

TotalEnergies said in a media release that this collaboration agreement illustrates its commitment to deploying its multi-energy strategy in Africa, particularly in Rwanda, a country with a booming economy.

Pouyanné said "we are pleased to seize this opportunity to work

together with Rwanda and contribute to the development of its energy sector, in line with TotalEnergies' ambition to become a global multi energy company."

"The collaboration with TotalEnergies in the energy sector, particularly the investment they will make in clean energy storage, distribution, partnerships with our private sector companies in Rwanda and beyond, is timely for a country that puts the environment at the heart of its development strategies," said Clare Akamanzi, CEO of the Rwanda Development Board.

"Additionally, the skills transfer in critical areas such as renewable energies and energy transition will undoubtedly contribute to the

development of local expertise in the energy sector." concluded Akamanzi.

TotalEnergies is a global multi-energy company that produces and markets energies: oil and biofuels, natural gas and green gases, renewables and electricity. It has approximately 105,000 employees and are committed to make energy affordable, cleaner, more reliable and accessible to as many people as possible. Active in more than 130 countries, TotalEnergies puts sustainable development in all its dimensions at the heart of its projects and operations to contribute to the well-being of people.

Becoming The Preferred Ghanaian Yoghurt Brand

By Mariam Naa Dedei Aryeetey

Sampson Boakye Addei is a Ghanaian Entrepreneur and the C.E.O of Yoga Business. Mr. Addei originally hails from Asamankese in the Eastern region and Kumasi in the Ashanti region. He was however born and bred in Ghana's capital Accra. Sampson had primary education at Dieudonne International School and then went to Kumasi Academy for his secondary education.

Mr. Addei is currently a graduate from the University of Cape Coast, Ghana with a bachelor's degree in Geography and Regional Planning. He had his National Service with the Ghana Lands Commission after tertiary education. Sampson Boakye Addei is a compassionate, hardworking and outgoing person that loves hanging out with family and friends.

From humble beginnings

The inspiration to produce yoghurt came about from an encounter with a Yoghurt Vendor who encouraged him to explore the market due to its potential to generate income. His sense of adventure and entrepreneurial spirit drove him to consider the business prospects of the idea which made him drop out of tertiary school in third year to learn



yoghurt production. With that advice and dream of becoming a successful Entrepreneur, he converted one room in his mum's house; a two bed apartment into a yoghurt production hub. He later formed an ambitious team who believed in the vision and expanded further till they moved production out of his mother's house.

'I have an enterprising spirit and am amazing team which makes our work much easier. As a man of the people, philanthropy is a hallmark.'

The first two years of operations was tough because they incurred losses but the contributions of team members with support from his dad kept the business afloat. The first major losses incurred by the business was the fermentation of all 500 bottles of yoghurts in a day, due to inadequate storage avenues and limited knowledge about preservation. One incident he will forever remember he was tagged 'Yoghurt Wura' (Yoghurt Seller) by some friends.

The teasing rather challenged the team to go the extra mile to see this venture succeed. His cousin (General Manager) and his close friend (Marketing Manager) have both been exceptionally supportive right from the inception of the company. Their belief in him made it easier for them to buy into the idea and invest into the business. Even with our unique brand, we faced some challenges breaking into the market initially because of competition but with time, our customers have come to love Yoga Fresh and have helped us to establish networks and marketing channels.



Sampson Boakye Addei Entrepreneur & CEO of YOGA Business Group.



Yoga Business Group currently has forty (40) employees and thrives on relationships and networking to promote the business. He associates the smooth running of operations to the existing harmony among the core team members. The company thrived during the COVID lock down, by employing social media and personal delivery channels to customers. They are also producers of bleach, disinfectants, antiseptics and liquid soaps. Their products can be found in numerous marts and shops across Ghana.

The company is looking to expand its market share by adding other products like bottled water and flavored drinks soon in to the market.

Yoga Fresh can boast of low sugar content, good

pricing and better taste. The product has a life shelf of two months but should preferably be served cold. The business does not only focus on sales but donate a percentage of their revenues to charity homes, hospitals and other avenues.

Recipients of their charity donations include the Korle Teaching Hospital Renal Unit, amongst other charity homes. Yoga Fresh can be has a page on Instagram at yogafreshgh

Mr Addei prides himself to be his ability to meet expectations of all around him. Sampson is a passionate young man who believes in providing value to society and it's Hero especially in Entrepreneurship is his own dad His advice to all. He would like to take this opportunity to extend his sincerest gratitude to all employees of Yoga Business Group, his family, friends and customers who continue to stay loyal to the brand

His advice to all young Entrepreneurs is that, they should remain focused, work and build formidable teams that will expand their visions into the much desired companies.

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Record Details

Today, 14:12 by Jeff M.

76045-010-10

Hydromophone Hydrochloride 2 mg/mL INJ SOL

Amended: 50 Dispensed: 500

Starting Count 5,000	After Dispensing (Amended) 4,550
Original Count 500	Amended Count 50
Rx Number 1568537-09710	Patient Caleb Montrose
Reason Recorded incorrect quantity Yesterday, 11:53 by Anastasia S.	Alibi Jeff M. Yesterday, 11:53

Recent Activity

for Hydromophone Hydrochloride 2 mg/mL INJ SOL

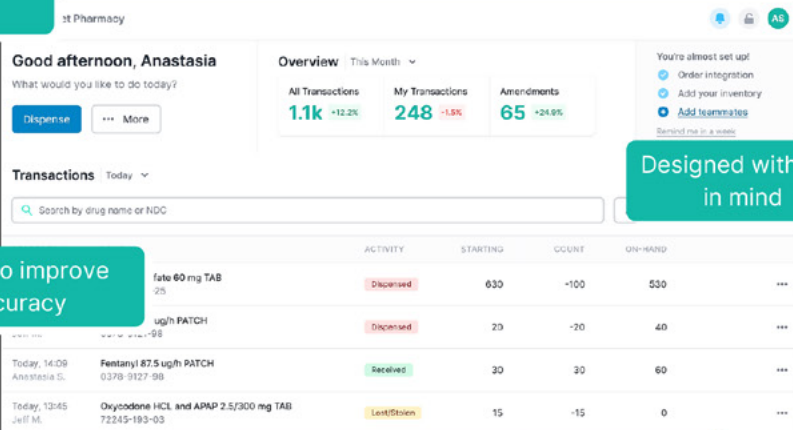
RECORDED	ACTIVITY	STARTING	COUNT
Today, 15:53 Anastasia S.	Dispensed	630	100
Today, 14:12 Jeff M.	Dispensed	20	20
Tues, 14:09 Anastasia S.	Received	30	30
Jun 2, 13:45 Jeff M.	Lost/Stolen	15	15
May 27, 11:01 Jeff M.	Amended	15	15

