A Powder Keg Waiting To Explode

Dr. Christopher Fomunyoh On Hopes & Fears For Cameroon

Nigeria: Tinubu Inches Closer To Holy Grail

Kenya: Martha Karua Shatters Glass Ceiling

South Africa: Malema Reads Riot Act To France

Malawi: Fresh Headache For Chakwera With Currency Woes
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The Limits Of Cameroon Exceptionalism

By Ajong Mbapndah L

A simmering crisis in the English Speaking North West and South West Regions that would not be wished away, a President in his 90’s missing in action, the normally docile and pro-regime people in the coastal regions of Douala taking to the streets to protest opaque deals robbing them of their ancestral land, Boko Haram attacks in the North, an arrest warrant for the Managing Director of the Ports Authority that is not been enforced because of opposition from a faction within the government supporting him, confidential government documents flying all over social media and more paint a portrait of a country mired in cascading crisis.

Cameroon is Cameroon is one of the popular soundbites thrown out there over the years by President Biya to explain why Cameroon was different. Cameroon was an oasis of peace in a troubled Central African sub region, he touted. Indeed, Mr Biya was right, in the face of conflicts in Chad, in Central Africa, military coups in Congo, in Equatorial Guinea, Cameroon stood still. Whereas in other countries a hike of a few cents in the price of bread will provoke a crisis, in Cameroon a double slash in salaries followed by a currency devaluation barely generated murmur. From flawed elections to huge human rights violations, rampant corruption and more, Cameroonians were slow to anger. Well, the realities of the last few years have been radically different with the country galloping from crisis to crisis, dwindling hope, and living in the fear of tomorrow.

While his current mandate runs till 2025, President Biya is saddled with the onerous task of providing solutions to the myriad of crisis facing the country. Officially in his 90’s, it should be a human rights abuse of its own to saddle him with such burdensome responsibilities or expect so much from him. Yet, no one forced Mr Biya to take on these responsibilities, he could have said no, he could have worked on the kind of seamless transition that transpired between President Ahidjo and himself. He did not, and it is prudent to ask whether Cameroon as people know it will survive him in the face of inaction as the country unravels.

Typical of what will be expected of a man in his age, President Biya has been largely missing in action leaving many in doubt as to who is actually running the country. Occasionally, the all-powerful Minister of State Secretary General at the President pops up with decisions taken on the high instructions of the President of the Republic. While many in the past have privately questioned the veracity of these high instructions, it is now public knowledge that all is not well within the system and there is a power struggle playing out right infront of Mr. Biya’s own eyes. The sharks are smelling blood.

Curiously, looking at the succession scenarios and dynamics been floated around or predicted by pundits, there seems to be a shocking apathy on prospects of the due constitutional process playing out. Else how come people are throwing out potential names of successors or who is running the country as if there was no constitutional mechanism to in case of a vacancy?

In any case, for the country to avert calamity, there must be more engagement from the people, from everyday Cameroonians. Part of what has brought Cameroon to the crossroads it finds itself in today is the disturbing indifference of people to state or public affairs. Now that the genie is out of the bottle, now that signs are getting more and more evident that Cameroonians have conquered fear, things may never be the same again While potential successors have every legitimate right to presidential ambitions, they must be ready to factor in the wishes and desires of the people in the looming post Biya Cameroon.

To the potential successors as well, it probably will no longer be the presidency as people knew it. There may be no time for a honeymoon. You will be inheriting cascading problems, some are well known, a lot more remain unknown. Gone will be the days when of twelve months in a year, the President spent six out of the country with no one asking questions. From the cost of renting a private jet to hotel costs, and other expenses, Cameroonians are able to do the math and know the impact on the public treasury. Gone are the days when the public treasury will be looted with impunity, in the absence of institutions doing their job, people will name and shame.

As for President Biya, it is about a legacy question at this point. Already porous, the crisis in the North West and South West Regions, the endless tales of unbridled corruption, galloping youth unemployment, and the sorry state of infrastructural development do not speak well for the over forty years he has spent in power. At no point has the country been as fragmented as it is today. If by some miracle he could still muscle the energy and the will, the crisis in the North West and South West Regions should remain a priority. He is on record as referring to the North West Region as his second home, leaving behind a country in tatters when he inherited one that was strong and prosperous will muffle every spin his sympathizers may try to put on his long stay in power. For that to happen, broad and inclusive dialogue is one of the keys.

In this issue of PAV, Dr Christopher Fomunyoh, Senior Associate for Africa and Regional Director at the Washington, DC based National Democratic Institute sheds light on the challenges facing Cameroon, his hopes and fears and best way forward. Fomunyoh who has played a leading role in fashioning some of the success stories of democratic transitions in Africa says in a no holds barred interview describes Cameroon as a powder keg that could explode at any time. Like he has done over the years, Fomunyoh does not only criticize but proffers solutions that could stem the tide of Cameroon’s race to the bottom.

This issue of PAV also takes a look at epic succession battle shaping up in Nigeria to replace outgoing President Buhari, updates on the upcoming elections in Kenya, insights into the kidnapping for ransom industry in Mozambique, growing fears of another war in the Great Lakes Region ,currency devaluation in Malawi, Julius Malema’s new crusade to rid Africa of French influence and presence ,and more. Happy Reading!!
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Former two-time Governor of Lagos State, Asiwaju Bola Ahmed Tinubu got his hands closer to his long-sought trophy on Wednesday when he emerged as candidate of the ruling All Progressives Congress, ahead of presidential polls scheduled for February 2023. A long-time player in the Nigerian political space, it is basic tribute to him that he was able to overcome a considerable number of quite powerful bottlenecks that had been stacked against him in the build-up to the primaries.

Tinubu had come into the public imagination during the ‘crafted democracy’ transition process superintended over by military strongman, Ibrahim Babangida in the late 1980s and early 1990s when he quit his perch at Mobil Oil, and was elected Senator for Lagos West. When the junta annulled the June 12, 1993 presidential polls, he enlisted in the National Democratic Coalition, NADECO and alongside several others in the group, went into voluntary self-exile.

He returned to the country following on the heels of the death of the maximum dictator, Sani Abacha and ran for office to become Governor of Lagos State in 1999. After serving out two terms as Governor, he continued to be solidly immersed in the political process, first in Lagos State, then in the South West and also all across Nigeria. This involvement helped him build considerable political capital that definitely came in handy at this point of his push to run for the presidency on the platform of the APC.

Before now, the Peoples Democratic Party and the Labour Party had elected the duo of Atiku Abubakar and Mr Peter Obi as their own flagbearers. And just as this piece was being rested, one more relatively serious contender, former Kano State Governor, Rabiu Musa Kwankwanso was also being confirmed as candidate of the New Nigerian Peoples Party, NNPP.

As candidate of the ruling party in a country that has only had the ruling party defeated once according to formal records, Tinubu is evidently the man to beat. But it is not that simple, with his primary handicaps being essentially internal.

Chief of them would be his party’s governance record across the past seven years. In the eyes of many Nigerians, outgoing President Muhammadu Buhari whom Tinubu had contributed very significantly in bringing to power, has run a clearly less than satisfactory administration. Elected on an essentially three-point mandate to combat insecurity, redress the country’s floundering economic fortunes and tackle soaring corruption, his scorecard on all three and more has been underwhelming. This then is the first chink in Tinubu’s armour.

A second hurdle involves crossing the frosty North/South political divide in the country. Indeed, on an open score that was even a bigger challenge for the APC overall in the run-up to the primaries and it is also basic credit to the party that it was able to finally swing it southwards. However, given the realities on the ground, there is a religious sub-set to the challenge that is yet to be crossed. A Southern Muslim, the expectation is that Tinubu would either go for a Northern Christian running mate and risk losing some Muslim votes in the process or pick a Northern Muslim
and risk losing some Christian votes from all over the country. Those who make light score of the religion factor in the politics of Nigeria point now and again to the outcome of the June 12, 1993, presidential contest where the Muslim/Muslim ticket of MKO Abiola/Babagana Kingibe triumphed. But then the answer from the other side is that the conditions prevalent in the country today do not exactly approximate those of 1993.

Chinks apart, Tinubu is however a very determined goal-getter and hard fighter as evidenced again in how he secured his party's nod even when well-heeled establishment figures, including his national chairman, had publicly voted otherwise.

Some commentators however prefer to look at even other variables. According to Eloho Edesiri, the appropriate parallel for Tinubu's emergence as candidate in the current process may be closer to the circumstances that threw up the duo of Umar Ar Adua and Goodluck Jonathan in 2007. Another commentator, Mike Akanni, thinks that the place to zero in on would be to find a fitting explanation as to why the league of Northern Governors had seemingly broken ranks with the National Chairman and other Northern interests and swung in the direction of a Southern presidential ticket. Was it an altogether altruistic push for national unity or was it a ticket. Was it an altogether altruistic direction of a Southern presidential run? At the moment Tinubu's strongest leverage is the South West of Nigeria where he has performed wonderfully well in his primary political stronghold, Lagos. Granted that as governor he had helped open up the city-state's revenue potentials, the other end of the discussion is whether within the context of its much expanded resource base, the Lagos administrations that Tinubu has personally continued to control for 23 unbroken years and counting could not have made the city-state more liveable and less encumbered by distressing challenges as its almost never-ending traffic congestion problems.

So is he the one? Or should we look to another?

Tinubu's leverage

At the moment Tinubu's strongest leverage is the South West of Nigeria where he is fairly well-entrenched. He is quite weak in the South East and would also need to negotiate with all other regions on a case by case basis. He will also need to address the challenge posed by his party's alienation of young people which came to the fore in the ENDSARS crisis.

The other contenders

Atiku Abubakar: Resilient and persistent

Since quitting the Nigerian Customs Service and signing up in the political trenches, alongside Shehu Yar Adua, Atiku Abubakar has not looked back.

After an initial bid to be Governor of Adamawa State, he moved up to the presidential hustings and after losing to MKO Abiola in the Social Democratic Party primaries of 1992, finally became Vice President to General Olusegun Obasanjo in 1999. Since then he has unsuccessfully made all attempts to be president.

Atiku's leverage

Atiku will draw votes from the North West and North East. But the quantum of his final count here would be dependent on other grey areas in the build-up to the polls.

He will also however have to negotiate what he gets from the rest of the country given that the popular mood in those four other regions do not favour a Hausa-Fulani Muslim. The same factor also affects the possibility of his making inroads into the youth demographic.

Peter Obi: A time to rock

Peter Obi, businessman and former two-term Governor of Anambra State is your unlikely politician. His traditional title, Okwute Ndigbo (Rock of the Igbo Nation) speaks to his steely carriage. And he has evidently been able to hold his own in the country's political space this far.

On the home front, the All progressives Grand Alliance, APGA that he had joined in the early 2000s and led to its first gubernatorial victory shortly after has continued to hold on to Anambra State even as Peter moved on to the PDP and now Labour Party where he is the flagbearer in the 2023 polls.

Peter Obi’s leverage

As a son of the South East in a season where the cry for justice is swinging in that direction, Peter Obi impresses many a popular voter and is indeed on current score the rave of the youth voter also who see in his spartan discipline and self-effacing conduct, a good place to begin the task of cleaning the Augean stables.

He however has to deal more adeptly with the intricacies of practical politicking on a broader stage than he had quite commendably addressed and overcome in Anambra.

Rabiu Musa Kwankwanso: Holding on to Home Ground

For Senator Rabiu Musa Kwankwanso, the Nigerian Presidency is one that he is well-qualified for.

After serving in the National Assembly, as two-time Governor of the populous state of Kano and as Minister of Defence, he has since trained his sights on being President and this has informed his movements from the PDP to the APC and back to the PDP and now the NNPP where he is flagbearer in the 2023 presidential polls.

Kwankwano’s leverage

According to a top aide of the former Governor, the strategy is simple: hold as much of the North West as is possible and bargain with it.

Evidently, the next eight months would be most interesting in Nigeria.
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Kenya: Martha Karua Shatters Glass Ceiling For Women In Politics

By Samuel Ouma

There have been few women in Kenya’s political arena for decades, but Former Justice Minister And Constitutional Affairs Minister Hon. Martha Wangari Karua is among the first to remain relevant for a long time.

Since entering politics in the 1990s, Karua, affectionately referred to as «The Iron Lady,» has proven to be a formidable opponent for her male colleagues. The 65-year-old recently took the voter-rich Mt. Kenya region by storm after she was named Azimio La Umoja-One Kenya Alliance Presidential flagbearer Raila Odinga’s running mate.

The ODM party leader picked her as his deputy on May 16, 2022. She immediately hit the road to popularize Odinga’s bid in the region, which has ever opposed his candidature, sending shivers into the rival camp.

«Our wish is not that people remain poor; it is to ensure that no Kenyan sleeps on an empty stomach regardless of their social or economic status. Raila has pledged to reinforce the social and economic rights of Kenyans,» she was quoted saying during a campaign to popularize Odinga in Murang’a. Karua is a fearless woman committed to fighting corruption and advocating for human rights, especially for women. She has worked with several women’s organizations, including the International Federation of Women Lawyers (FIDA-Kenya) and the League of Kenya Women Voters, to champion women’s rights through public interest litigation, lobbying, and advocacy for laws that strengthen and safeguard women’s rights.

President Mwai Kibaki was left to watch. Ms. Karua demanded Mr. Ruto’s resignation over the maize scandal, and the two ministers had been publicly feuding for three weeks before clashing with each other.

In the same year in April, she also resigned as the justice minister over what she referred to as frustrations in discharging her duties. She quit a few days after the appointment of judges by President Kibaki.

«If my hands are tied, and the Judiciary continues to be used as a place where people sacked from parastatals are recycled, the agenda is forestalled, and all reforms are annihilated, then I better leave and fight for the rights of the ordinary citizen,» she was quoted by the local media.

The mother of two made headlines in the local media after she and a Catholic priest, Fr. Dominic Wamugunda, were carjacked and robbed late at night on December 6, 2003, while driving to her house in Wamugunda’s car. When questioned by MPs, she brazenly stated in Parliament that she was under no responsibility to explain where she was going or what she was doing.
when the robbers attacked. «I consider myself like many other Kenyans sharing security risks experienced by my constituents and citizens,» she stated.

Additionally, Karua stormed out of a stadium in Kirinyaga, Central Kenya, during the reign of late President Daniel Moi, who was then addressing a large crowd. This was a first-of-its-kind open rebellion against the authoritarian rule of Moi, who ruled the country. When questioned by the media about her behaviour, she responded that she was not prepared to be frightened.