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Cameroon: Prof Emmanuel Pondi Becomes ICT University VC, Set To Bring New Impetus

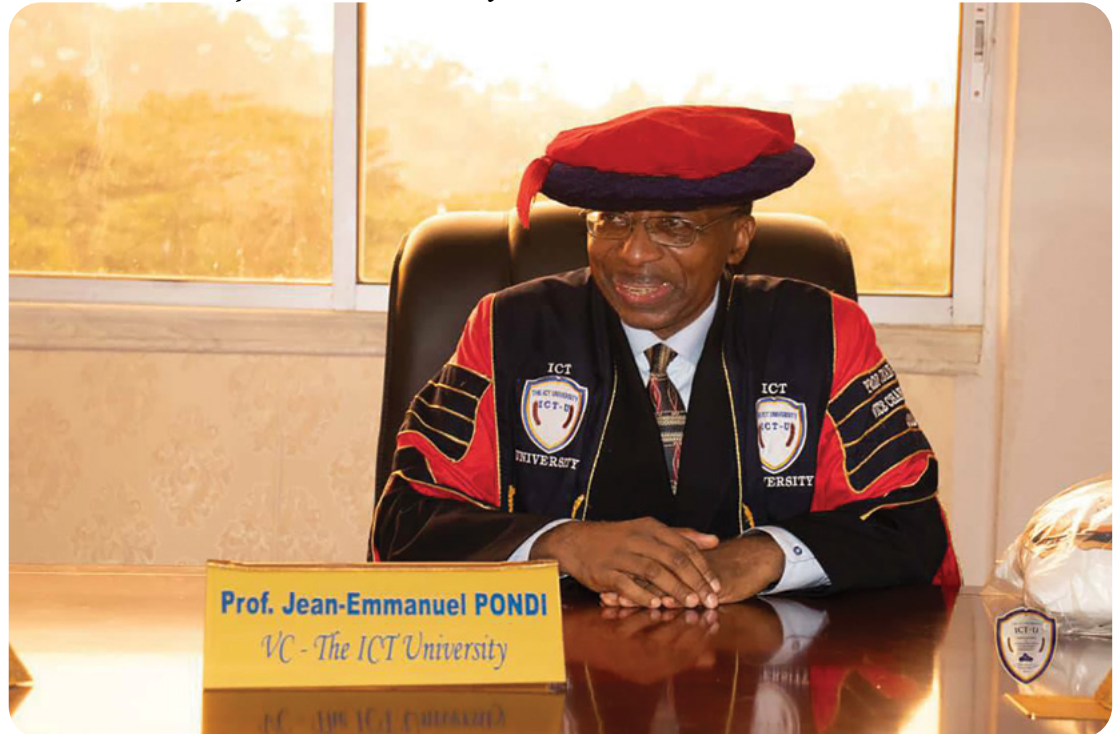
By Boris Esono Nwenfor

Renowned professor of political science and international relations with 23 books to his name has officially taken office as the new Vice-Chancellor of the Information Communication Technology University (ICT-University), Cameroon.

The new Vice-Chancellor intends to build on the achievements so far and so that ICT University remains a reference institution in Cameroon and why not the rest of the world.

Prof Emmanuel Pondi was commissioned on January 5, 2022, in a ceremony at the ICT University campus in Messassi, Yaounde attended by many such as the representative of the Minister of State, Minister of Higher Education, Minette Libom Li Likeng, Minister of Post and Telecommunication and Prof Beban Sammy Chumbow, the pioneer Vice-Chancellor of the ICT University.

"I will bring in my best with all sincerity and determination necessary to move forward the ICT University. The world of the 21st



Prof Pondi who is now the third Vice Chancellor of the renowned ICT University is a specialist in political science and international relations

century revolves around ICTs," Prof Jean Emmanuel Pondi said after being given full attributes. Prof Pondi is a former Director of the

International Relations Institute of Cameroon (IRIC) from 1999-2006 and upon his appointment as the Vice-chancellor of the ICT University, he

also doubles as Vice-Rector in charge of Teaching, Professionalization and ICT Development in the University of Yaounde I.

"We know that we are at the right place and we could bring some new impetus. I come with an open arm, open ear and open eyes," the former Vice-rector of the University of Yaounde I in charge of Research, Cooperation and Relations with the Business World from 2017-2020 and as Secretary-General of the same university from 2006-2017 added.

"I pay tribute to my predecessor for the work done, all I can say is that I will build on the achievements so far that this institution remains a reference in Cameroon, Africa and the world," Prof Pondi said while indicating that he will not be collecting a salary but that it should be paid into a fund to reward the deserving students of this institution.

Prof Pondi who is now the third vice-chancellor of the renowned ICT University takes over from Prof Anyambod Emmanuel Anya.



President Board of Trustees ICT University Worldwide Professor Victor Mbarika commissioned Prof Emmanuel Pondi as new VC of the ICT University



Prof Pondi with student body of ICT University.

who served five years. The latter has been described as exceptional having taken the university from its temporal to its permanent modern-day infrastructure.

The President, Board of Trustees, The ICT University Worldwide, Professor Victor Mbarika and many other speakers took to the rostrum to thank the out-going Vice-Chancellor, Prof. Anyambod Emmanuel Anya for his remarkable and distinguished services to the University since 2017. He was particularly praised for the new dimension he brought; that of counselling and paying attention to the problems of staff and students.

"We are bringing that sense of America to Cameroon but bringing it in the taste of the African realities. We have some great young professors here that are so looking forward to his mentoring," Prof Victor Mbarika, President – ICT University Cameroon added.

About the ICT University

The ICT University Cameroon is a private institution based in

Yaounde, which provides learning in the fields of ICT, renewable energies, telecommunications management, educational sciences and the development of managerial capacities specially targeted for Africa, Latin America, the Caribbean and Asia. It also has a French-speaking section in Cameroon.

ICT University started in 2010 and it currently serves more than 15,000 students on-site and online. The University develops productive and relevant Diploma, Bachelors, Masters and Doctoral level scholars to utilize their research and training in solving the substantial problems in their countries.

The ICT University Foundation is registered and chartered in the USA. It is the funding organ of all ICT University campuses. It also funds donations of ICT equipment, E-Learning laboratories and E-Libraries for many universities in Africa. The headquarter of African campuses is in Cameroon and the ICT University campus was accredited

by Cameroon's Ministry of Higher Education in 2012.

Who is Prof Jean Emmanuel Pondi?