With other like-minded leaders in the early 1990s, Karua fought for the return of multi-party politics, which bore fruits in 1992. Until 1992, Kenya was ruled by the authoritarian Kenya African National Union (K.A.N.U.), the country’s only legally recognized political party led by President Daniel Moi. She’s been recognized as human rights monitor by Human Rights Watch and other organizations for her work as a human rights defender. For her efforts in advancing women’s rights, she was honoured by the Federation of Kenya Women Lawyers (F.I.D.A.). On top of that, she was honoured by the Law Society of Kenya in 1999 with its Legal Practitioners Due Diligence Award. In the same year, she was named the Kenya Jurist of the Year by the International Commission of Jurists (I.C.J.).

Karua has served in many leadership capacities while in Parliament. She was a member of Parliament of the Gichugu constituency in central Kenya from 1992 to 2012. She also served as the Minister of Water and Irrigation. She was behind the implementation of the Water Act 2002, which has transformed the provision of water in the East African country. The no-nonsense Karua served as a Minister of Justice and Constitutional Affairs from 2005 until she resigned in 2009.

She was a member of Parliamentary committees, namely the Committee on Powers and Privileges - (National Assembly Powers and Privileges Act), Public Accounts Committee and House Business Committee.

Karua was the only woman to run for president in Kenya’s 2013 general elections, but she fell short to incumbent President Uhuru Kenyatta. Only 43,881 people voted for her, placing her in sixth place. In 2017, she contested for Kirinyaga gubernatorial seat but lost to Anne Waiguru after garnering 122,091 votes against Ms Waiguru’s 161,373 votes.

However, she was unsuccessful in her efforts to overturn the results at the High Court, Court of Appeal, and Supreme Court. To get justice, she went to the East African Court of Justice to file a lawsuit against Kenya’s government for failing to provide it through the courts.
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Cameroon is like a powder keg waiting to explode if urgent solutions are not found to the multiple crisis plaguing the country, says Dr Christopher Fomunyoh Senior Associate for Africa and Regional Director at the Washington, DC based National Democratic Institute.

Speaking in an exclusive interview with PAV, Dr Fomunyoh says there is an urgent need for a credible platform that would allow for the legitimate grievances of Anglophones to be addressed head on and resolved.

“As I have said consistently since the beginning of the conflict, the only way out is going to be through a negotiated resolution with third party facilitation, given the hatred and mistrust that now exists among the belligerents, and between sizeable chunks of the Anglophone population at home and abroad and the central government of President Paul Biya,” Fomunyoh charges.

The losses, pain or trauma under which the affected populations live will definitely not be alleviated by further killings and atrocities, not by bayonets and bullets; but by genuine, inclusive and mediated comprehensive peace talks that will get to the bottom of the grievances and bring agreement on solutions with which these populations can identify, says Fomunyoh.

It is extremely disappointing and sad that many of today’s African leaders are failing us, and even some of the good leaders are going along with complicit silence, Fomunyoh says in reaction to a report from the Norwegian Refugee Council indicating that the top 10 displacement crises in the world are in African countries.

In the interview which also harps on post Biya succession scenarios, his own perceived political ambitions, and other developments across Africa, Dr Fomunyoh sees hope in the younger generation as 60 percent of the population is under 25 years old, and yearning to find a better and more meaningful life and better opportunities for themselves, devoid of the prejudices, wickedness and malpractices of the past.

The Norwegian Refugee Council (NRC) just released a report that lists the top 10 displacement crises in the world, and all are in African countries. As a pan africanist and someone who crisscrosses the continent regularly for peace, democracy and good governance, how do you react to such a classification?

I’m devastated! You can’t argue with the list which calls out DR Congo, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, South Sudan, Chad, Mali, Sudan, Nigeria, Burundi and Ethiopia in that order. The list is based on hard facts and therefore very painful to see. It speaks to the reality of the multiple conflicts currently ongoing on the continent, and that are impacting heavily already marginalized and vulnerable populations, especially in rural areas and out of sight of political elites and diplomats who live in capital cities. On the one hand, this list of ongoing conflicts and internal displaced persons points to poor governance and the failure of national governments and our regional organizations to prevent or resolve conflicts and guarantee the safety, security and wellbeing of citizens; at the same time, it is testament to the fact that the rest of the world and multinational organizations such as the United Nations system seem to have closed their eyes to the havoc occurring in many of the conflict zones across the continent.

It is extremely disappointing and sad that many of today’s African leaders are failing us, and even some of the good leaders are going along with complicit silence. Every African and genuine friend of the continent should be revolted by these reports and statistics on conflicts, misery and suffering. For a continent that is so rich in mineral resources and human capital, we are better than being perceived as the permanent poster child for unresolved conflicts and violence that displace millions every year.

Why do you think regional organizations such as the African Union and even the subregional bodies like ECOWAS, SADC, IGAD are not taking on these challenges?

Excellent question! Some of the subregional organizations such as ECOWAS are doing what they can to pressure leaders in countries such as Mali, Burkina Faso and Guinea to perform better; SADC is active in Mozambique and Eswatini, and its interventions may still produce positive results; but the African Union itself is beginning to lose its luster as the enthusiasm and hope that accompanied the organization’s launch in 2001 wither. Many of us now look back with nostalgia at the African Union of former Malian
president Alpha Oumar Konare when shared values and human security were guiding principles. It is regrettable that the era when leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Thabo Mbeki, Olusegun Obasanjo, Nicephore Soglo, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Konare and others talked about the peer review mechanism and the African Renaissance now looks so distant.

*Your home country of Cameroon just celebrated 50 years of the unitary state with some pomp, despite occupying third place on the NRC list. What’s your reading of the socio-economic and political shape of the country in the wake of that 50th anniversary celebration?*

Cameroon is in very bad shape today on multiple fronts as it experiences overlapping and suffocating security, political and socio-economic crises. There are too many ongoing conflicts and inconsistencies, including around the May 20th date itself. For some Cameroonians, the abolition of the name the ‘United Republic of Cameroon’ by decree in 1984 took a lot of the veneer off the commemoration of a unitary state. Still others, especially among the English-speaking population, question the legality of the referendum of 1972, that put an end to the Federation and brought about the unitary state. Thus is my view, unlike the symbolism of unity that May 20 should hold in Cameroon, that day has come to crystalize the contradictions of our history and destiny. On top of that, the country is embroiled in an ongoing five year old armed conflict in the North West and South West regions of Cameroon or what was Southern Cameroons prior to reunification in 1961, have been suffering under grievances related to the marginalization of populations from these areas over the 60 years of experimentation with nation building. Unfortunately, by 2017, the crisis, initially led by lawyers and teachers, morphed into an armed conflict that has left thousands dead, hundreds of villages burned, close to one million displaced persons, about 70,000 of whom are refugees in neighboring countries, and close to 800,000 children who have been denied access to education. Under such circumstances, and until there’s a negotiated end to the conflict, it is not humanly possible to have people out feasting on a day that many see as the source of their pain and suffering, or political ills and misfortunes. Turnout at public events was generally low, especially as armed non-state groups had declared and actually enforced lockdowns in many communities in those regions.

*So, is it true that the May 20th event was very chilly or literally nonexistent in many parts of the English speaking North West and South West Regions of the country; and, if so, what should be the take home message from this?*

Since 2016, the North West and South regions of Cameroon or what was Southern Cameroons prior to reunification in 1961, have been suffering under grievances related to the marginalization of populations from these areas over the 60 years of experimentation with nation building. Unfortunately, by 2017, the crisis, initially led by lawyers and teachers, morphed into an armed conflict that has left thousands dead, hundreds of villages burned, close to one million displaced persons, about 70,000 of whom are refugees in neighboring countries, and close to 800,000 children who have been denied access to education. Under such circumstances, and until there’s a negotiated end to the conflict, it is not humanly possible to have people out feasting on a day that many see as the source of their pain and suffering, or political ills and misfortunes. Turnout at public events was generally low, especially as armed non-state groups had declared and actually enforced lockdowns in many communities in those regions.

*The conflict in the North West and South West Regions has taken an alarming toll on human life and property, as things stand now what do you see as a way out?*

As I have said consistently since the beginning of the conflict, the only way out is going to be through a negotiated resolution with third party facilitation, given the hatred and mistrust that now exists among the belligerents, and between sizeable chunks of the Anglophone population and the government of President Paul Biya. There’s an urgent need for a credible platform that would allow for the legitimate grievances of Anglophones to be addressed head on and resolved.

The military option which many of us decried from the beginning has not only failed; it has generalized and normalized the kind of violence and atrocities from both sides that we have seen in the past five years. The losses, pain and fear or trauma under which the affected populations live will definitely not be alleviated by further killings and atrocities, not by bayonets and bullets; but by genuine, inclusive and mediated comprehensive peace talks that will get to the bottom of the grievances and bring agreement on solutions with which these populations can identify.

*President Paul Biya has been in power for 40 of the 50 years of the unitary state, how much of liability or solution is he or could be in the quest for solutions to the conflict?*

At close to 90 years old in a country where the median age is 19 years, and with 40 years as president, Paul Biya has long since missed the opportunity to lead Cameroon out of the conflict; yet the highly centralized jacobin-like system of government that Biya has put in place is such that no one else makes decisions in Yaounde except him. So, he needs to awaken from slumber to the realization that people have died in the thousands, lives are being destroyed daily, a sizeable percentage of Anglophones believe that he and his regime are bent on destroying their educational and legal systems, and their culture and way of life, and so this conflict needs to end immediately.
Interviewed recently after a visit to Cameroon, the former apartheid chief negotiator Roelf Meyer said ‘genuine and inclusive dialogue could be the only way out of the conflict.’ What role do you think respected international actors such as former minister Roelf Meyer could play in bringing an end to the conflict?

Many Cameroonians were quite touched that an African leader like former South African minister Roelf Meyer would make the time to visit Cameroon and pay attention to the armed conflict where other Africans have been so indifferent and insensitive to this conflict. Roelf Meyer is a global leader of great stature given the prominent role he played in his home country to bring an end to apartheid and facilitate the release of Nelson Mandela, and even thereafter his role in championing the cause of a new constitution for a new and democratic South Africa. Many countries around the world reach out to Roelf Meyer regularly to elicit his advice and wise counsel in tackling issues of conflict and difficult transitions. In fact, shortly after his Cameroon trip, Mr. Meyer flew to Bangkok, Thailand for consultations on Myanmar (Burma). There’s absolutely no doubt in my mind that he and others of his caliber can help us in Cameroon find peace and justice, and an end to this senseless war. Were Roelf Meyer to step forward, his impeccable credentials would make it difficult for those who have been opposed to negotiations to continue to block the process; alternatively, it would become more obvious who wants the war and atrocities to continue, and hopefully that will make it easier for such individuals to be held accountable for their actions and their profiteering from the crisis.

Back to President Biya, the issue of succession is looming large for obvious reasons. Can you shed light on the succession mechanisms in place and how important it is for the country to get it right?

I can understand the fretting and hand wringing around Biya’s presidency, because historically, as illustrated by the examples of long serving African presidents such as Houphouët Boigny in Côte d’Ivoire, Omar Bongo in Gabon, Gnassingbé Eyadéma in Togo, and Muammar Khaddaf in Libya, the death of long serving leaders portend chaos and confusion as various factions jockey for position, and some seek to replace him amidst a panoply of grievances that could boil over once the lid is off the simmering pot. As the oldest president in the world, Biya has kept the disparate threads together during his four decades of rule through old style autocratic methods such as patronage networks, excessive corruption and the instrumentalization of the military and security services to squash or repress dissent and extract total loyalty to himself. Article 6 (4) of the constitution of Cameroon, as amended in 2008, provides that in case of a presidential vacancy, the president of the Senate assumes the
Looking at some of the names being floated out there as potential successors to Biya, the impression one gets is that should Biya not be there today, there are people ready to replace him the very next minute; how concerned should the country be that the constitutional succession pattern may not be followed?

It is no surprise that the poor performance of the current regime, gets many politicians to easily see themselves outperforming the current crop of policy makers. The sad equation for Cameroon is that many of those most agitated at this time are themselves midgets and dwarfs compared to their underperforming team leader. They have to understand, as we say in French, that “ca ne passera pas!” Over the years, the regime has eliminated many of its potential rivals, some political heavyweights languish in prison and others are out of the country. The few that are courageously resisting the system within the country barely have room to breathe as political space continues to shrink and their voices are muscled or stifled.

Do you think it would be in the interest of the Francophone majority to seriously give thought to prospects of the next President coming from the English-speaking regions as a means of addressing some of the historic injustices and boosting prospects of a new dawn for the country?

If Anglophones feel marginalized now because of six decades of Francophone absolute domination, wait until the next generation is told they’ll have to brace themselves for another hand-picked autocratic Francophone president with zero democratic credentials and perhaps another decade or two of more blatant injustices and governance malpractices. Even if your question looks surreal for the time being, there are certain historical facts that can no longer be ignored. For example, right after independence in 1960, many Francophone politicians in the Douala area and the Western region actually hoped there would be new presidential elections and they would back John Ngu Foncha the Anglophone against Ahmadou Ahidjo. They were disappointed with the arrangement whereby Foncha accepted to become Ahidjo’s Vice president of the Federation without a new election. Two decades later, prior to Paul Biya becoming president in 1982, the constitution was amended, and the line of succession tinkered with so Biya would become the second personality of the country, instead of the Speaker of the National Assembly S.T. Muna who was an Anglophone. Ten years later in 1992, in the first competitive multiparty presidential election in Cameroon’s history, the Anglophone candidate John Fru Ndi obtained his highest vote totals in regions that included the Francophone West and Littoral provinces at the time and came close to defeating incumbent Paul Biya. One can therefore posit that deep down, there is a strong sentiment among even Francophones that a qualified Anglophone at the helm of Cameroon could more effectively get the country out of the mess in which it currently finds itself. Of course, while the armed conflict persists, thoughts like this one look more like an intellectual exercise than anything else.

Your own name has been floated during previous election cycles as a potential Presidential candidate, for all you have done across Africa to help fashion and polish democracies; have you ever thought of dropping everything to go help the country rebuild, if called upon?

I’m humbled the way you pose the question. Indeed, it is difficult to have my experience and the expertise that I’ve been fortunate to gather over the years, have a human heart and a good conscience, and sit idly by while your people perish and languish in misery and despair. It’s doubly painful when you realize that most of the ills that you identified and spoke strongly about in the past could have been resolved without firing a shot, and that with one’s exposure to the world and international arena, one could lift up one’s fellow compatriots and give them another lease on a decent lifestyle, and reposition one’s country in its rightful place in Africa and the world. My position prior to the 2018 presidential poll was well known in terms of not walking into politicking while the blood of innocent citizens was being spilled in a senseless war. I do believe strongly that in life, one must have one’s priorities right - that too is an indispensable aspect of visionary leadership.

A last question on the future of Cameroon, what are your biggest fears and what gives you hope, will there be a Cameroon after Biya?