Jean-Emmanuel Pondi was born on 26 November 1958 in Nkongsamba, Cameroon and obtained his Bacc B in 1977 in Lyon, France. He obtained his first degree, B.A in Economics and Political Science and awarded Cum Laude «with distinction» from the State University of New York at Buffalo, N.Y. (USA). He is also a graduate of Cambridge University (Pembroke College, 1983), The London School of Economics (1981), where he obtained a Master of Philosophy (M. Phil.) in International Relations and a Master of Science (M. Sc.) in Political Economics respectively. He holds a PhD in Political Science, with a specialization in International Relations from the Pennsylvania State University in 1986 where he was awarded the mark of «Superior».

He is the author or editor of 23 books and 85 scientific articles published in

renowned and peer-reviewed journals such as The Cambridge review of international affairs, Johns Hopkins University's SAIS review (School of Advanced International Studies) and the Cameroon review of international studies. He has a long experience in teaching international relations in general, and African international relations in particular. He is a full professor at IRIC and has been a visiting fellow/visiting professor in several African, European, American and Asian Universities, including, among others, the University of Nairobi, the University of Cambridge, The Diplomatic Academy of Vienna, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS) in Washington, D.C., and the Chinese Diplomatic Institute in Beijing. In addition, Professor POND I is the Dean of the College of Social Sciences of the Cameroon Academy of Sciences.



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"COVID -19 And What Else - The Forgotten Health Issues In African Media During The Pandemic"

By Jessica Ahedor

Africa is getting deeply rooted in the peril of the days of double burden of diseases as the efforts at curtailing this menace have been seriously challenged by the advent of COVID-19 pandemic, disrupting many public health systems and access to care.

The era of COVID-19 has made access to essential health service and delivery to the people difficult, especially in countries where lock-downs persist. In the case of Ghana, people suffering from other health conditions like diabetes, HIV/AIDS and malaria, among others, shy away from health facilities for fear of contracting the virus.

The advent of the pandemic has not only diverted the attention of many health systems and the media in Africa. Most health conditions which hitherto received the needed priority have been neglected as allocated resources and media publications on the continent keep dwindling.

According to the latest World Malaria Report 2021, in 2020, an estimated 241 million cases of malaria were recorded worldwide compared to 227 million cases in 2019, representing an increase of 14 million new cases from 2019 to 2020.

However, the African region recorded 96 per cent of malaria deaths - about 602,000 people died from malaria with under-five children accounting for 80 percent of these deaths. This makes the African Region to bear a huge share of the global malaria burden.

Six countries in Africa contributed to more than half of malaria deaths in 2020 globally. These countries include Nigeria (27%), the Democratic Republic of the Congo (12%), Uganda (5%), Mozambique (4%), Angola (3%) and Burkina Faso (3%).

AFRICA CONTINUES TO CARRY THE HIGHEST BURDEN OF MALARIA GLOBALLY



In 2019, Africa had:

94%

of the world's
malaria cases & deaths

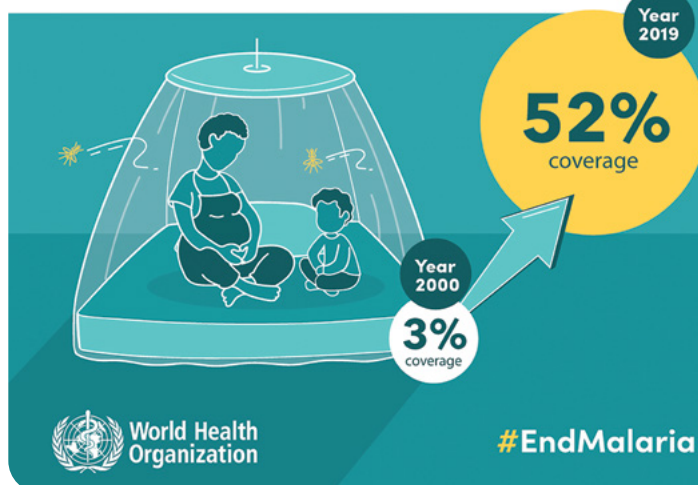


World Health Organization

#EndMalaria

Mojeed Alabi, head of development health. As a result, the news desk at Premium Times, Nigeria, media succumb to the pressures of cacophony on COVID, to the neglect of various conditions especially non-communicable diseases.

Many more pregnant women and children in sub-Saharan Africa are sleeping under insecticide-treated nets, but the goal of universal coverage is still far from reach



While pointing out that the implications of neglecting other conditions affecting people's health by the media and various governments in the face of the pandemic "is the upsurge we see now," Alabi stressed that "it is incumbent on us to drum - home these issues as they are even killing our people more than COVID."

In a publication by Brent Burkholder et al 2021, these 16 Africa countries, Angola, Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Central African Republic, Chad, Côte d'Ivoire, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Guinea, Ghana, Mali, Niger, Nigeria, Togo and Zambia, are still experiencing outbreaks of circulating vaccine-derived poliovirus (cVDPV). Paving way for the spread of another strain of the virus - type 2 - across these African countries, leaving more than 170 children paralyzed yearly in Ghana.

The challenge mainly is that most health systems are donor-driven, so as the pandemic hit, these donors are forced to concentrate on their counties before looking elsewhere, says Koku Awonoor-Williams, a former Director of monitoring, planning and evaluation at the Ghana Health Service. Going forward, Ghana and other countries have to take a clue from that and build health systems for days like this, he added.

Again, UNICEF's latest report on fighting polio in COVID-19 pandemic, said "the fight against polio is far from over." After the Ghana Health Service and its partners struggled to hit their set target of 4.5 million children for vaccination because of resistance, challenges in accessing communities and low immunization coverage in other parts of the region.

On cholera cases, the World Health Organization, WHO, has stated that 14 million people live in cholera

hotspots in Nigeria. The Central and West Africa case fatality rate, CFR, rose from 1.8 per cent in 2019 to 2.1 per cent. At the country level, from 2019 to 2020, cholera CFR rose by 2.2 per cent in Benin, 0.4 per cent in Cameroon, 1.2 per cent in Liberia, and 3.5 per cent in Nigeria.

This, Abdoulaye Bousso, Director of Emergency Operations, Ministry of Health, Senegal explained that Senegal has learned from the

Ebola crisis that has ravaged the country's health system. As a result, the government had to invest its resources into the country's health system. "Little did we know that we were preparing for a bigger pandemic compared to Ebola. Senegal has learned from the Ebola outbreak and prepared its health systems so when COVID struck, it was easy for us to handle because we have already strengthened our system." This is

what we did right, he added.

In West Africa, other conditions like Lassa fever claim 5,000 lives annually. The overall case fatality rate is one percent while observed case-fatality rate among patients hospitalized with severe cases of Lassa fever is 15 percent. In areas like Sierra Leone, Liberia, Benin, Ghana, Guinea, Nigeria and Mali, Lassa fever is having serious impact on productivity. But experts say during

the pandemic, these cases decreased due to low turn-out, suggesting that many cases are going underreported within communities.

Reference

The immediate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on polio immunization and surveillance activities

<https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X21013475>

Ghana: "A Father Of Peace-The General's Testimonial"

By Maxwell Nkansah

The Ghana Army (GA) is the main ground warfare organizational military branch of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF). In 1959, two years after the Gold Coast obtained independence as Ghana; the Gold Coast Regiment was withdrawn from the Royal West African Frontier Force and formed the basis for the new Ghana army. Together with the Ghana air force (GHF) and Ghanaian navy (GN), the Ghana army (GA) makes up the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF), controlled by the Ministry of Defense (MoD) and Central Defense Headquarters, both located in Greater Accra.

Major General Thomas Oppong-Pepurah, the Army Commander was commissioned into the Ghana Armed Forces in 1986 as part of Regular Career Course 26, and was posted to the Armor Recognizance Regiment. His civil educational qualifications include a Master of Arts in International Security and Strategy from Kings College, London (2013 – 2014) and an Executive Master of Business Administration (Human Resource Management) from the University of Ghana, Legon (2006 – 2007). He also has a Bachelor of Science degree in Administration (Human Resource Management) from the University of Ghana (1999 – 2004) and a Post-Graduate Certificate in Public Administration from Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration (1998).

Major General Oppong-Pepurah has undertaken several career



progression courses. These include Defense Studies at the Royal College of Defense Studies, London, United Kingdom (2013 – 2014), Senior Intelligence Course at the Joint Intelligence Centre, Strasbourg, France (2010), Law of Combating Terrorism at the Defense Institute of International Legal Studies, Newport, Rhode Island, USA (2009) and Senior Command and Staff Course at the US Army Command and General Staff College, Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, USA (2000-2001).

He again took some career progression courses; Senior Command and Staff Course at Ghana

Armed Forces Command and Staff College, Accra (1998 – 1999), Junior Command and Staff Course at the Command and Staff College, Kaduna, Nigeria (1997), and Armour officer Basic Course at the US Army Armour School, Fort Knox, Kentucky, USA (1996).

Appointments held in the course of his career include Aide-de-Camp to the Chief of the Army Staff and Chief of the Defence Staff, Ghana Armed Forces (1995 – 1997), Operations/ Training Officer, 64 Infantry Regiment, (1999 – 2000).

He was then the Commanding Officer, 64 Infantry Regiment from

2002 to 2009, with additional appointments as Commanding Officer, Armoured Reconnaissance Regiment, (2004-2005), Coordinator, State Transport Security (2001 – 2008), and Instructor, Disaster Management Course, Army Combat Training School, Teshie (2001-2005).

Major General Oppong Pepurah has held Director, Strategic Intelligence Assessment, Defence Intelligence Department, General Headquarters (2009-2011), Director Operations and Plans, Defence Industries Department, General Headquarters (2011 – 2013), Director Army Training (Sep 14 to Feb 16) and Director Army Peacekeeping Operations (Feb – Jul 16) Chief Staff Officer, Army Headquarters (Jul 16 – Feb 17).

Before his current appointment as the Chief of Staff at the General Headquarters, he was the General Officer Commanding, Southern Command of the Ghana Army (Feb 17 – Jan 19). Before his current appointment as the Chief of Staff at the General Headquarters, he was the General Officer Commanding, Southern Command of the Ghana Army (Feb 17 – Jan 19).

In peacekeeping, he has served as Humanitarian Officer, United Nations Assistance Mission in Rwanda (June-December 1994), Military Observer, United Nations Aouzou Strip Observer Group in Libya/Chad (March-May 1994), G4 Transport and Plans, United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara – 1993 and Detachment Second-In-

Command/Troop Leader, United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon/ Israel (1987, 1989, 1992)

He is a Board member of the Governing Council of the National Disaster Management Organisation (NADMO). Major General Oppong-Pepurah is married with five (5) children. He enjoys horse riding, soccer, traveling, watching movies, and jogging.

The participation of the Chief of the Army Staff (COAS) of the Ghana Armed Forces (GAF) in the prestigious United States Army Coalition Forces Land Component (CFLCC) Course is considered historic as the Commander is arguably the only senior African military officer to be invited by the United States Africa Command (USAFRICOM), to participate.

The course, which was organized at the US Army Carlisle Barracks, in the State of Pennsylvania, from April 20-24, 2021, was aimed at equipping selected military Senior Leaders, to function effectively.

A post by the US Army Southern European Taskforce, Africa surmises that the Ghana Army Commander – Major General (Maj Gen) Thomas Oppong-Pepurah, is a Senior Leader and a Land Component Commander in a Joint/Combined Interorganizational Multinational

Environment.

CFLCC, a multinational land force directing all land forces of different allied countries, on behalf of a Combatant Commander or Joint Task Force Commander, was established under Commander U.S. Army Forces Central Command (CENTCOM), to direct the two corps-sized formations – I Marine Expeditionary Force and U.S. V Corps, involved in the initial invasion of Iraq in March 2003.

General Oppong-Pepurah, who hails from Dormaa Ahenkro, in the Bono Region of Ghana, and is considered to have brought a lot of reforms to the Ghana Army. Since assuming command, he has set for himself and his

troops, a vision of transforming his charges into a well-led, well-trained and well-equipped one, capable of handling any assigned task.

Considering the peculiar circumstances of West Africa, a sub-region threatened by terrorists, the Ghanaian officer, who is a graduate of Prempeh College and the Ghana Institute of Management and Public Administration, has set himself a



target of collaborating with other militaries, such as the German, British and the US Armies, to retrain his charges, as a way of building the capacity of troops and opening them up to current military trends and standards.

Before being the Army Commander, he as Lieutenant Colonel was historically the concurrent Commanding Officer of two different

Regiments of GAF, and was the General Officer Commanding (GOC), Southern Command as a Brigadier General and later as Major General as Chief of Staff at the General Headquarters of the entire GAF, where he is credited for working to pleasantly increase the emoluments of all personnel of GAF.

After his appointment on February 18, 2020, a month before Ghana located COVID-19 in its bounds and subsequently locked down two major metropolis, he is deemed to have hugely transformed the Ghana Army in the areas of accommodation facilities, training and morale of his troops, restrictions notwithstanding.

For about one-and-half years since his appointment, the Army Commander, who enlisted into GAF in 1985, has strategically expanded the Army with two Mechanized Battalions, each at the northeast and northwest parts of Ghana, reinforced troops at midsections with adequate accommodation and equipment, and a new armored regiment to fortify the northern frontier.