Ironically, I have almost no fears left for Cameroon because most of the fears are already being materialized before our very eyes in terms of how broken, polarized, fragmented, and divided the country is right now. It couldn’t be worse than we’re currently experiencing. The good news is that ‘countries don’t die’; individuals and regimes come and go, but the people whose resilience is quite legendary will pick themselves up and soldier on. My greatest hope is in the younger generation as 60 percent of the population is under 25 years old, and yearning to find a better and more meaningful life and better opportunities for themselves, devoid of the prejudices, wickedness and malpractices of the past. Also, for the very active group that represents 56 percent of the population between 15 and 65 years old, I hope they would draw lessons from the hardships and inferno of the Biya regime and turn the page so we can all work to put out the fires and begin the healing.
Zimbabwe since the turn of the millennium when it undertook the infamous fast track land reform program has always experienced fiercely contested elections. The last harmonised election conducted in the country in 2018 was also fiercely contested even though the strongman Robert Mugabe was not part of the contestants. Owing to how the past panned out, most political analysts are expecting another fierce and close election come 2023.

In the lead up to 2023 harmonised elections, several local and international actors interested in Zimbabwean politics have called upon the current administration to implement much needed electoral reforms which guarantee a free, fair and credible election come 2023. The main opposition party in Zimbabwe, the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) led by the charismatic Nelson Chamisa recently called for an elections roadmap which he termed Pre-Elections Pact on Reforms (PREPARE).

In a statement, Nelson Chamisa said “It’s about 60 weeks to the 2023 general election. Any dialogue must be about reforms and the road to 2023, not a GNU (Government of National Unity). As Zimbabweans, we must find each other to avoid yet another disputed election and all its undesired consequences. We need a Pre-Elections Pact on Reforms (PREPARE). Whoever wins an undisputed mandate in 2023 must then unite the nation, form a credible inclusive Team ZIMBABWE and deliver prosperity and happiness”.

Though the official results released by the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) in 2018 stated that Emmerson Mnangagwa won the presidential election, Chamisa has up to this point disputed the result saying it was manipulated. However, when calling for an election roadmap for the upcoming 2023 harmonised elections, he said he is willing and ready to concede defeat if the much-needed electoral reforms are implemented. He said the implementation of the reforms guarantees a free, fair and credible election hence any result derived from such an election will be legitimate and a true reflection of the will of the people.

Towards the country’s electoral body ZEC, Chamisa said, “We had problems with the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission (ZEC) around issues to do with the voters’ roll, we still have the problems. Yes, we have had a landslide but that does not move away from the fact that elections in this country need fundamental reforms around the voters’ role, the credibility of the voters’ roll, around making sure that results are managed in a better way and polling stations are not subject to the violence, intimidation that we have seen... Challenges are there, ZEC still has to reform, electoral reforms have to be implemented and have always been saying those reforms must be put in place that’s why we have written to SADC and asking them to help us and also to have a political dialogue within the country around reform that we would want instituted and put in place”.

The opposition leader also went on to state that though they have called upon ZEC numerous times to implement electoral reforms, it has consistently shown that it’s insincere when it comes to implementing the reforms. “Going forward we are pushing for electoral reforms; the journey has begun the march to 2023 elections. We wrote to ZEC several letters around voters’ roll, and they also responded to us but in their response, they were not giving any solid answer, they were wishy-washy not committing to anything. ZEC was supposed to pass various tests one of which is sincerity, another one is integrity, the honourable conduct of the Zimbabwe Electoral Commission we have not seen that... They were supposed to pass the constitutional test in terms of following the constitution on all the requirements. You can see (on issues they raised) that there is tomfoolery, deliberate mischief on the part of ZEC and these are the issues that we have put on record,” Chamisa said.

The sentiments echoed by Nelson Chamisa were also supported by Elmar Brok, the head of the European Union electoral mission. Elmar Brok led the EU delegation which observed the Zimbabwean harmonised elections in 2018. In the lead up to the 2023 harmonised elections, Brok was recently assigned to Zimbabwe by Brussels to share its findings of the last election and give recommendations on what needs to be corrected or improved.

In his recommendations, the head of the EU electoral mission called for the implementation of genuine electoral reforms which give all parties a fair chance of winning. “It has to do with even playing field, the impartiality of the (state) media, equal treatment of the parties, a proper voters’ registration, there is a multipart liaison committee, there will be a proper conducting of elections, the conduct on election day – the transparency – and then counting and the collection of the counting to the final results. If that is transparently clear, no loopholes, then it’s the best way to have peace in the country, because nobody says
there was something wrong with the elections, to get the credibility of elections,” Brok said.

Brok also expressed concern about the lackadaisical approach taken by legislators when it comes to pushing for reforms saying “If the authorities and the legislators do not address recurring problems related to voter registration, constituency delimitation, the level playing field in the campaign, partisan behaviour of traditional leaders and public administration, freedoms of expression, assembly and of the media, they will undermine progress towards achieving an environment conducive to a greater level public trust in the electoral process and peaceful elections”.

The EU head of mission also expressed concern about the proposed private voluntary organisations amendment bill saying it may undermine the operations of civil society organisations. “We are concerned that if the Private Voluntary Organisations (PVO) Amendment Bill is adopted, it will severely impact the organisations,” Brok said.

Opposition leader Nelson Chamisa says Zimbabweans must do all possible to avert another contested election with devastating consequences.
Trinity Holdings
African Union Conference Focuses on Finding Strategic Solutions to Africa's Humanitarian Issues

By Kestér Kenn Klomegâh

An Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit and Pledging Conference held on May 27 and 28 in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, by African leaders to address the current humanitarian challenges that Africa is facing, and that are exacerbated by the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and disasters across the continent, identify durable solutions to address the current humanitarian challenges especially of humanitarian financing and those that contribute to post-conflict recovery, peace and development.

The two-day conference, by the African Union and hosted by the Government of Equatorial Guinea, was also part of marking the 20th year of the transformation of the Organization of Unity to African Union, and significantly to deliberate effective ways in resolving the emerging problems confronting the continent within the context of the current changes and in a new era of global cooperation.

At the conference, Moussa Faki Mahamat, Chairperson of the African Union Commission, stressed the significance of the gathering and highlighted details of the humanitarian issues that really needed concrete financial solutions from member states and international organizations.

Moussa Faki Mahamat, in his speech, illustrated figures and statistical data drawn up and compiled by the United Nations specialised agencies, based on the general trends that emerge in the five regions of the continent, there are 15 most affected member States, 113 million people urgently waiting for emergency assistance in 2022. These are refugees, returnees, internally displaced persons in Africa.

East Africa and the Horn of Africa are currently hosting 4.5 million refugees, more than 75% of whom have been affected by the reduction in food rations in 2021. Over the past two years, in this same region, food requirements have increased by 70%, and more than 25 million people are in a situation of food insecurity.

In West and Central Africa, there are 58 million people in a state of food insecurity. This is the highest level of food insecurity since 2016. There are two million Internally displaced persons in Central Africa. This figure represents a 30% increase compared to 2020 and does not comprise the five million displaced persons in the Lake Chad Basin. In North Africa, more than 14 million people need humanitarian assistance.

«The picture is not bright. Far from it. It is further bleaked by two factors: on the one hand, the annihilation of refugee empowerment efforts by the impact of the COVID -19 pandemic and on the other hand, the pressure exerted on the planet earth in the name of the quest for economic growth and whose effects are reflected in climate change manifested through prolonged drought and uncontrollable floods,» Faki Mahamat explained.

Faced with this nexus of difficulties, the African Union has developed normative and operational instruments to improve the living conditions of refugees and internally displaced persons on the continent. At the normative level, it is necessary to mention, among others and mainly, the Kampala Convention, adopted in 2009 and the related declaration which specify the objectives and the modalities of action in favour of refugees and other people forced to move. At the operational level, regional plans to manage refugee crises have been put in place.

For five years, the funds required for their operation have not exceeded the 50% bar. The first donors conference, it should be recalled, was held 11 years ago, in 2011. The paradox of humanitarianism lies in
the discrepancy between the urgent nature of the situations of human distress to be taken care of and the poignant need to defer this care because of the lack of or insufficient financial resources.

In his speech, Macky Sall, Chairman of the African Union and President of Senegal, also undoubtedly, discussed the scale and persistence of humanitarian emergencies on the continent - emergencies linked to climate change, natural disasters and terrorist attacks which have become endemic in certain countries but also emergencies linked to armed conflicts.

According to the 2021 United Nations Global Humanitarian Overview report, six of the largest crises with alarming humanitarian consequences are in Africa, with more than 30 million internally displaced people, refugees and asylum seekers.

The FAO, for its part, counts in its 2021 Report on the state of food security in the world 282 million people in a situation of undernourishment in Africa. The sad fate of these millions of people, men and women of all ages, destitute and without hope - this challenges humanity.

«It reminds us of our responsibility to take the evil by the root, by prophylaxis of tensions, by attacking the root causes of humanitarian situations; because prevention is better than trying to cure,» President Sall said.

Macky Sall passionately called for laying down military arms, to engage in dialogue to settle our differences peacefully, the culture of rejection to embrace care that repairs social fragilities by relieving those who suffer from hunger, disease and poverty, emphasized access to power by peaceful means and to agree on spaces for dialogue and consultation for a peaceful exercise of power, and an inclusive development, following the principles of social justice, so that each citizen feels heir to a part of the national resources.

«We cannot dream of a better future when the poverty of some leaves others indifferent. The state must constantly serve as a lever to give confidence to those who think they are right to doubt and lose hope. In return, the State and the institutions that embody it deserve respect and protection from all, the Senegalese leader Sall stressed.

When the state is in danger, when it is destabilized in any way, the foundations of living together falter to make way for chaos. The scourge of terrorism calls for a more substantial mobilization of member states, according to new methods of intervention, transcending traditional peacekeeping operations which have shown their limits.

The State of Africa’s Climate 2020, published under the auspices of the World Meteorological Organization, the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa and the African Union, predicts that by 2030, 118 million Africans are at risk of being in a situation of extreme poverty, under the combined effect of rising sea levels, floods, drought and other associated phenomena.

In a way, it is anticipated these forecasts by having set up in 2012 the Group of the Pan-African Risk Management Mutual, African Risk Capacity (ARC). The AU aims at helping African countries to anticipate and manage natural disasters through a risk financing mechanism. It thus contributes to improving the planning, preparation and response capacities of member states in the face of disasters, including the effects of climate change.

Bearing in mind the repeated demands of the African Union, it has become necessary to save and support vulnerable populations. With human and natural resources, with the strength, talent and creativity of the youth, African continent owe future generations. The participants rallied around collaborative pledges and commitments to the humanitarian situation from governments and international organizations and a broad set of stakeholders, and finally followed by making a joint declaration.

Participated in the conference are Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, President of the Republic of Equatorial Guinea; Madam Aisha Buhari, President of the African First Ladies Peace Mission; and Martin Griffins who represented the Secretary General of the United Nations.

By organizing the Extraordinary Humanitarian Summit, followed by the donors’ conference, the African Union demonstrated its firm determination to pursue its efforts to reduce the sufferings endured by refugees and internally displaced persons on the continent. It reviewed the Malabo Declaration on Terrorism and Unconstitutional Changes of Government in Africa. The AU, however, expressed deep satisfaction with the unique concerns by Antonio Guterres, the Secretary General of the United Nations.
African Energy Week 2022, an interactive exhibition and networking event, will unite global and African energy stakeholders, drive industry growth, and promote Africa as the destination for Africa-focused events.

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Tensions are brewing between Rwanda and Democratic Republic of Congo after the later denounced Rwanda’s alleged support to the M23 rebel group.

There are fears that this could escalate to a third great Congo war after Uganda threw support to M23 and vowing to help Rwanda eradicate FDLR forces that are believed to be fighting alongside Congo’s army.

FDLR is a rebel group that Rwanda accuses to be made of people who mostly participated in genocide against the Tutsi in 1994.

The Government of Congo recently adopted a cabinet resolution suspending RwandAir flights from and to Kinshasa as well as other key cities like Goma and Lubumbashi.

Some Congolese are calling for even further measures including closing borders with its Eastern neighbor.

Kinshasa accuses Rwanda of supporting M23 rebels who since May, had launched multiple attacks against government forces (FARDC) in Northern Kivu Province bordering with Rwanda and Uganda.

M23 accuses the government of not upholding its promises made during Nairobi accord that put an end to its advances in 2013.

M23 rebels who fight in the name of marginalized Kinyarwanda speakers of Congo, had captured key strategic points in the East of Congo including North Kivu provincial capital, Goma before being defeated by government and UN backed forces in 2012.

After the 2013 accords and defeat, some of M23 rebels fled towards Rwanda others into Uganda. The section that has been fighting FARDC is the one from Uganda but backed by Rwanda, according to reports.

Congo has presented some military materials including uniforms alleged to be from Rwanda. It said were captured during clashes with M23 rebels.

On 23rd May 2022, Rwanda Defence Force (RDF) accused FARDC of firing rockets on Rwandan territory, wounding civilians and destroying properties.

Saturday, 28th May, hours after Congo closed space for the Rwanda national carrier, RDF accused FARDC together with FDLR of kidnapping two Rwandan soldiers.

“FARDC with FDLR attacked RDF along our border, and two Rwanda Defence Force soldiers were kidnapped while on patrol. We have since located these two soldiers: Cpl Nkundabagenzi Elysee and Pte Ntwari Gad being held by FDLR in Eastern DRC”, RDF statement reads.

Rwanda also had said FARDC fired on its territory, wounding civilians as well destroying properties. Investigations were requested and authorities of the Democratic Republic of Congo called to secure the release of Rwandan soldiers.

Meanwhile, Uganda has affirmed its support to the M23 cause and its readiness to fight anyone working with FDLR.

Since the end of 2021, Uganda has its troops in DRC where along FARDC have been fighting ADF, a terrorist group operating in Eastern Congo with roots to Uganda.

Uganda has crossed with heavy weapons. It is feared that those weapons can be used against FARDC.

Lieutenant General Muhoozi Kainerugaba, Commander in Chief of Ugandan Land Forces and a son of President Yoweri Museveni, revealed that he is ready to fight along President Paul Kagame’s army.

“After finishing with ADF, we shall focus on the Interahamwe in Eastern DRC. Criminals who massacred our brothers and sisters in 1994. The time for chatting is soon coming to an end”, Muhoozi revealed in a series of tweets.

Rwanda and Uganda have been in a feud since 2017 but the tensions eased this year because of the role played mainly by Muhoozi Kainerugaba, who is seen as a successor to his father.

Many started to fear that the M23 problem can turn into an open war, where Rwanda and Uganda will cooperate together, backing M23 against FARDC.

Martin Fayulu, a prominent opposition figure who was a candidate during 2018 presidential elections condemned his government for doing nothing to respond to Rwanda’s aggression.

“There is a war in the eastern part of the DRC. The local populations...
Malawi: Currency Devaluation Piles More Misery On Struggling Economy

By Joseph Dumbula, Blantyre.

As nations across the Southern African region are settling down with their post Covid19 recoveries measures, Malawi is not just meeting goals of improved livelihoods after the pandemic. This apparently comes amid a recent devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha by 25 percent and alleged corruption involving senior government officials, moves analysts feel put the Lazarus Chakwera leadership into a negative public relations status.

The devaluation was made in a bid to shore up dwindling foreign exchange reserves and curb inflation, according to the Reserve Bank of Malawi after recovery package talks with the International Monetary Fund.

The devaluation, the biggest in a decade as last devaluation of the kwacha (-33 percent) took place in 2012 when Joyce Banda was in power.

From January, Malawi has seen its foreign currency reserves shrink sharply due, according to the Central Bank, to a drop in import revenue due to the Covid epidemic and a rise in the cost of imports, particularly raw materials, due to the war in Ukraine.

As of last month, the Southern African nation had its inflation at 15.7 percent triggered by a rise in food and non-food prices.

On his part, Dr Betchani Tchereni, an eminent economics scholar at the Malawi University of Business and Applied Sciences as having said that the move implies that prices of almost every commodity will go up and that the price of foreign currency on the black market will also go up. “Salaries for those who work will remain the same unless we are told they are going to change. Those who do not work at all, they are going to have problems to purchase the commodities and the middle class will be wiped out,” said Tchereni.

In reaction, Chakwera has announced an execution of stringent economic measures including a cut in his own and minister’s foreign trips to a minimum of three for the remainder of the year.

He has also announced a halt in purchase of government vehicles and a cut of fuel packages for ministers by 20 percent. But these are not just the last viral events. There are continued fears about corruption among senior government officials. Actually, President Lazarus Chakwera admitted that Malawians are justified to be worried.

This comes amid allegations that several top government officials have been benefitting from alleged proceeds of corruption of Zunneth Sattar, who is currently being investigated by the National Crimes Agency of the United Kingdom and Malawi’s Anti-Corruption Bureau.

Sattar, a businessman, is being accused of engaging in corruption in Malawi.

The revelations come days after Sattar’s case came before Deputy District Judge Stein of Uxbridge Magistrate Court, in which the accused was asking the court to vary his bail conditions to allow him to travel outside the UK.

Among other names reportedly named in the evidence are Vice President Saulos Chilima, State House Chief of Staff Prince Kapondamgaga, Minister of Youth Richard Chimwendo, and Malawi Police Inspector General George.
The alleged evidence also has Chairperson of the Public Procurement and Disposal of Assets Authority John Suzi Banda and former Anti-Corruption Bureau director general Reyneck Matemba.

For these events, political commentator Wonderful Mkhutche tells PAV in an interview that the Chakwera leadership has a mountain to climb for public perception on corruption to end.

“The present administration got into power on the promise that they were going to root out corruption in the country. However, the reality has been far from this. Recently, an Afrobarometer survey said that people feel this government is more corrupt than the previous one. This is worrying, especially to the image of President Chakwera and his administration. The past election showed us that people can vote out a government if it is corrupt, and this is the danger the present administration is living on,” says Mkhutche.

But in his address earlier on, Chakwera insisted he would not pounce on the people because they are yet to appear before courts. He has since given the Anti-Corruption Bureau a 21-day ultimatum to serve his office with a report on investigations regarding Sattar.

“I would expect that a specific report on this issue be made available within 21 days to allow my office and the country to be appraised, as Malawians have every right to know the extent of the whole thing and the actions that will be taken on it,” said Chakwera.

However, Mkhutche feels Chakwera has been rhetorical about changing government dynamics.

“The present administration has largely used the institutional approach to politics and government. This means that they are only complementing the existing political systems and practices. However, this is contrary to the change rhetoric that came out from them. The administration is being overpowered by the existing political systems and practices, and people have lost trust in their promise of change. There is a need for homegrown pro-people political, social and economic ideas. The government is using the same old and failed approaches to dealing with our challenges, but expecting different results. This is political vanity,” he said.

Earlier in the week, former ruling Democratic Progressive Party, slammed government for blaming former President Peter Mutharika’s leadership for the current woes over lack of financial prudence coupled with nepotistic approaches.

Renowned economist and former minister of finance Goodall Gondwe said for instance the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha reflects bad leadership, a remark that government spokesperson Gospel Kazako described as coning from frustrated former leaders.
Aviance welcomes United Airlines to Accra

Akwaaba

#StrongerTogether
COBAC's Rush To Ban Crypto Currencies In CEMAC Zone Puts CAR, Others On Tight Spot

By Andrew Nsoseka

A t a time when many countries and economic blocs are studying, strategizing and looking for ways to accommodate and then regulate the use of crypto currencies, the Banking Commission of Central Africa, COBAC has in its most recent decision banned cryptocurrency transactions and related activities in the whole of the CEMAC region.

The COBAC decision covers six countries that make up the Central African Economic and Monetary Community, CEMAC. The affected countries that make up the Monetary Community include; Cameroon, Chad, the Central African Republic, Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, and the Republic of Congo.

Before COBAC’s decision that stirred mixed feelings from citizens of the CEMAC region, the Central African Republic, had earlier on April 27, 2022, legalised the use of the biggest cryptocurrency by market capital, Bitcoin, as legal tender, alongside FCFA in the CAR. Other countries in the bloc were already using crypto currencies too, though it was not endorsed officially at the national levels.

In a press release announcing its decision taken after its extraordinary session on May 6, COBAC said its decision is hinged on the need “to guarantee financial stability and preserve clients’ deposits”. In its statement, the banking commission said the decision bans the exchange or conversion, settlement or hedging in cryptocurrency transactions and related activities in the whole of the CAR territory as a legal tender.

CAR in Tight Spot over COBAC’s Decision

The decision by COBAC now puts the Central African Republic, CAR in a tight spot, given that the country had just voted in favour of legalising the use of Bitcoin as a legal tender. The decision voted in CAR’s parliament was signed into law by its president, Faustin Archange Touadera. CAR’s decision to adopt the use of Bitcoin made it the first country in Africa to out rightly endorse the use of cryptocurrency.

Many people believe that the decision reached at by COBAC might have been influenced by the decision of the Central African Republic to endorse the use of the currency. Here, the belief is that it threatened the use of FCFA and that it could pave a way for other countries in the economic bloc to start endorsing the use of the very volatile crypto currencies.

The COBAC decision now puts it at logger heads with the CAR as concerns now arise whether the country will scrap its law voted in parliament to legalise the use of Bitcoin within its territory as a legal tender.

A decision by President Touadera to adopt the use of Bitcoin made CAR the first country in Africa to out rightly endorse the use of cryptocurrency.

COBAC’s Seemingly Impossible Task To Actually Ban Use Of Crypto Currencies

By their nature, it is difficult for bodies like the COBAC to actually prevent citizens from holding and using cryptocurrencies, because they are essentially designed to avoid such interferences. By their decentralised nature, crypto currencies are not an asset that a body like a government can raid a building and hold, as they can be moved from one wallet account to another easily without any accompanying costs that goes with moving or transferring fiat currencies. Crypto currencies have been referred to by many as a revolutionary measure against the fiat currency that cannot just be waved aside by banning.

Starting from the creation of bitcoin, those behind crypto currencies designed it in such a way that the government does not have control over the currency system due to their decentralised nature. The underlying technology behind most crypto currencies makes sure that there is no central authority for any transaction, and as such, the government or any other authority cannot regulate the monetary policy because they have no power over the virtual currency.

After the creation of the first crypto currency, Bitcoin, other developers who came up with other crypto currencies have only made it better, reducing the gaps identified in the technology behind bitcoin, and as such, other currencies that are predominantly decentralised come up each day and are designed to escape any control mechanism. In other areas and economic blocs around the globe, monetary regulators are rather looking for ways they can regulate, but not totally ban as the case in the CEMAC region.

In several countries around the world including the USA, they are considerations to digitise their currencies to make them as flexible as the crypto currencies. Nigeria, Africa’s fastest growing economy has launched the eNaira that permits citizens to carryout contactless transactions, similar to what digital currencies do. China was among the first countries in the world to take a bold step to bring forth the idea of creating its own digital currency, the e-CNY, or digital yuan. While trying to look for ways to control the wide
and unregulated use of the crypto currencies, several countries are investing in looking for ways to study and tolerate or influence how the trend goes. This is unlike the decision of the COBAC that out-rightly banned the use of the digital currencies even though in reality, millions of citizens still hold and carryout crypto currency transactions every single minute. This is the nature of the digital currencies to escape any centralised control.

Reacting to COBAC’s decision, Cameroonian technology entrepreneur and founder and CEO of AppsTech Rebecca Enonchong remarked that the regulatory body’s decision is “like what Nigeria did last year before reversing and implementing rules to govern crypto”. On the possibility to actually enforce the decision, the award-winning tech entrepreneur wondered that she is “Not sure how they intend to enforce (the crypto ban). You would need cooperation from member states. Given crypto is used mostly by government officials in those countries (for reasons we understand), I don’t foresee much impact from this announcement.”

In the concerned CEMAC regions, there already existed crypto trading platforms like Yellow Card that had been operating officially in countries like Cameroon. With the ban, it is not known what the COBAC expect users who were already in the business to do. In the just ended AFCON completion hosted by Cameroon, the world’s biggest crypto exchange platforms, Binance was one of the major sponsors and advertised its services which are now used by many who were enticed by it. The platform even carried out donations to which families whose loved ones were involved in the stadium stampede benefited from. A country like Cameroon, though not having any national endorsement of crypto currencies already had known operators operating in the country with ease, with the ministry in charge of sector rather studying the virtual currencies and consulting on ways it could rather regulate it for safe use by citizens. It remains to be seen how COBAC will effectively stop citizens from using cryptocurrency.

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Outspoken South African political leader Julius Malema who is a strong proponent of Pan-Africanism joined several other Francophone countries on Africa Day in protesting against France for its ‘post-colonial imperialistic tendencies’. Julius Malema who is the leader of the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF), an opposition party in South Africa has on several occasions called out the West for using its long tentacles in meddling in African affairs.

The self-styled ‘commander in chief’ of the EFF Julius Malema has in the past largely focused his efforts on advocating for the strengthening of Pan African ties between and amongst African nations. In his own country, Malema has faced stern criticism owing to his ‘One Africa’ drive which downplays the ‘colonial borders’ put in place by the colonial powers during the colonial era choosing instead to promote a borderless Africa where Africans can freely move beyond borders within the African continent.

In a country which has witnessed a huge influx of economic migrants from neighbouring countries particularly Zimbabwe, Malawi and Mozambique, many South Africans saw Malema’s Pan Africanism drive as a major cause of concern as it allows more and more economic migrants to come into the country and take the few employment opportunities available. The Russian-Ukraine war couldn’t have come at a better time for Malema as he managed to reinvigorate his dwindling support base by openly supporting Russia saying, the white monopoly capital instituted by the West was the major reason behind the slow economic progress in South Africa and not economic migrants coming from other African countries. The actions by Russia in Ukraine are justified according to Malema as Russia is keeping the West in check.

Riding on his newly instituted internationalist wave, Malema on 25 May 2022 led hundreds of protesters to the French Embassy in South Africa to express disapproval of the West’s meddling in African affairs. Upon arriving at the French Embassy, Malema addressed his supporters before presenting the French Ambassador with a 14-day ultimatum to respond to a list of demands. Amongst the demands, Malema called upon the French government to grant full independence to all its former colonies. He went on to call upon the France government to let its former colonies determine their currencies, monetary policies and economic direction.

“France must immediately remove all its military bases which are currently stationed in Africa. This includes but is not limited to military bases, French soldiers, French aid through and any presence of French influence in the armies or militia groups in Africa... France must desist from interfering in the economic affairs of African countries, through monetary policy and the usage of their currency in West Africa must gradually decrease towards establishing currency systems determined by Africans themselves... Africa will not be free until African countries reclaim their reserve banks and have their currency as independent countries. It is for this reason that the unity of the African continent remains urgent, for Africans to stand together against imperialism,” Malema said.

Malema also took the opportunity to advise the entire world that the protests were not only against France’s meddling in internal African affairs but rather, it was a protest against the entire Western region. “France must stop its sponsorship of divisions that occur in Africa’s continental multilateral institutions, particularly in the Pan African Parliament and the African Union. These demands are made to the government of France and sent to all its military bases which are currently stationed in Africa. This includes but is not limited to military bases, French soldiers, French aid through and any presence of French influence in the armies or militia groups in Africa... France must desist from interfering in the economic affairs of African countries, through monetary policy and the usage of their currency in West Africa must gradually decrease towards establishing currency systems determined by Africans themselves... Africa will not be free until African countries reclaim their reserve banks and have their currency as independent countries. It is for this reason that the unity of the African continent remains urgent, for Africans to stand together against imperialism,” Malema said.

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In his concluding remarks, Julius Malema called upon the France government to respond to its demands of granting full political and economic independence to its former colonies. He said failure to do this will result in the EFF ‘undermining and countering’ France’s actions on the continent. “The EFF expects a response to all these demands within 14 working days. If there is no believable and practical response within the 14 days, we will as the leadership of the EFF outline a clear and practical programme on how we will undermine and counter France’s continued colonisation of the African continent,” Malema said.

Receiving the memorandum of demands from Malema, the French
Crowdfunding: An Entrepreneurial Financing game-changer for Africa

By Alexander Maune *

Globally, entrepreneurs are faced with serious financial challenges due to several reasons. The COVID-19 pandemic as well as the current Ukrainian war have not spared the operations of entrepreneurs the world over. These two global phenomena have seen disruptions in the flows of capital and caused the collapse of many entrepreneurs. Governments’ response to COVID-19 especially through lockdowns did not do much in curbing the pandemic, however, these lockdowns caused serious socio-economic challenges that will take a long for many to recover from. These lockdowns affected many entrepreneurs, especially in Africa whose economies had structural challenges. The current Ukrainian war and the sanctions imposed on Russia as well as the tension between China and USA have also caused serious financial challenges in the global economy given Russia’s geopolitical position in the global economy. Imposing sanctions on Russia’s central bank was a terrible mistake by the USA and EU with the effects boomeranging to the imposer of these sanctions. These sanctions caused disruptions in the global financial flows and many countries are losing confidence and trust in the global financial and capital systems. Although these actions seem so far away from Africa because of globalization that has connected the world economies into one village, Africa is feeling the heat as its economies which are reliant on USA, EU, China, and Russia for exports and imports are starting to tremble. It is high time Africa starts to introspect and look for alternative finances for its entrepreneurs given its young population.