The Professional Armour Officer, set his sights on transforming the famous Battle Training Camp, Bundase, into

an international standard Centre of Excellence for a United Nations Peacekeeping Training for the African sub-region, and has mainly succeeded by constructing modern dormitories to replace weak camp tents, completed a multipurpose hall and re-networked the water system of the training camp.

The Ghana Army, in addition to what the central government has initiated, is also constructing Forward Operating Bases (FOB) at Bui and Tapa, in the Bono and Ashanti Regions, respectively, massively reconstructed the Recruit Training Schools at Shai-Hills and the Daboya Training Camp, in the Greater Accra and Savanna Regions.

The GAF has long had acute accommodation challenges, but efforts are ongoing by the Government of Ghana to retool, reequip and provide major residential

facilities under a program dubbed Barracks Regeneration Program (BRP), however, the Army has seen some appreciable provision of accommodation facilities at its Units, with internally generated resources. There have been palpable improvements in accommodation provision at the Army's 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 Battalions of Infantry, 64 Infantry,

and 153 Armored Regiments and the landmark construction of a UN village for International Peace Support Operations (IPSO) purposes.

On training, the Army has reinforced some courses and also introduced a couple, such as; Battalion Commanders' Course, Increased Career Progression Course, new Peacekeeping Pre-

deployment and Media Training Module, Female PROMAX Cadre, and annual training exercises like EAGLE CLAWS, BURNING ARROW, intended to train to reinforce the Northern and Mid-Zone Frontiers of Ghana, against aggression.

In US military terminology, "Unified Combatant Commands" or "Joint Task Forces" can have components from all services and components – Army-Land, Air, Naval, Marine, and Special Operations, thus a Land Component Command is a command directing all land forces on behalf of a combatant commander or Joint Task Force commander.

Major General Oppong Preprah is such a father of Peace who's thoughts for the military and the civilians across the world are indeed remarkable.



Civil Society Organizations In Africa Urged To Campaign For The Domestication Of The AU Transitional Justice Policy

By Wallace Mawire

Civil society organizations working in the African continent have been urged to play a critical and oversight role for African countries to fully domesticate in their home countries the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP).

The call was made in Zimbabwe by Dzikamai Bere and Webster Zambara at a Peace Building Network of Zimbabwe (PBNZ) workshop hosted in Harare, Zimbabwe on 30 November 2021 to 1 December, 2021 facilitated by the Centre for Conflict Management and Transformation (CCMT) under the theme:

'Reflecting on the operating environment as the nation heads towards the 2023 harmonized elections'.

Bere's presentation focused on reflection on the AUTJ policy and its relevance to the Peace



building Network of Zimbabwe and was co-facilitated by Zambara from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) based in Cape Town, South Africa. The IJR was launched in 2000 by officials who worked in the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission with the aim of ensuring that lessons learnt from South Africa's transition from apartheid to democracy are taken into account and utilised in advancing the interests of national reconciliation across Africa. IJR works with partner organizations across Africa to promote reconciliation and socio-economic justice in countries emerging from conflict or undergoing democratic transition.

Dzikamai Bere is the National Director of the Zimbabwe Human Rights Association (ZimRights), an organization operating in Zimbabwe with at least 250 000 members.

According to Bere, this is one of the biggest grassroots movement organizations in the country.

Bere also worked with the National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG) in Zimbabwe, where he played a critical role in coordinating the transitional justice agenda. He is also an IJR Transitional Justice in Africa fellow for 2015.

In a policy brief compiled by Dzikaikai Bere published by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in April 2020 titled: Civil Society leading transitional justice in Southern Africa: Lesson from Zimbabwe presented at the network meeting, Bere said that civil society organizations across Africa had a critical role to play to push for the domestication of the AU transitional justice policy in their respective countries of operation.

According to Bere in the policy brief, the policy was adopted by the AU in February 2019 after almost a decade of advocacy efforts by civil society.

It is also reported in the brief that the policy is expected to act as a guideline for member states in their quest to confront and address past injustices.

He says that the adoption of the policy is the first step in a continental drive to implement a coherent transitional justice mechanism that can be applied to different contexts.

‘Just as the role of civil society was critical in the development of the AUTJP, similar proactive civil society leadership will be required to ensure the implementation of transitional justice at national level in AU member states,’ Bere said.

Using Zimbabwe as case study, the policy brief presents a practice model of how civil society can play an effective and proactive leadership role in pushing for the implementation of transitional justice. The briefing outlines the civil society led process

in Zimbabwe that moved the transitional justice agenda from the early stages of isolated solution-seeking initiatives to more organized consensus building processes such as the 2003 Johannesburg symposium on civil society and justice in Zimbabwe, the establishment of broad civil society coordination framework designated the National Transitional Justice Working Group and the adoption of the 2013 Constitution of Zimbabwe which laid down a number of transitional justice measures, including the establishment of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC).

It is reported that the policy brief while focusing on a specific jurisdiction, as well as the experiences and models developed in Zimbabwe, it can be used with necessary adjustments according to context in other countries in order to ensure that civil society can play a proactive role in leading transitional justice efforts.

It is also added that the policy brings what has now become a global practice in post-violent conflict situations back to Africa, in line with African values of ubuntu. It covers both retributive justice and restorative justice.

It is also added that while the state is equipped with the necessary resources and infrastructure for the implementation of transitional justice, civil society as a representative of various communities of interest brings wide participation and the technical expertise necessary to

ensure the process is undertaken according to best practice.

It is added that without the participation of survivors and victims of past violations, the principles of equity, inclusivity and non-discrimination remain empty.

Bere says that civil society plays its leadership role within the parameters of the principles while also acknowledging that responsibility lies with the respective African governments.

In a presentation on strengthening civil society peace-building strategies through the African Union Transitional Justice Policy (AUTJP) prepared for the Peace-building Network of Zimbabwe by Webster Zambara from the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation transitional justice offers tools to address legacies of violent conflicts and systemic or gross violations of human rights in an integrated and sustainable manner, guaranteeing non-recurrence in the future.

Examples of transitional justice mechanisms in Africa he outlined include gacaca in Rwanda, magamba spirit mediums in Mozambique, fambul tok in Sierra Leone and Mat Oput in Northern Uganda.

Zambara said that some of them may be harmful traditional justice practices which violate human rights and constitutional provisions and in some instances, they do not serve justice.

On the role of civil society in promoting transitional Justice, Zambara said that this would include

influencing policy making and advocating for passing of just laws.

He added that CSOs can exercise their power and mandate to ensure transitional justice policies and laws are widely consultative and comprehensive to address the multi-dimensional impacts of the conflict and violence related issues in the region and at national level.

In Zimbabwe he said that this work has been led by the National Transitional Justice Working Group (NTJWG).