Crowdfunding is one of the main alternative finance models that have passed the test of time and proven effective in financing entrepreneurs the world over. It is considered the game-changer in financing entrepreneurs globally. But what is crowdfunding and is the concept new in Africa?

Crowdfunding stands at the forefront of and is synonymous with, alternative finance. Several authors have viewed crowdfunding as a method of pooling small financial contributions from a potentially large group of backers, while using the internet, and often without the involvement of standard financial intermediaries. In this respect, this is an old fundraising method (synonymous with ‘Mukando’ in Zimbabwe) that has received a new boost from internet technologies towards achieving greater

Inside Africa

Protesters carried placards with messages critical of the controversial role of France in
France.

Ambassador Aurelien Lechevalliar said, “You came to see us today, so it was normal to come and receive your memorandum. We cannot sign it because it’s your memorandum, but we will convey the memorandum to Paris. And also, I want to say an important message, that we have our disagreements, and then today France is a partner to Africa and we are friends of the African nations.”

In an interview with a state broadcaster after the protests, the French Ambassador said France cannot be blamed for all the problems in South Africa and Africa as a whole. “France today is a partner and friend of Africa. We stand for an independent Africa and we want to strengthen our bond with Africa,” Lechevalliar said.
Crowdfunding is arguably the most visible disruptive technology intermediary. In less than a decade, crowdfunding has gained traction in several developed economies including Australia, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Italy, and the United States of America. This exciting phenomenon is spreading across the developed world and is now attracting considerable interest in the developing world of Africa as well.

But why focus on entrepreneurs? Entrepreneurship has become the major focus for economic growth and development in the world. Marom et al. (2012) in a book titled, A framework for European Crowdfunding, point out that, 23 million small and medium enterprises (SMEs) in Europe represent 99% of businesses. As such, access to capital for SMEs is critical for sparking job creation in Europe. However, the crowdfunding market is in its infancy in developing countries though the potential market is significant.

Crowdfunding has today become one of the most promising tools to help enable economic growth, job creation and innovation. Research has shown that new online alternative finance providers have certain advantages when compared to traditional financial institutions. Such advantages include: reduced funding costs, reduced information asymmetry, entrepreneurs’ ability to raise capital from anywhere in the world, and entrepreneurs can use crowdfunding to test business ideas and validate products.

Crowdfunding has its challenges and these include; information asymmetries, high risk, lack of experience using the platforms, limited financial capacity, potentially higher transaction costs, stolen intellectual property, fraud, and ethical issues. The lack of bespoke regulatory regimes and specific alternative finance policy developments is affecting alternative finance industry growth in Africa.

Shneor Rotem (2020) in a book chapter entitled “Crowdfunding models, strategies, and choices between them,” argues that crowdfunding is an umbrella term for a wider family of fundraising models. At a basic level, these models can be differentiated between “investment models” or “non-investment models” depending on the types of compensation promised to, and expected by, the funders.

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Q & A With Amujae Leader Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor

By Ajong Mbapndah L

Featured recently on the list of top 50 most inspiring women in Nigeria by Business Day Newspaper, a 2021 Amujae Leader, one of 15 African women mentored and coached by Presidents and world leaders, Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor is charting her own way to the top despite the odds. In a Q and A with PAV, Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor, a former Adviser to the Imo State government shares her thoughts on gender perspectives across Nigeria and Africa.

You were recently listed among the top 50 most inspiring women in Nigeria by Business Day newspaper, what does this mean to you?

It is truly an honour, and I am humbled to have been listed. I deeply appreciate BusinessDay for the platform and recognition given to me and I celebrate all the great women with whom I share the honor. It means a great deal to me; it is a recognition of my values and the excellence I bring to my space.

It can be compared to being spotlighted, given an elevated platform where I can shine brighter and cascade to create the change that my country needs; motivating the younger generation to strive to be the best despite the many odds and obstacles that they are likely to face in their journey. It is really great to have the work you do acknowledged. It becomes the stimulus you need for greater pursuit.

So, I have become motivated to serve more and achieve more given this recognition.

In a country of some 200 million people, how challenging is it for women like you to make it to the top?

It is a challenging country for everyone whether male or female to make it to the top and this should not be so. Dearth of power and infrastructure for example are commonalities impacting business growth. In general, a deficit in value based leadership in my country; Nigeria has not allowed us make notable advancement over the years going by all developmental indices and evidence on ground. Making it to the top is made even more difficult for the 50% population who are women; by the institutional barriers of cultural stereotypes, patriarchal society, religious dogmas and archaic gender biases that have not shifted to embrace 21st century realities. There is a great underutilization of ‘women’ resources even where it is most needed. A simple analogy is why struggle to put on your belt with one hand when you have two? We are making a case for greater efficiency and management of resources by developing and unleash all our human resources.

For women, there are challenges of financial inclusion, recognition and platforms to optimize their potential in business, politics and in other spheres. The few success stories there are have been opportune and far between. Even when there is legislation and policy to support inclusion, there is weak enforcement and implementation.

But these challenges, present greater opportunity to right them. So, I acknowledge and support the work of various civil society groups to create more space for women; the Womanifesto movement is championing Constitutional reform that will amongst others allow women play a more prominent role in politics and governance. We marched in the month of March this year demanding implementation of the National Gender Policy. The court ruled in our favour for 35% affirmative action. When implemented, this should create a wave of change as we expect women; competent, capable women of unimpeachable character to be brought to the Governance table.

We can then begin the journey, become an inclusive nation and actualize our fullest potential by converting all of our human capital to human assets, male and female.

Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor is a former Adviser to the Imo State government, how did that appointment come about and how was the experience like?

This appointment happened in 2019 under the administration of HE Emeka Ihedioha , Imo State, Nigeria and it was my first public sector role.

At the time, I had outstanding records of achievement in the private sector; an award-winning career in banking and finance and I had repositioned an ailing company to be one of the leaders in its industry.

Then I began to show an interest in the governance of my state arising from a growing passion for leadership and compassion for the people. The state had faced serial malgovernance and required an injection of expertise, those who had the instinct and ideas of how to solve public problems. The timing for me to segue into the public sector was right. Fortunately, I was recommended to the Governor - elect as a strong candidate, capable of delivering policy that could create wealth and rebuild the state.

Within days of his inauguration, I was appointed a Member of a Think tank called The Financial Advisory Committee, I concurrently served on The Judicial Panel of Inquiry for review of Contracts Award and the Visitation panel to Imo State Polytechnic, Umuagwo. I equally carried out Research and Policy work to reposition the state-owned University. These formed my most significant contributions to the state for which I am very proud.

The experience of repositioning the
state was very fulfilling. I found this most enriching and is the kind of work I wish to spend my time doing going forward.

You are also a 2021 Amujae Leader, one of 15 African women mentored and coached by Presidents and world leaders, could you shed some light on how you achieved this feat?

I have been very fortunate to be selected in 2021 as an Amujae Leader. Amujae means ‘we are going up’ in Kru, a Liberian language. The Amujae Initiative is a program of the Ellen Johnson Sirleaf Presidential Center for Women and Development (EJS Center) that identifies and challenges African women to be catalysts for political and social change across Africa.

The vision of Amujae is to move society from a culture of tokenism to a culture that values women leadership. It believes in the important work of overcoming the negative social constructs, culture and religious dogma keeping women from achieving their highest potential.

My core value is excellence and I have a passion for leadership. My vision is to bring excellence into democratic leadership on the continent.

This aligned with the vision of Amujae and when I applied it led me through a rigorous selection process to become one of the 15 women to emerge for the second cohort in 2021.

The Centre is committed to building the capacity of the leaders through networking and prestigious leadership programs on their way to the highest echelons of office. I have benefited from this network greatly, part of which is this interview with you today.

What are some of the useful leadership lessons and tips that you have garnered as an Amujae leader, and how are you putting this to use to empower other women in the community who look up to you?

I refer to the Amujae Leaders as a convocation of eagles who benefit from the thrust of each other’s flight. It’s a wonder to be on this journey with these very accomplished and remarkable women. The greatest lessons I have learnt and shared include not to give up on the dream that you have been given. To keep trying, to dream bigger, strive higher and be comfortable in any room. To find your ‘Why’ and persevere in pursuit of higher calling.

I am putting these lessons to use to empower others. As an entrepreneur and employer of labour, contributing to the local economy, I model enterprises for younger women. I motivate them through various capacity development and mentorship programs.

I inspire them to strive for greater goals by serving in Committees and Board positions and engaging in Community and Nation building efforts.

Specifically, I have been a speaker at various fora on Women in Politics and Women in Business. I am a regular Analyst/Commentator on women issues on The Women Radio FM 91.7 (The Voice of Women) Lagos, Nigeria. I also mentor many young women across the globe, sharing my Amujae lessons through my writing, blogging and social media channels.

With growing recognition, vision and strong profile you are building for yourself, may we know some of the leaders or people you consider as role models and why?

I am grateful for the growing recognition. I will mention two African women who I consider as role models. The first is HE Madame Ellen Johnson Sirleaf. She is a worthy Ambassador of democratic ideals and value-driven leadership, a catalyst for women aspiring to the highest echelons of leadership in a quest to transform the African continent.

As Africa’s first female democratically elected President, Nobel Peace Laureate and holder of numerous awards, she continues to work tirelessly to empower and nurture women leaders on the continent. The Amujae Leadership Program is a testament of this.

I appreciate her vision, leadership, boldness, courage, strength and determination. She is a role model not just for women but for the entire continent.

Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala

Dr Okonjo-Iweala is one African woman I look up to. A Nigerian economist, author and entrepreneur, she served as the first female and two term Finance Minister and the first female Foreign Affairs Minister. I admire Dr Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala for her transparency, integrity and tenacity to bring reform while she served under the administrations of President Olusegun Obasanjo and Goodluck Jonathan. Creditably, she fought to end corruption in the system. Being resilient and courageous she has many successes to her credit.

She improved the macroeconomic management of Nigeria. She assisted the governed to monitor their leaders and seek accountability. She has been instrumental to several policies that have empowered the Youth like the Youth Enterprise with Innovation Program (YouWIN) which was a success.

Perhaps her most celebrated achievement is the negotiated debt relief secured from the Paris Club of creditors of US$30billion.

Her outspokenness, courage, commitment in the fight against corruption in Nigeria makes her very inspiring and a role model to many.

She is also on the Board of the Amujae Initiative.

We are doing this interview at a time when politics is dominating discussions in Nigeria, first how has eight years of President Buhari impacted the fortunes of women in your country?

This month of May 2022 the country is conducting its Party Primary elections which will determine the candidates in a General Election which comes up in 2023.

Unfortunately, in the 8 years of the Buhari administration there has not been much progress for Women in politics. In fact, the numbers of Women in Houses of Parliament and
in appointive offices has regressed despite the National Gender Policy of 35%. According to reports, the national average of women's political participation in Nigeria has remained less than 7%, which is far below the Global Average of 22.5%, and Africa Regional Average of 23.4%. For instance, out of the 36 ministerial appointments by the Buhari administration only six are women, representing 16.7%. In the National Assembly, women constitute 5.6% of members of the House of Representatives and 6.5% of the Senators. Also, with the twenty-three years of uninterrupted democratic governance (1999-2022), Nigeria is yet to produce a female governor in any of the 36 states of the Federation. Nevertheless, in the business sphere, we have maintained Africa's richest woman position as well as several other wins. For example, in attempting to achieve gender parity, the Central Bank of Nigeria (CBN) said it reserved 60% of its N220 billion Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises Development Fund for women entrepreneurs. The disbursement and monitoring for impact however may be a different kind of challenge.

**On the upcoming elections, in what way do you think Nigerian women can better make their voices heard, or ensure that leaders elected prioritize expectations and development interests of women?**

1. **Mobilize. Mobilize. Mobilize.**

Women must mobilize. It would require commitment and dedication. I am reminded of the election that brought in President Biden and the work of the women like Stacey Abrams in the state of Georgia.

We must commit time and resources to ensuring the right candidates have visibility and the electorate understand and value the potential they carry.

2. **Advocacy for financial inclusion and empowerment.**

Women must be financially empowered, so they become a force to reckon with.

In the recent past, I was privileged to have worked with the Central Bank of Nigeria and the Nigerian Association of Chambers of Commerce, Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NACCIMA) Women's Group on advocacy to enhance access to finance for women. The Central Bank of Nigeria launched its Financial Inclusion Strategy in October 2012 with the aim of increasing financial inclusion of women from 36% to 70% by 2020. Reports for 2022 show the target has been achieved at just under 70%.

This program and others should be evaluated for its impact. The numbers should be sustained, and the program expanded.

3. **Build Capacity and hold elected leaders accountable.**

Women must build capacity. Towards this, I have been privileged to be Speaker at several Women Empowerment programs for the Chambers of Commerce and the Centre for International Private Enterprise (CIPE). I have served as a Member NACCIMA -CIPE Committee in Governance,

Working with GEMS, to improve Growth and Employment in states supporting an improved business environment.

Mentorships: Women must commit to developing and mentoring the next generation.

I co-founded a movement called Liberation Movement which became registered as a National Political Party called Liberation Party. As a Trustee of the party, I mentored many women to join politics and run for office.

I have a scholarship fund for young girls who are less privileged to attend University.

I Co-founded a Women’s Group called We the Women ; a mentoring and networking group for women.

I have served as an Executive of the Women’s Group of the Nigeria Association of Chambers of Commerce and Industry, Mines and Agriculture (NAWORG).

From an Adviser to a state government, to an Amuaje leader, what next for Ifeyinwa Maureen Okafor, any plans to run for public office down the line?

Quoting Edmund Burke ; ‘Nobody makes a greater mistake than he who does nothing because he could only do little’.

My desire has always been to apply the little I know; my fund management and organizational leadership skills to prudently manage any organization.

I took a step further to seek elective office in 2015. I sought to govern Imo state, to be a prudent custodian of the states meager resources and build wealth for the people by providing authentic leadership and achieve greater results in provision of infrastructure, education and healthcare.

It’s a dream I plan to pursue again down the line and I do so because there is so much at stake.

**And to other young women out there who see in you a role model, any advice or tips on how to navigate life challenges or emulate your success?**

In my public sector role, I have contributed research work into issues that affect young ladies, in Nigerian Universities. As a government appointee in the Imo State University Joint Action Committee, we made far reaching recommendations and we developed a code of ethics for the University.

My interaction with these young women and men showed many gaps. Thus, my advice would be:

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Since April 2022, the activities of the international humanitarian medical non-governmental organization Doctors Without Borders (DWB, MSF) in the South West Region have been suspended. The decision to suspend follows the arrests of DWB staff in the region after government officials accused them of taking care of separatist fighters. It also follows a similar action taken in the North West Region where DWB no longer operates.