On the development of model law on transitional justice for Zimbabwe, Zambara said that CSOs could advocate for the domestication of the continental transitional justice policy through developing a model practice on transitional justice to address national realities and challenges.

He also added that CSOs have oversight over actions of the executive where such actions are violent or fuel conflict, violence and gross human rights abuses.

‘Civil society can exercise its oversight powers to hold the executive to account,’ Zambara said.

He added that CSOs can also recommend any one of the transitional justice elements highlighted to address the consequences of conflict and violence.

It is also reported that CSOs can facilitate public participation and involvement in transitional justice legislative and policy-making processes, mobilising their constituencies at community and national level, to participate in national transitional justice legislation, policy design, development and implementation processes.

He said that in Zimbabwe where transitional justice processes are undertaken at national level, CSOs can monitor such processes and call upon the executive and the NPRC to provide progress reports on implementation.





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CAPITAL FLOWS UNDERPINNING THE ENERGY TRANSITION



The Republic Of Cabo Verde Became The Forty-First (41st) To Deposit The Agreement Establishing The African Continental Free Trade Area (Afcfta).



The Republic of Cabo Verde became the forty-first (41st) State Party to deposit the instrument of ratification of the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). On behalf of H.E. The Chairperson, the Office of the Legal Counsel received the instrument from Secretary of State of Foreign Affairs and Cooperation of Cabo Verde, Miryan Djamila Sena Vieira, Ambassador of Cabo Verde in Nigeria and ECOWAS, Belarmino Silva. The Secretary-General of the AfCFTA Secretariat, H.E. Wamkele Mene expressed his delight and welcomed Cabo Verde for becoming as State Party.

To date, the Agreement Establishing the AfCFTA has been signed by 54 AU Member States. Forty-one (41) African Union Member

States are also State Parties to the Agreement by virtue of their deposits of the instruments of ratification of the Agreement, demonstrating an unequivocal political will to achieve market integration in Africa. Pursuant to Article 13 of the Agreement establishing the Agreement Establishing the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA), the Assembly has established the AfCFTA Secretariat. The seat of the AfCFTA Secretariat is Ghana, Accra.

Under the AfCFTA, African countries have collectively undertaken commitments to substantially liberalise all trade by eliminating tariffs on 97% of tariff lines – over a 13-year period from the start of implementation. So far, the AfCFTA Secretariat 44 countries representing 80% of African Union membership have submitted their tariff offers, with Algeria being the

latest. Regarding Trade in Services, so far, the Secretariat has received 46 initial offers submitted by State and non-State Parties, covering the five priority sectors, namely: Business, Communication, Financial, Tourism and Transport services sectors.

On Trade in Services, there have been some progress in the implementation of the objectives of the Protocol on Trade in Services. So far, the AfCFTA Secretariat has received 46 initial offers submitted by State and non-State Parties, covering the five priority sectors, namely: Business, Communication, Financial, Tourism and Transport services sectors. Some State and non-State Parties, namely members of CEMAC, EAC, and ECOWAS, have all presented consolidated offers as part of this process.

About the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA)

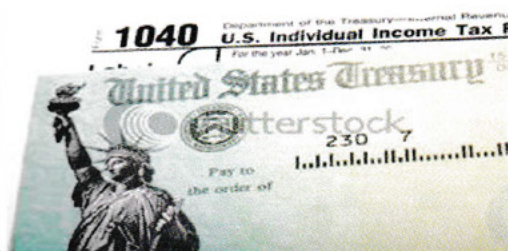
Established in 2018, the AfCFTA brings together 55 African economies, with a population of 1.3 billion and combined GDP of \$3.4 trillion. Per the geographical area and number of participating countries, the AfCFTA is the largest free trade area since the establishment of the World Trade Organization (WTO). Through the AfCFTA, African countries are building a single continental market for goods and services, facilitated by movement of capital and persons, thus laying the foundation for the eventual establishment of a continental Customs Union. Other objectives of the AfCFTA include the promotion of sustainable and inclusive development, industrial development and diversification.

**Source African Union*



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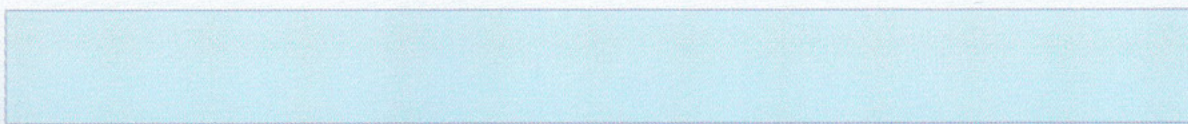
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A Business Spin To AFCON 2021

By Prince Kurupati

The past few years have been tough for most businesses in Cameroon. The Covid-19 pandemic presented unprecedented challenges to most businesses. To compound the situation, the security issues largely necessitated by the Anglophone crisis have also presented huge challenges to Cameroonian businesses. The ongoing African Cup of Nations (AFCON) being hosted in the country has however come as a huge relief as most businesses in the country are saying their figures have risen significantly since the tournament kicked off on 9 January, 2022.

The influx of supporters from all of the participating teams has worked wonders for the tourism industry in the country. News agency Xinhua which observed the hotel (including motels and lodges) occupancy rates before and after the start of the AFCON tournament says that the figures for most hotels especially those in Yaoundé and Doula rose by between 12% to 25%. The increase in the hotel occupancy rates proves that the country marketed itself brilliantly despite the widely circulating reports of security threats posed by the Anglophone crisis. Writer for the 20ten daily publication in Cameroon Patsy Nwogu interviewed a hotel operator who said that her hotel “was booked by a national team that pushed revenue in her company to approximately \$24,000 in two weeks”. This is an amount that the hotel operator could not achieve for the whole of 2021 owing to the Covid-19 pandemic.

More impressive is the fact that the high tourism figures showcase the country's great work ethic as promises made by the country's leaders' way back to improve the image of the country have come to fruition. Speaking during the AFCON preparations in July 2021, Cameroon's Minister of Tourism and Leisure Bello Bouba Maigari said that “This is a very important event that will be communicated not only



in the country but in Africa and the world over. Our strategy is to sell our country in the best possible way in order to attract more tourists during and after the competition.” Maigari's words have since turned into reality as the country is witnessing an influx of tourists from all corners of the continent.

All the people that have had the opportunity of visiting the country during the tournament are experiencing Cameroon's beauty, culture, environment, traditional and modern distinctive local products. The hope amongst the tourism actors in the country is that Cameroon's beauty will aid all visitors to become Cameroonian tourism ambassadors once they return back to their countries. This will in turn propel them and their friends and family to return in the near future for purely tourism purposes.