Since the crisis escalated in 2017, Doctors Without Borders has provided free care to the population well beyond war wounds. In 2021, DWB had more than one hundred and sixty-five thousand consultations, including forty-two thousand children under the age of five in the South West Region.

In an interview with Gisa Kohler, MSF Deputy Operations Coordinator for Central Africa, she said the suspension of their activities continues until “our colleagues are freed and until we come to an agreement with the government of Cameroon.” “Our policy is no arms... We treat everyone irrespective of their religion and political ideology.”

**Journalist: For the past years Doctors Without Borders has been in the South West, what are some of the activities you have been engaged in?**

Gisa Kohler: We have been in the South West since 2018 and we have been carrying out support to hospital structures. We work on three levels; in the community, we support some primary health structures and some hospitals. In case of need of tertiary care, we refer cases to Mutengene Regional Hospital. Additionally, one of the most popular services we offer is our ambulance services. We have ambulances working in the region 24 hours/7 days a week including the lockdown days, where people cannot move but we can because we have agreements to move.

**Journalist: Talk to us about some of the key areas that Doctors Without Borders have been involved in and the people being impacted.**

Gisa Kohler: At the moment, the projects that we have suspended are all in Mamfe and Kumba. For you to understand a little bit what we are talking about; we have more than 164,000 consultations done in that community in 2021. We did five thousand antenatal care consultations and we have been doing more than eight hundred surgeries. Of these surgeries, more than forty per cent are caesarean surgeries. Our impact has been greatly felt by pregnant women. In the children’s section, we had more than ten thousand admissions to the pediatric wards in the Kumba and Mamfe District Hospital. We also did more than eight thousand ambulance referrals in 2021.

**Journalist: What challenges did Doctors Without Borders face in the exercise of their humanitarian endeavours?**
Gisa Kohler: In December 2020, our colleagues were suspended from the North West and one of our challenges has been that we have been accused of working with the separatists. As a humanitarian organization, we do not look at who we treat; we have a patient and we take him, we do not care if the person is from the security forces or whether it is somebody from the separatist - for us he or she is a patient and that is our humanitarian principle.

The other issue is that we faced highly unsecured situations in the Anglophone region. We need to talk to all actors of the conflict; we need to talk to the security forces (government officials as well) and also the non-state armed groups to guarantee maximum safety and security for our patients and also our staff. This is, however, something that is creating sanctions.

Journalist: Let’s look at the situation in the North West, the government has accused Doctors without Borders of supporting separatist fighters, how true is this allegation?

Gisa Kohler: As I explained earlier, we have to have contact with all groups of the conflicts for the security of patients and our staff. This does not by anytime mean that we are supporting one of the parties to the conflict. The accusations were done about MSF transporting arms in ambulances and so on; we have a clear no arms policy. Nobody with any arms, including uniform men with arms, is entering the ambulance and in structures. Now, the structures we cannot control one hundred per cent because we work with other actors as it is not MSF structures as we work with public structures. But our policy is no arms.

Journalist: Talk to us about the communique halting operations in the South West Region. What necessitated that action from MSF?

Gisa Kohler: It is based on the detention of our four colleagues. We have since the 27 of December two colleagues detained (an ambulance driver and a nurse) who transported an injured patient. They were stopped at a checkpoint in Nguti and two days later they were detained for transporting separatists. Again, I come back to what I already stated, we do not ask the person who he is - it was an injured person who needed urgent care.

The other case is on January 15 with the arrest of one community health worker and one field coordinator assistant who is also accused of collaborating with the separatists. Now we feel like we cannot provide the security for our colleagues to work in this region because we as a humanitarian organization don’t see a reason for these arrests. A report from the Mandela Washington Center commissioned by the Ministry of Defence clearly stated that MSF has not been doing anything wrong. For us, it is not clear and under these situations, us is not acceptable to risk other arrests. Since then we engaged with the authorities to understand more to find a solution to the matter. Note: Since this interview was conducted, two staff of Doctors Without Borders have been released on bail. The other two colleagues are still behind bars.

Journalist: What is the way forward for this suspension to come to an end?

Gisa Kohler: It is extremely painful for us to stop our activities but we need our principles to be respected. We are impartial and do not care about the religion or political affiliation the person has. If we cannot work under these principles, we have a serious problem. Much more, we are concerned towards our staff - we have a duty of care not only towards our patients but also towards our staff. We want to do everything possible so we see that other staff do not find themselves in such situations. We are engaging with government officials at all levels to understand first the constraint they are having and then to agree on how to work together in a situation where we can guarantee a certain safety for our staff and patients.
It's time to make the switch

Controlled Substances Inventory Management for Pharmacies

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Recent Activity
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Kidnapping For Ransom: An Unpunished Industry In Mozambique

The cases of kidnapping and abductions of businesspeople in Mozambique are multiplying, which makes clear that the world of organised crime has directed its barbarous actions towards the business class. The Mozambican police had recorded six kidnappings in the first three months of the year, but only one of the victims had been released. So, at least until the end of March, the five other victims remained in the hands of the kidnappers. The main people targeted by the wave of kidnappings in Mozambican cities have been businesspeople of Asian origin. The proximity of police stations to the sites of kidnapping has been noted repeatedly. Few people expect the perpetrators to be brought to justice.

By Jorge Joaquim

The first case of kidnapping for ransom in Mozambique was in 2008. A 55-year-old Dutch woman was held captive for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband paid a $20,000 ransom, negotiated for 18 hours before her husband.

After that time, the number of kidnappings grew steadily, according to official statistics. Kidnapping also spread geographically, starting in Maputo and Matola (which continue to be the main focus for kidnappers), before reaching other major Mozambican cities such as Beira, Chimoio and Nampula. These crimes happen in broad daylight, in streets full of passers-by.

The Mozambican police had recorded six kidnappings in the first three months of the year, but only one of the victims had been released. So, at least until the end of March, the five other victims remained in the hands of the kidnappers. The main people targeted by the wave of kidnappings in Mozambican cities have been businesspeople of Asian origin.

The General Commander of the Mozambican police, Bernadino Rafael, has admitted that he is “greatly concerned” at the wave of kidnappings of wealthy business people who are ransomed for large sums of money.

The main people targeted by the wave of kidnappings in Mozambican cities have been businesspeople of Asian origin. The threat of kidnapping affects not only the decisions of those who want to invest in the country but also leads to cash exit by investors who feel unsafe. As a result, jobs are lost and there is a decline in income generation. In the end of the day, this crime is gradually destroying the country’s economy.

Mozambique faces major challenges in preventing and combating organized and transnational crime, such as terrorism, money laundering, corruption, kidnapping, drug trafficking, and illegal immigration.

Some kidnappings occur a few metres from police stations, with the criminals showing confidence and “freedom of movement”.

Police complicity in kidnapping

There might be some degree of collusion between the kidnappers and the police, as the corporation has barely done anything to stop the wave of kidnappings, even those occurring within a stone’s throw of a police station. The proximity of police stations to the sites of kidnapping has been noted repeatedly. During her annual report on the State of Justice, delivered to the Mozambican parliament, the Assembly of the Republic, in April, Attorney-General Beatriz Buchili denounced police complicity in kidnapping.

She said that some of those who should be on the front line combatting the kidnappers are in league with them. “The involvement of some members of the police, lawyers, magistrates and other figures in the judiciary creates fragilities in investigating these cases”, said Buchili, “and endangers the safety of those public servants who are committed to fighting against crime”.

Due to the high number of kidnappings, President, Filipe Nyusi, recently announced the creation of an anti-kidnapping unit to stop these crimes. He also branded as completely unacceptable the transformation of police stations into breeding grounds for kidnappers.

“I cannot accept that police stations become nests of kidnappers, and the commander of the station has top responsibility on the matter. If he does not know the life of his staff, he should resign from his post,” he said. “How come a kidnapping occurs just a few metres away from a police station, with the victims shouting for help, but there was no rapid reaction by the police force?”, Nyusi asked.

Actually, not only police, but also other public servants, such as lawyers, magistrates and other figures in the judiciary. The involvement of these people creates fragilities in investigating these cases. In order to attain their goals and cover up their activities criminals infiltrate state institutions to better control the investigations that are undertaken.

In April the Higher Council of the Judicial Magistracy, the regulatory body for the Mozambican law courts, has expelled two judges from the profession for corrupt behavior. One of them is Rui Dauane of the Maputo City Court. Dauane was involved in several polemical cases, but the...
most serious was his release of Edith D’Compta da Camara Cylindo. She was accused of participating in the kidnapping of business people in 2017, but Dauane set her free. According to the CSMJ, he ignored the evidence against her and ordered her release, in violation of the Penal Procedural Code.

**The link with South Africa**

Kidnapping crimes have been increasing and criminal groups operate with cross-border ramifications, maintaining cells in countries such as South Africa. The South African Police announced in May the arrest of a 37 year old man believed to have masterminded a spate of kidnappings in Maputo, and in the South African province of Gauteng. According to SAPS the Crime Intelligence National Anti-Kidnapping Task Team arrested the alleged mastermind and three of his accomplices in Brackenhurst, just outside Johannesburg.

According to the General Commander of the Mozambican police, the gangs kidnapping business people in Mozambique have recently demanded that the families of their victims deposit the ransom demanded in bank accounts abroad, and this is helping run down Mozambique reserves of foreign currency.

He said that, by demanding that ransom payments be made abroad, the kidnappers were trying to throw the police investigators off their trail. These payments, he claimed, cause “incalculable damage” to the Mozambican economy. Rafael said criminal investigation teams have been instructed to check in whose names the accounts abroad have been opened, and how much money has been deposited in those accounts. However, Nobody can walk into a Mozambican bank and transfer a million dollars to Dubai (or to anywhere else). All transfers of large sums of foreign currency must be authorised by the Bank of Mozambique. Furthermore, the Monetary Policy Committee of the Bank of Mozambique regularly publishes details of the country’s foreign reserves, and these show no sign of being run down.

In November 2021, the Mozambican police launched the training of a mixed security force to grapple with such crimes. Rwandan specialists are overseeing the training. The police hope that, with the creation of this brigade, they will bring to a speedy end the wave of kidnappings of business people and their relatives in the main cities.

Despite the situation of kidnappings in the country, some of the justice authorities try to do their part. In 2021 the Maputo City Court sentenced two people to twenty years imprisonment for their part in the kidnapping of a businessman in central Maputo in February 2020.

These kidnappings are part of a profitable industry which generates millions for the kidnappers out of the blood of honest and hardworking men and women.
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PRESS
PROF. VICTOR MBARIKA
PRÉSIDENT OF ICT UNIVERSITY WITH PM DION NGUTE
Juba, South Sudan - The two-lane Freedom Bridge with a dual sidewalk, more than a half-kilometer long, built by Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), officially commissioned in May after a multiple suspension due to conflict, is expected to enhance economic growth, regional integration, and consolidate peace through a safe and efficient road network in South Sudan.

The bridge, believed to be Juba’s gateway to East Africa through Nimule [Uganda] and Nadapal borders entries [Kenya] and to the Ethiopian border towns with South Sudan, has created imaginary new economic outlooks both internally and externally in the country that has been devastated by a five-year conflict that killed nearly 400,000 people and displaced millions from their homes.

The 560-metre-long Freedom Bridge on the edge of the capital, was constructed using a grant from the government of Japan through Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

According to JICA, the construction of the Freedom Bridge gULped nearly 100 million US dollars. The bridge was conceived in 2011 and construction work commenced in 2013 and was meant to take 4 years but took 9 years due to multiple suspensions because of the civil war in the country and the Covid-19 pandemic.

The previous bridge could be dismantled and moved and was sometimes dangerous to cross especially for pedestrians.

It is hoped that the bridge will ease traffic congestion in Juba as well as help speed up trade.

For countryside clients on the west side of the Nile River in Rumbek, Yei, Yambio, Aweil and Wau, among others, there will be a reduction in time to reach them.

Speaking at the commissioning ceremony, President Salva Kiir said the Freedom Bridge was a symbol of long and lasting friendship between the people of Japan and South Sudan. He expressed gratitude to Japan for being one of the few countries that do not attach conditions to development support.

Kiir further said the commissioning of the Freedom Bridge marked the “beginning of the road to development in the East Africa’s youngest nation.

He also said it fell under the “governments’ priority of reconnecting the country to the region via road network, with an aim of facilitating trade.”

According to President Kiir, the Freedom Bridge is a gateway for regional integration and economic growth.

“Today is a great day for the city of Juba, South Sudan, and our Region. The bridge we are inaugurating has been a project in the works for a very long time. The need for this bridge was identified in 2011 and it was conceived as a unique link for regional integration that would enhance economic growth,” said President Kiir, during the commissioning of the bridge on, May 19, 2022.

South Sudan won her hard – fought independence from Sudan in 2011, but after two years of hope and joy, the country returned to another civil war, which withheld a developmental project.

Kiir is now struggling to implement the 2018 revitalized peace deal in order to end the bloodshed and to open a new chapter of stability.

“What holds the progress,” said Kiir - the delay to complete Freedom Bridge is a living example of how the war delayed development.”

“To my people who received this gift (bridge) today, I would like to call upon you all to work hard to maintain peace in our country. Having peace will allow us to focus on service delivery and development projects,” he asserted.

May’s opening was attended by the Kenyan presidential candidate and AU infrastructure envoy Raila Odinga, as well as the head of Japan’s International Cooperation Agency Dr. Tanaka Akihiko.

Odinga, the High Representative for Infrastructure Development in Africa, a contender for the Kenyan presidency, said the commissioning of the bridge shows the interest of the government to connect with the rest of the region.

“Africa is busy expanding its infrastructure,” Odinga said – the bridge will contribute to efforts to develop and connect the rest of the world.
He advised the government to ensure that citizens and the police become custodians of the new bridge, not the military.

“This is a great day for the people of South Sudan as the freedom bridge in Juba opens for business – this bridge will play a key role in enhancing connectivity and trade in our region,” said Odinga.

“Every bridge built, is a relationship established, says Odinga, adding that the bridge will resolve fast the transport disruption and trade interruption to the people of South Sudan and the people of East Africa.

“It is great seeing the project to fruition – Africa will surely rise,” said Odinga. With this bridge South Sudanese businessmen would easily access the port of Mombasa or Lamu just as the Kenyan and Ugandan traders want to access Juba.”

“We are talking about building a pipeline from South Sudan and connecting it with the Kenyan oil in Turkana and taking it to the port of Lamu for export to the rest of the world,” said former Kenya prime minister.

At the same event, the President of JICA, Akihiko, says the bridge will contribute to economic development that will benefit South Sudan and the East African region.

Akihiko said the Freedom Bridge was named for its three enduring positive impacts; contributing to economic and logistics development, nation-building through resource development, and being a symbol of freedom and peace for the people of South Sudan.