The chief economist at the African Business Information Bank, Kennedy Tumemnta agrees with the sentiments that AFCON has presented great business opportunities for Cameroonian businesses. In a report, Tumemnta said that business owners especially those operating in tourism, leisure, communications, transportation and food have enjoyed great success recording over 30% rise in revenue generation. Tumemnta went further

to suggest that the successes recorded by these businesses have positive economic spinoffs that will benefit the entire country.

Away from the government and key tourism actors, AFCON has brought about huge relief to emerging entrepreneurs. Speaking to Patsy Nwogu of the 20ten daily publication, Frederic Issa who is a shoe cobbler in Yaoundé switched businesses at the start of the tournament. Frederic Issa ditched his shoe mending business and ventured into the cab-hailing business. Thanks to the huge numbers of people commuting daily during the course of the tournament, Issa said his decision to switch business to cab-hailing has proved to be a masterstroke.

Many emerging entrepreneurs have followed in the footsteps of Frederic Issa as they have changed businesses for the duration of the AFCON tournament. Issa Hamadou who used to trade in boiled eggs in an interview with DW said that he has now turned to sportswear. Issa Hamadou said, “I sell jerseys like those of Cameroon, Senegal, Ivory Coast – in fact, the jerseys of all 24 countries participating in this year's AFCON.” Issa Hamadou is banking on the success of the Cameroon team to earn more money – “If the (Cameroon's Indomitable) Lions win, the country will benefit a lot. The

price of jerseys will rise, and we will make more money”.

Some businesses like a local bar at the Melen neighbourhood in Yaoundé have had to improve their services and operations while at the same time getting a facelift so as to win business during the AFCON tournament. The owner of the bar said that they gave the bar a facelift, a new coat of paint and new furniture to make it appealing to the visitors. Before the AFCON, there were no TV sets inside the bar but they purchased some so as to lure more patrons. All the efforts have paid dividends as business is booming with each passing day.

While businesses have benefitted the most from the hosting of the AFCON tournament, the chief economist at the African Business Information Bank, Kennedy Tumemnta said that AFCON need to be broadly seen as a gateway to development. Tumemnta said “Most of the cities that host AFCON have benefitted from not only stadiums but also road networks. It has also created jobs for some young people. However, although most of the companies that constructed some of these sports' infrastructure were foreign companies, we think that the economic fallouts for the labourers and local engineers are so huge”.

Cameroon: Africa Cup of Nations 'Stained' by Death of Fans

By Boris Esono Nwenfor



The incident At Olembe Stadium left some 8 people dead.

The 33rd edition of the Africa Cup of Nations hosted by Cameroon has been «stained» by the death of fans at the Olembe Stadium, as many are still to come to terms with how just going to watch a football game featuring their beloved nation would turn to be a nightmare to many and the end of the road for others.

The sad where eight people lost their lives and scored left injured happened on Monday, January 24, as the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon was about to face Comoros in the knockout phase of the Africa Cup of Nations in Yaounde. On the field, the game ended 2-1 in favour of Cameroon.

This incident overshadowed Cameroon's hosting of the Africa Cup of Nations, a competition the country is hosting for the first time in fifty years. It also comes after Cameroon failed to host the competition back in 2019 due to security and infrastructural issues. And with this, some say it will be long before Cameroon will again host the African continental showpiece event.

Before the game had commenced, videos and pictures circulated on social media showed supporters

pushing and shoving trying to get into the stadium. The Olembe Stadium which has a capacity of 60,000 has been given the clearance to accept 80 per cent capacity for all of Cameroon's encounters but many have indicated that supporters are more than that quota.

Media reports indicate that some eight people died from the incident with scores of others injured with

the Cameroonian authorities and the Confederation of African Football, CAF, confirming this number.

That gate was supposed to be open because if it was opened, they would have walked through and for inexplicable reasons, it was closed," CAF President Dr Patrice Motsepe said about the incident.

"If that gate was open as it was supposed to, we would not have had

this problem we have now, this loss of life. Who closed that gate? Who is responsible for that gate?"

«It is very shocking as people were coming to the stadium to watch football, and people have died,» 40-year-old Eric Djemba-Djemba, who had a spell at Manchester United from 2003 to 2005, told the BBC World Service,

«We were inside and suddenly we



CAF President Dr Patrice Motsepe is hopeful that such an incident at the Olembe Stadium would not happen again.

heard people had died outside the stadium. It is the worst possible news because Cameroon did everything to play the tournament in Cameroon and built big stadiums. I think for me it is very sad."

Danish journalist Buster Emil Kirchner described to the BBC as seeing «a lot of chaos» as fans clamoured to enter the ground through a single open gate. «It was hectic - people running, people climbing fences, people breaking through the barricades,» he told the BBC, adding that he had seen many people without tickets trying to «force themselves in».

Another journalist, Leocadia Bongben, saw the commotion coming from one of the fan zone

areas outside the stadium. «People started shouting,» she told the BBC's Newsday programme. «A minute after that an ambulance came to the stadium, but when we got to the place the police would not allow us to get close to where the stampede was. «It's quite a sad situation that people go to watch a game and they end up dying there.»

CAF lifts Olembe Stadium suspension

Following the tragic loss of lives, the Olembe Stadium which hosted the opening match of the competition was suspended from organizing matches until an investigation was carried out on how and why people lost their lives.

But, the President of CAF Dr Patrice

Motsepe having convened a meeting of the CAF Organizing Committee, received the report compiled by CAF Safety and Security Department together with COCAN, unanimously voted to lift the suspension imposed on the Olembe Stadium.

According to CAF, the report dealt with and highlighted the tragic circumstances which led to eight people being killed and eight being injured and also highlighted the recommendations and interventions to ensure that a tragedy of this nature should never be repeated.

«Having noted the recommendations and undertakings from the Government with additional security provisions over and above those which were successfully

implemented at the Ahmadou Ahidjo Stadium during the Morocco v Malawi match and at the Japoma Stadium during the Gambia and Cameroon match, the CAF Organizing Committee unanimously agreed to lift the suspension imposed on the Olembe Stadium and allow the TotalEnergies AFCON semi-finals as well as the final match to take place at the Olembe Stadium,» a communique from CAF read on its website.

"In conclusion, CAF, the Local Organizing Committee and the Government of Cameroon having significantly increased security and resources at the Olembe Stadium, are confident that the safety and security of spectators and visitors will be assured."



The 60,000 seater Olembe Stadium hosted the opening and final game of the AFCON.

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Senegal Finally Conquers Africa at AFCON 2021

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

The 33rd edition of the TotalEnergies Africa Cup of Nations Cameroon 2021 has come to an end with the Teranga Lions of Senegal picking up their first title in their history. The country coach by former player Aliou Cisse defeated the Pharaohs of Egypt 4-2 on penalty shootouts (game ended 0-0 at full time) to lift the trophy this February 6, 2022, at the Olembe Stadium, Yaounde.