“This bridge will promote peace and stability in South Sudan. Furthermore, it strengthens connectivity of East Africa by the international corridor from the port of Mombasa, Kenya, through Uganda to South Sudan,” said Akihiko.

JICA’s president hopes the bridge will promote peace and stability through its essential function to help in the safe delivery of aid to needy people.

“The opening of the first permanent bridge over the Nile in South Sudan will greatly contribute to Juba’s social and economic activities and the stable supplies of humanitarian aid to the internally displaced person and conflict-affected people living in the rural areas,” Akihiko said.

Jubilant crowds came out to cross South Sudan’s first permanent bridge over the River Nile after it was officially opened.

Juba’s suburb areas have now become a town because of the Freedom Bridge. As the citizens
said they are going to lease out their piece of lands to national and foreign tycoons along a road for uncalled businesses.

I have four plots around here because it’s my ancestral land. I will lease out two to investors, use the money to build on for my family,” said Taban John, a resident of Lologo residential area, suburb of Juba’s capital.

However, Juba’s landowners, along a new bridge road like Taban see poverty as a thing of the past.

Ahmed, a foreign businessman says, “as someone who deals in the transport business, I will definitely have to find land closer to the bridge to invest in,” Ahmed said.

A new bridge has drawn a glimpse hopes on the forehead of South Sudanese people by seeing the country moving from violence to developmental era.

Meanwhile, the country’s vice president Riek Machar says the country need some alternative transport systems in order to ease a highly charge on goods.

“We have teething infrastructural challenges as a country. Our goods in Juba are costly because of transport costs and the damages that come with transporting them from other places to the capital. We are also aware that Mombasa Port is congested, making Lamu Port ideal for the expanded business volume,” said Machar.

Japan has been enthusiastically assisting South Sudan for peace and nation building since its independence through from UNMISS (United Nations Mission in South Sudan), development projects to humanitarian assistances with more than 700 million US dollars and more than 4,000 Japanese nationals involvement.

Japanese Ambassador to South Sudan, Tsutsumi Naohiro stressed that helping South Sudan is perfectly in line with Japan’s foreign policy, including bilateral exchanges.

According to him, Tokyo and Juba’s bilateral cooperation is in a great shape

He says Japan needs stability in East Africa as it is the gateway to the African Continent.

“South Sudan’s peace and stability interrelates with that of East Africa and Japan expects that South Sudan will remain a stabilising factor in the region,” said Amb. Tsutsumi.

The diplomat says Tokyo wants to strengthen cooperation with Juba in addressing global issues such as the rules-based international order, the UN reform, and environment.

“Japan will be continuously standing by you and assisting you as long as your self-help effort for durable peace and nation building continue. And Japan hopes to further strengthen the bilateral relations which would be even more mutually beneficial than ever,” said Amb. Tsutsumi

Amb. Tsutsumi concluded by saying This bridge will work very hard for you, laying itself down for you as “Bridge Over the Troubled Water,” for the development of this country, for the welfare and happiness of the South Sudanese people. And I am sure, Freedom Bridge will stand as the symbol of “true friendship” between Japan and South Sudan for many generations to come.

South Sudan is one of the least developed countries in East Africa due to the impact of successive decades of civil war, and poverty levels among the people is the world’s highest.

However, domestic production of goods and services is at its infancy and travelling from one town to another either is notoriously difficult as all road network connecting major towns and production areas in the region were destroyed by civil wars and floodwaters.

As a landlocked country, it receives its goods and services from Kenya and Uganda.

With a peace deal that has brought relative calm, development has picked up rapidly and foreign trade has surfaced with influx of various imports into the country.

“I know some of you do not want to see this country grow, but we will always prove Thomas’s doubting wrong,” said President Kiir.

Infrastructure remains one of the major pillars for South Sudan’s economic and socio – political development.
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A seemingly non-negotiable principle of South Africa’s foreign policy, is to be on the side of autocrats and dictators and habitually anti-West, irrespective of the issues. Cozy relations with the likes of Ethiopia’s Mengistu Haile Mariam, Sudan’s Omar al Bashir, Cuba’s Fidel Castro and Zimbabwe’s Robert Mugabe, characterised our foreign policy under all presidents since Nelson Mandela. With the present government being enamoured with a rabid war criminal like Vladimir Putin, we see a continuation of this policy.

Obsessed with a myopic partisan ideology and habitual hobnobbing with dictators, of course, come at a high price, particularly degrading SA’s erstwhile high international prestige, role and status as well as stunting our all-important economic development. In short, this means that SA’s prevailing foreign policy is totally out of zinc with its intrinsic national interests.

According to ANC declarations, SA would <stick to its principles> and not take sides in this war in spite of blatantly illegal and murderous Russian war crimes. Hence, it abstained from voting against Russia together with a motley minority of 34 other UN members in the March 2 General Assembly resolution (only 5 states voted against whilst 141 voted in favour).

The minister of the department of international relations and development (DIRCO), Naledi Pandor, issued a statement demanding Russia to withdraw from Ukraine. This clearly upset the Marxist, anti-West faction in the ANC policy establishment who subsequently prevailed upon president Ramaphosa, to denounce the statement, no doubt to assuage Russian and local communist’s displeasure.

For many, both inside and outside the country, this was a controversial decision resulting in a rare local public debate about our wayward foreign policy. What emerged was a conflict of opinion between the ideologues and realists in the foreign policy establishment. A hopeful sign, but unfortunately of little consequence in our fossilised ANC foreign policy establishment.

All along, the ideologues accepted that being in cahoots with war criminal Russia was in SA’s best interests notwithstanding the normative constitutional dictates and founding moral principles concerning respect for human rights, sovereignty, democracy, and territorial integrity.

What followed was indeed a case study of expedient, if not downright ‘Walter Mitty’ diplomacy. First, president Ramaphosa rushed to telephone Putin, obviously to bask the reflected glory and honour of speaking to the ‘great man’. Afterwards, he subserviently thanked “His Excellency President Vladimir Putin” for taking his call. At the same time, our ‘great negotiator’ refused official engagement with the local Ukrainian ambassador as well as with ambassadors of the European Union, our biggest trading partners.

In the latest General Assembly meeting on Ukraine, SA persisted with its pro-Russian pseudo-neutrality but got a humiliating bloody nose after presenting a draft resolution, excluding the country of all blame. No wonder as this resolution was strictly in line with Kremlin propaganda lies casting doubt as to where exactly SA’s UN diplomats got their instructions from.

Ramaphosa’s aim, it seems, is to push himself forward as facilitator in the conflict, recalling at length in parliament his past experiences a negotiator.

‘Illusions of grandeur’, it may be, as SA’s international status and role during about three decades of uninterrupted misrule has declined close to being almost insignificant. While most of the world reached out to end the horrible and unthinkable human and material misery inflicted upon Ukrainian people, he offered them naught for their comfort, except portending to be a great negotiator reporting for service.

Belatedly, after strong criticism he rejected war as an instrument of policy, and signalled his wish to also speak to Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelinskiy, impressed perhaps by the latter’s sterling performances addressing the American senate and the British, Canadian, Israeli, Italian and Japanese parliaments and the German Bundestag.

The pièce de résistance of his kindergarten diplomacy, was to blame NATO for being deaf to earlier warnings against eastward expansion, ignoring the Russian brutal invasions, of inter alia, Finland, Latvia, Hungary and Czechoslovakia, in the previous century not realising that NATO membership was their safeguard against future Ukrainian-type of invasions. Theirs was a wise decision. Indeed, Mr President, ignorance is bliss....!
Citizens Say 'NO' to South African Government's Plan of Erecting a Million-Dollar Flag

By Prince Kurupati

To advance a “common national identity”, the South African government through the ministry of Sports, Arts and Culture agreed to erect the South African National Monumental Flag. The monumental flag project according to the government would consume more than R22 million. Though expensive, the government justified the project saying it aims at unifying the nation and advancing social cohesion.

The idea of the monumental flag was first presented to the South African Parliament. After several debates, a consensus was reached that the project though expensive would help unify a nation which has in recent times seen fissures erupt along gender and race lines. The project was then debated in the Cabinet and according to the spokesperson of the Sports, Arts And Culture Ministry Masechaba Khumalo, “the SA National Monumental Flag project was approved by Cabinet in the last financial year 2021/2022”.

While addressing the media, Masechaba Khumalo also said that the project had already kickstarted though still in its infancy at the pre-construction stage. Parliament’s Portfolio Committee on Sports attested to this saying the sports ministry had already spent close to R1.7 million on geotechnical studies for the project.

Masechaba Khumalo said they started working on the project after the project plan sailed through smoothly in both the Parliament and Cabinet owing to its unifying elements. she said “This project reminds South Africans that they share a common identity through the national flag and other national symbols. The realisation of shared identity and values lead to nation-building and the advancement of social cohesion. A theme of unity in diversity cuts across all national symbols. The national flag, which is a symbol of our democratic dispensation, will thus, be rendered a national brand as well as a monument”.

The sports, arts and culture ministry spokesperson also took time to advise the South African nation that the idea of a monumental flag was not unique. “Monumental or tall flags can be found in some countries in the world. This is not a unique South African concept. When such flags are constructed, they become a site for commemorative events. The site will become a landmark and a tourist attraction.”
After Masechaba Khumalo addressed the media, the government particularly the sports, arts and culture ministry which was spearheading the project was hoping for a positive response from members of the public. Contrary to the expectations, however, the public immediately disapproved of the project saying the project was irrational, elitist, and a mockery of the struggling South African citizens.

In an interview with a state broadcaster, Mohau Pheko said that the monumental flag project is a clear example of the South African government’s elitist nature and how this nature necessitates it to come up with misplaced priorities. Pheko said during these trying economic times exacerbated by the Covid pandemic, the government should be at the forefront ensuring that it caters to the welfare of the poor and underprivileged. However, it chose to embark on an elitist project. “In light of the Covid-19 pandemic, mismanagement, and state capture, it seems like there’s a roller coaster of political and economical collapse in the country... We have a state that is able to manage and find funds for its elite projects and this R22 million is a case in point that this is money that could be spent to beef up other more needy sectors in the country”.

The sentiments echoed by Mohau Pheko were reinforced by Dennis Bloem who is the spokesperson for the political party Cop. In a statement, Dennis Bloem said, “Millions of people are going to bed on an empty stomach. Nobody can justify this disgraceful abuse of power. The priorities of this government are laughable and senseless.”

The national labour body, Cosatu castigated the government for embarking on such an elitist program when thousands of people are finding it hard to put food on the table. The labour body in a statement said, “Many people around the world are being squeezed by the rising cost of living and they do not have the money to go around looking at flag monuments... South Africa has enough tourist attractions and does not need another inept government department to waste millions of Rands on a misguided project to attract tourists”.

An expert in national symbols focusing on post-Apartheid South Africa Professor Elirea Bornman said the planned monumental flag wouldn’t have much of an impact on nation-building. Professor Bornman said research has shown that South Africans are more attached to the national anthem than the flag. Gwen Ansell who is a creative arts researcher said that the sports, arts and culture department has a “very limited notion of heritage”. “Bureaucrats love finite products because they are easy to show and tick off when reporting. But heritage is a process, not a product,” Ansell said.

Following the backlash, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa said he told the Sports, Arts And Culture Minister Nathi Mthethwa to “cancel this thing”. Speaking at a Black Business Council gala, the South African president said the sports minister called him and said, “President, this flag thing, which is such a wonderful initiative, it seems our people are not happy with it.” Ramaphosa said he replied by saying cancel this thing. The president went on to state that this demonstrates how his administration is a “listening” government. “We listen to what our people say. We don’t ride rough shed over our people,” he said.

In light of the public outrage and Ramaphosa’s call for the monumental flag project to be cancelled, the minister of sports, arts and culture Nathi Mthethwa issued a statement saying “In upholding the ethos and the inalienable rights of citizens to be heard, the minister of Sport, Arts and Culture has directed his department to review the process related to the Monumental Flag in its totality”. At the moment, it’s not yet clear if the department will cancel the project in totality or if it will take a different route in its plans to erect the monumental flag.
In the name of God

The easiest way to get credulous religious adherents to accept any course of action is to attribute the preachers’ words to a revelation from God or the Holy Spirit. In Africa, reliance on religious leaders for religious satisfaction has made these leaders gods; they can get away with manufactured dreams or claims of a direct communication line with God in bogus utterances to which the people shout, “Amen! Alleluia”. Pastor Lesego Daniel of South Africa was able to lead his congregants to eat grass in the name of a revelation from God. He said humans can eat anything to feed their bodies and survive on whatever they choose to eat - and despite the criticisms from thousands of people, members of his congregation still swore by him. (Kwaile, 2017)

In God’s name, religious leaders have replaced the truth of God’s word with baseless philosophies, revelations with no biblical endorsement, vain ideas, and perverse teachings to capture the minds and hearts of their followers. Many of the so-called powerful men of God in both mainstream churches and neo-Pentecostal churches have very strong ties with occult movements. Nigerian pastor Benjamin Ojobu and his wife, Patience, were arrested for allegedly using a human head in rituals for church members. (Onongha, 2011) This dual allegiance, known as syncretism is dominant among pastors and Christians alike. As Lee-Hegeman, a former missionary of West Africa explained, Christianity is practiced in the daytime and occult practice is done at night. Many of the pastors will preach from the pulpit that this type of thing is wrong, but secretly take part in it at night. (Fortunak, 2008) This position is maintained by Archbishop Roger Houngbédi of Cotonou when he said many Catholics in Africa are still too closely tied to esoteric circles, talismans and other superstitions. (Houngbedo, 2022)

Sad to say many young people have been trapped into secret societies under the disguise of “spiritual church”, and in the end have lost their lives or property in devilish rituals. These so-called men of God are known to possess satanic or demonic powers aimed at captivating more followers. As soon as they have a firm grip on their followers, they make lofty promises of wealth and prosperity which are only a means of destroying lives and livelihood. Nothing good can come from the kingdom of darkness, where the devil, the trickster or the deceiver, only sucks the blood from the culprits.

Abuse of power by religious leaders

Religious leaders of all faiths have significant power which could be used for good or evil. In a recent study by McMaster (2020), it was found that religious leaders draw not only on their positions of power and authority as adults, which is potent in and of itself, but also on assertions about God’s will - the ultimate unquestionable authority for religious adherents - and a figure that can inspire fear as much as it can awe and love.” The pattern whereby religious authorities take advantage of their ‘almighty’ status to abuse their power is prevalent in mainstream churches as well as megachurches. Religious leaders can easily hush opposing voices to agendas that are crafted to serve their selfish interest and, while they milk and molest religiously, serve their selfish interest and, while they milk and molest religiously, they claim one cannot question the things of the spirit. The refrain from the pulpit is usually that the church is not a democracy; some even perpetuate the belief that as they have been appointed by God, they are not answerable to the people. As such, consultative bodies are mere formalities as the leaders always have the final say in everything.