The competition was filled with upsets, records tumbling, new faces picking up awards and even individuals losing their lives just to watch the beautiful game of football. The biggest shock was the defending champions Algeria who failed to qualify out of the group stage while Vincent Aboubakar (8 goals) broke a 43-year old record (scoring more than 7 goals)

With all these, Pan African Visions takes a snippet at some of the exciting and unforgettable moments at the just concluded Africa Cup of Nations.

Third time lucky for Senegal

Was there even an iota of doubt that Senegal would not be victorious this year and claim their first title? Certainly, there was after the Teranga Lions failed to achieve that prize for the first time against Algeria back in 2019 (1-0 loss).

This year was, however, going to be different for Sadio Mane, Aliou Cisse and Senegal as a whole, a country that had not tested the feeling of winning the Africa Cup of Nations since the inception of the competition. The country had been on the cusp of victory on two previous occasions (2002 and 2019) but on these editions failed to achieve Africa's continental showpiece event. And they were certainly looking at avoiding the unwanted history of reaching three finals without winning.

Sadio Mane and the Senegalese side started very slowly in the competition but as it unfolded, so too, was the ambition and the hunger from the country to win the competition. None so was more evident as when Senegal



This is Senegal's first AFCON after losing in 2002 and 2019.

faced Malawi in the last group game. The game ended 0-0 but Senegal lost several goal-scoring chances and at the end of the day, the faces of the Senegalese players showed one of disappointment.

Coach Aliou Cisse has been with Senegal for more than five years and he joins Algeria's Belmaji as one of the only African coaches to win the competition. The golden generation of Senegal has certainly written their names in the history books of the country and that will be talked about for generations to come. They will hope to defend the title in just sixteen months to come as Ivory Coast is set to host the 2023 edition of the AFCON in June next year.

1972 nightmare for Cameroon continues

The Indomitable Lions were seen as one of the favourites to win the competition, first for being the host nation and secondly because of the star players the country boosted of. And they certainly showed that in the early stage of the competition, picking up two wins and one draw in the group stages.

Despite having players like Vincent

Aboubakar and Karl Toko Ekambi (two players who jointly scored 90 per cent of Cameroon's goals), the 1972 huddle that the country faced before could not be put to bed; failing to reach the final on home soil like they did when they last hosted the competition fifty years ago.

The Indomitable Lions would be consoled by winning the third-place match; though there had to be a show of «miracle» for them to overcome a stubborn Stallions of Burkina Faso in the match. Burkina Faso was 3 goals up by the 70th minute only for Cameroon to equalize by the 90th minute thanks to two goals from substitute Vincent Aboubakar.

It has certainly been an exciting competition for Cameroon, despite not going all the way to the title as they did back in 2017. Coach Antonio Conceicao who may have just saved his job with the national team after winning the bronze medal will have to turn their attention very quickly as the last round qualifiers for the Qatar FIFA World Cup approaches. Cameroon faces a tough test against neighbours Nigeria and the winner is guaranteed a spot at the November

showpiece in Qatar.

“Underdogs”, what underdogs?

The 33rd edition of the Africa Cup of Nations has shown Africa and the world that the tagline «underdogs» is quite misleading. Heading into the competition, some teams were given this unwanted tagline and how wrong where they were as the competition went on with some big names falling to the hands of these «small teams».

One of the standout teams was the Gambia who proved doubters wrong, won the hearts of many and captivated all those who had the chance of watching them in Limbe and Baffoussam. The Gambia was lodged in group F alongside former champions Tunisia, Mali and Mauritania. Surprisingly, the Gambia finished second (just goal difference stopped them from topping their group) and even defeated Tunisia on matchday three with Jallow getting the lone goal.

The Gambia's fairy-tale continued into the knockout stage as the side went on to defeat Guinea 1-0 to reach the quarterfinal. Mind you, this was the very first time that the lowest-ranked team participating in

the competition has ever reached the AFCON. Unfortunately, that run will come to an end at the quarterfinal against host Cameroon. They almost pulled that off but Cameroon was too strong, winning 2-0 thanks to two goals from Kal Toko Ekambi.

“I’ve always addressed the media by saying that we are the minnows, that we are here to learn and that we are the underdogs,” Coach Tom Saintfiet said about his side’s participation in the competition as a whole.

«We are going to have to go through the pre-qualification process for AFCON in 2023 as we are amongst the 12 worst-ranked teams in African football. That shows how small we are but naturally, my ambition is to build something that is more long-term. We have got a young group of players who can grow still. It is important we use this first experience at AFCON to qualify more frequently (2023, 2025) and maybe even be at the world cup.»

«We have proven in the last three-and-a-half years what we can do having won our qualifying group and drawn with Nigeria in our previous campaign. We have also beaten Morocco in a friendly. We have had good results against big nations so we knew we are competitive,” Coach Saintfiet added.

AFCON dented by the loss of lives

The 33rd edition of the Africa Cup of Nations can be hail as one of the



Deception for Cameroon was eased when they came from three goals down to beat Burkina Faso in the third place game.

best organized but the loss of lives certainly hit hard on everyone who watched games in person. This as eight people died and scores of others were left injured on January 24 as fans forced their way into the stadium to watch Cameroon’s encounter against Comoros.

“That gate was supposed to be open because if it was opened, they would have walked through and for inexplicable reasons, it was closed,” CAF President Dr Patrice Motsepe

said about the incident.

“If that gate was open as it was supposed to, we would not have had this problem we have now, this loss of life. Who closed that gate? Who is responsible for that gate?”

«It is very shocking as people were coming to the stadium to watch football, and people have died,» 40-year-old Eric Djemba-Djemba, who had a spell at Manchester United from 2003 to 2005, told the BBC World Service,

«We were inside and suddenly we heard people had died outside the stadium. It is the worst possible news because Cameroon did everything to play the tournament in Cameroon and built big stadiums. I think for me it is very sad.»

Danish journalist Buster Emil Kirchner described to the BBC as seeing «a lot of chaos» as fans clamoured to enter the ground through a single open gate. «It was hectic - people running, people climbing fences, people breaking through the barricades,» he told the BBC, adding that he had seen many people without tickets trying to «force themselves in».

Former Coach of the Indomitable Lions of Cameroon Claude Le Roy was also very bitter about the incident. He said: “It is appalling. Each time it happens we say never again, there are enough conflicts in the world, to die for a football match is unacceptable.”

“One must take into account that this touches thousands of people, fans, families, their friends, and above the death toll of eight. We are shattered by this. People came with their children, as families, the atmosphere seemed so serene arriving at the stadium early.»



The Gambia’s Ablie Jallow celebrates scoring against Tunisia.

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