Condemnation of abuse of young girls and women is easily shovelled aside for fear of the authority and excessive power wielded by religious leaders. When abuse is disclosed, it is often met with skepticism or denial, even by a child’s family. This is because devotion to the institution shapes social identity, especially for more devout individuals. Members of a religious community may be entirely suspicious of the victim’s claims, favoring instead the religious figure and his or her status and perceived credibility. (McMaster, 2020)

This abuse of power not only manifests itself in the relationship between Christians and religious leaders, but it is a common problem in the ecclesiastical hierarchy in which the bishop, or whoever has the final say of a church organization, has a free hand in manhandling junior ministers or priests who serve at their pleasure. Religious leaders have obviously rejected Jesus’ warning not to lord it over the flock like the pagans. (Matt 20:25)

Because authoritative subversion is commonplace, the only way the clergy vent their frustrations is by grumbling and complaining among themselves about their “powerful” superiors. In some African churches Christians have been subverted so much so that they only confide their concerns to the parish pastor or parish minister.

An example is the experience of an African priest who recounted how a group of women walked into his office and his or her status and perceived credibility. (McMaster, 2020)
shamelessly gone out of proportion in the abuse of his powers. The women cautioned the priest to keep quiet about it, if he wished to spare himself from the wrath of this leader, who happened to be his boss, and was known for his vengeful demeanor.

As earlier indicated, the moment a religious authority acquires influence over the “hearts and minds” of people who are believers in a religion, they “tap into” the most intimate and deepest-felt concerns of believers, gaining immense power over their followers. This power can be used in a self-interested manner, exploiting opportunities to benefit the position of the religious authority or its supporters in society. This could be considered as inconsistent with the real intentions of the religious belief, or it might show lack of respect for the spiritual autonomy of others. The “good faith” of people is then taken advantage of, in ways that involve some kind of deceit, or some dubious, selfish motive. (Anwar, 2012)

Tribalism and Nepotism in the Church

Tribalism and nepotism are among the main causes of conflict and division in African churches and communities. “Tribalism is the attitude and practice of harboring such a strong feeling of loyalty or bonds to one’s tribe that one excludes or even demonizes those ‘others’ who do not belong to that group.” (Nothwehr, 2008) It is worse when the evil of tribalism rears its ugly head in church. In regard to the hierarchy, tribalism is enabled by bishops who use their authority to elevate their tribesmen to high offices or strategic parishes, in the hope of gaining allegiance and advance their interests as well those of their entire tribe.

From its Italian root, “nepote” the word nepotism originated from the Roman catholic church in reference to the practice of popes appointing relatives (most often nephews) as cardinals during the Middle Ages and Renaissance. This was one of the four key flaws which Martin Luther pointed out in his 95 theses against the catholic church. Although the catholic church readdressed nepotism during the council of Trent in the 17th century, there are still cases of nepotism within the Roman catholic church in the twenty first century: bishops or archbishops and head of church offices often use their power and authority to influence the appointment of relatives to high offices. While members of traditional churches and their clergy fear to revolt against this kind of corrupt leadership, the case is different with neo-Pentecostal churches where members can easily boycott the central authority.

For example, tribalism and nepotism were at the root of the scandal that divided one branch of a black neo-Pentecostal church few years ago in Maryland, USA. The young Ghanian pastor who had worked hard to grow the congregation from hundreds to thousands was unceremoniously removed from his position and replaced by the brother of the general overseer of the same church. The problem was not just the transfer but the fact that the replacement lacked the competence to lead the congregation and other qualified pastors in the area were not given the position. The congregants cried foul, left the church, and founded their own church.

Regarding such machinations in the church, no one has said it better than the venerable Fulton Sheen: “There are two ways in which one advances in the church. One is by a push from below, the other is by a gift from above. By push from below, the other is by a gift from above. By push from below, I meant influence or intercession by another. By a gift from above I meant an appointment by the Holy See under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit and without the influence of men.” (Sheen, 2009)

There is no gainsaying the fact that tribalism and nepotism destroy the morale of the clergy: it deeply troubles the local clergy when a fellow priest is groomed and raised to a high office because he is a relative or “son” of the bishop; it is also concerning when some clergies are sidelined and disregarded by their superior due to prejudice; and it is sheer discrimination when one priest is suspended for a crime while another is transferred or sent abroad on further studies for the same crime. And, in the Anglophone regions of Cameroon where social injustice is the main cause of the ongoing civil war, it is impossible for the Roman catholic bishops to effectively denounce the evil of social injustice when the church herself is fraught with tribalism and nepotism.

Alliance between religious leaders and politicians

It is high time African religious leaders rose beyond the bromance with politicians: as Parsitau (2021) says, “What Africa needs is not a clergy in bed with politicians but one that can boldly speak up against the state and hold political leaders accountable.” The vice-president of the Nigerian Economic Summit Group (NESG), Professor Yemi Osinbajo, said that each time he attempted to dismiss a government official who was “found to be corrupt,” a mixture of religious, political and business leaders called him asking that he go easy on the person, the main argument being, what about the others? (Princewill, 2018)

This unholy alliance is founded on nothing else but mutual financial benefits and a high level of class solidarity. Sadly, some politicians and wealthy businessmen are under
the impression they can bribe their way to heaven, and their religious counterparts are taking advantage to offer prayer services in their homes and offices in exchange for large sums of money. They are given conspicuous seats in church and they make large contributions to support the projects of their clerical buddies. As Thiongo’o (2019) noted, “Corruption is honored when corrupt people are honored by the church.” And when religious leaders accomplish projects from these dubious sources of income, it is only meant to advance their ecclesiastical aspirations.

It is not uncommon for prominent religious leaders to change their views in times of serious socio-political upheavals after having received money, or instructions from their political lords on some future benefits. The clearest implication of this is that religious leaders tend to side with the rich against the poor, and when condemning the rich and powerful in their public utterances, their motive cannot be genuine.

Evidently, compromised religious leaders lack credibility and the moral authority to speak truth to power. The compromised clergy can be compared to the scriptural salt that has lost its taste; it is no longer good for anything except to be thrown out and trampled underfoot. (Matt 5:13)

Among other things this mutual beneficial bond between religion and politicians is responsible for the widespread poverty and economic stagnation of many African countries. As Orogun and Pillay (2021) assert, poverty lacks existential capacity, but it is aided and abetted by cause and consolation. The cause is corruption while the consolation is religion. These two have become weapons in the hands of political leaders in alliance with their religious counterparts to increase the rate of poverty disproportionately and advance their acquisition of wealth and luxurious lifestyle.

**Liberation from Spiritual opportunism**

“Christ freed us to make us really free. So, remain firm and do not submit again to the yoke of slavery.” (Gal 5:1) Contrary to the liberating message of Jesus Christ, many Christians have been trapped in an allegiance to religious masters who concoct frightful messages on looming danger, generational curses, death threats, or punishment from God. Their diagnoses for the problems presented by their followers are designed to increase dependence for spiritual support and protection.

Spiritual and mental enslavement have grip Africans everywhere as long as they are reliant on their masters for spiritual prescriptions like anointing water, prayers, and other religious objects. Africans even promote these churches abroad as the invite the religious masters for deliverance sessions. These men of God are revered more than parents, husbands, and wives as they have literally assumed titles like “papas” “mommys” and “daddys”. Some fanatical adherents even keep their leaders’ photos in wallets, closets and on conspicuous places in the living room. Family duties are neglected or shoved aside because one spouse devotes more time to things of the church than to the family. Relationships disintegrate and are even destroyed because one spouse puts the needs of the man of God over those of a partner.

Typical Africans have itchy ears due to widespread superstitious beliefs, and knowingly charlatan pastors tell them exactly what they want to hear—although not the truth. But Jesus says, you will be my true disciples if you keep my word. Then you will know the truth and the truth shall set you free. (Jn 8:31-32) Any Christian teaching that does not seek to liberate is not of God as is evident in Jesus’s inaugural message: The Spirit of the Sovereign LORD is on me, because the LORD has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners. (Lk 4:18) How then can Christians be liberated from the yoke of unscrupulous religious leaders?

* * *

**Remains of Rwandan Genocidaire Found in Zimbabwe**

*By Prince Kurupati*

The remains of one of Rwanda’s most sought-after fugitives were recently found in Zimbabwe. Protais Mpiranya was on the United Nation’s most wanted list on charges of genocide. Mpiranya before and during the Rwandan genocide of 1994 was a commander of the Rwandan presidential guard. Mpiranya’s grave in Zimbabwe was found under an alias name, Sambao Ndume. Mpiranya’s tombstone reveals that he died in 2004.

Mpiranya according to several sources including the International Residual Mechanism for Criminal Tribunals (IRMCT) is believed to have fled to Zimbabwe in 2002 after several jaunts across the African continent. Several sources state that Mpiranya was given refuge by the Zimbabwean government then led by Robert Mugabe. Mpiranya came together with his family and several of his trusted subordinates. The IRMCT believes that Mpiranya was given a beautiful house by the Mugabe administration in an affluent suburb where he lived away from the public eye. From the time he arrived in Zimbabwe till his death, Mpiranya is believed to have “continued his engagement with Zimbabwean...
Mpiranya’s role in the Rwandan Genocide

During the Rwandan genocide, Mpiranya was a commander of the Rwandan presidential guard. Mpiranya, therefore, was one of the most influential people in the country at the time. He used his power to arm the notorious Interahamwe Hutu militia which went on to commit a lot of heinous crimes against hundreds of thousands of the Tutsis.

After the shooting down of the plane carrying then Rwandan president Juvenal Habyarimana on 5 April 1994, which happened to ignite the genocide, Mpiranya ordered the Interahamwe Hutu militia to block all the streets in the country’s capital and set up roadblocks where the Tutsis were separated from the Hutus and massacred.

Mpiranya is also accused of ordering the soldiers from the presidential guard to murder the prime minister Agathe Uwilingiyimana. Though the prime minister was a Hutu, she was deemed a moderate and for that, she was murdered to set an example to all Hutus that no moderates were to be tolerated. Only the extremists eager to exterminate the Tutsis were to be spared. After murdering the prime minister, her body was mutilated and paraded for all to see. The prime minister’s Belgian security detail was killed.

Escape from Rwanda

At the end of the Rwandan genocide, Mpiranya fled Rwanda seeking refuge first in Cameroon. He stayed there for four years but had to flee the country after it became inhospitable for genocidaire fugitives. From Cameroon, Mpiranya went to the DRC where he fought against the Rwandan army in the Second Congo War. He fought alongside other Hutu forces and the Zimbabwean army in support of the country’s president Laurent Kabila. It was during this war that Mpiranya befriended top commanders from the Zimbabwean army. The Zimbabwean army commanders were receptive to Mpiranya as they saw him as a top military strategist.

The United Nations Link

In 2000, Mpiranya was indicted alongside several other former Rwandan army commanders on charges of genocide by the International Criminal Tribunal for Rwanda (ICTR). In 2002, the international tribunal intensified its operations to locate Mpiranya. As the tribunal knew that he was an active figure in the Second Congo War, it became apparent to Mpiranya that the only way to evade arrest was to seek refuge secretly in another country. Thanks to his links with the Zimbabwean army, he fled DRC to Harare.

Since then, the international tribunal and later on through the IRMCT embarked on a mission to track down Rwandan genocidares. Mpiranya was one of the key individuals that they were after. IRMCT followed several leads but most of the times, they had an understanding that he was secretly harbouring in Harare. Unfortunately, they couldn’t locate him. Things were also compounded by the fact that the Zimbabwean government facilitated his name change and his family even after his death continued to conceal his identity.

The IRMCT got its big break in September 2021 when it seized a computer of an individual with strong links to former Rwandan genocidares in a European country. Owing to security and investigative purposes, IRMCT could not disclose more details on the individual and country. Sifting through the hundreds of emails, digital photos and other references on the computer, the IRMCT was convinced that Mpiranya was in Zimbabwe but the graveyard and tombstone links they found meant that their fugitive was now likely dead. IRMCT contacted the Zimbabwean authorities and for the first time in a long time were permitted to exhume and perform DNA analysis on the remains of a man by the name of Ndume Sambao. After analysis, the remains were confirmed to be that of Protais Mpiranya.

Relations between Zimbabwe and Rwanda

After the news broke out that the remains of Protais Mpiranya had been found, several media outlets both local and international reported that the Zimbabwean government knowingly harboured a war crimes fugitive. The Zimbabwean government was forced to issue a statement disputing the reports saying it knew nothing about Mpiranya. However, the Rwandan Embassy in Zimbabwe corrected the wording of the government’s statement in a move that many analysts claimed was a clear demonstration of thorny relations between Rwanda and Zimbabwe. At the present moment, the Rwandan government hasn’t issued any statement per se with regards to the exhumation of Mpiranya’s findings.

In its statement, the Zimbabwean government said, “The Government of Zimbabwe wishes to clarify some recent media reports that are circulating insinuating that the Government was harbouring the most wanted Rwandese fugitive, Protais Mpiranya... Contrary to a smear campaign peddled by both international mainstream media and social media seeking to portray Zimbabwe as aiding, abetting and aiding a fugitive, the government of Zimbabwe assisted the UN Prosecutor in the identification of Mpiranya... It was the Government of Zimbabwe that authorised and participated in the exhumation of Mpiranya’s remains when it was suspected that he was the one buried under a false name, Ndume Sambao.
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Africa Gears Up To Undertake Green Hydrogen Projects

By Wallace Mawire

At a time Green Hydrogen is becoming a hot topic of discussion globally in terms of alternative renewable energy forms, the African continent positioning itself to take an active role in the promising industry, the Africa Solar Industry Association (AFSIA) has said.

AFSIA is the reference association for solar professionals in Africa. The association is headquartered in Kigali, Rwanda and carries out solar-related activities and programmes across Africa. Its regional coverage stretches from Egypt to South-Africa, from Cape Verde to Madagascar.

AFSIA promotes solar power in the African region from large scale grid-connected projects to off-grid solar home systems, through hybrid systems including diesel and storage to solar water pumping, solar stoves or solar water heaters. It also organizes networking opportunities for solar professionals and gives them access to the right information and the right network to expand their business and strengthen the solar industry across the continent.

According to AFSIA, several landmark projects on green hydrogen have already been announced and started across the African continent.

AFSIA says Africa is in a special position where it could benefit twice from green hydrogen. On the other hand, Africa is anticipated to become a major global production hub for export of green hydrogen. Green hydrogen could also be used for local production of green ammonia and green fertilizers which the continent is currently importing in mass quantities.

In 2021 AFSIA organized its first green hydrogen e-conference and the event attracted more than 1,000 participants.

The association says that green hydrogen market has significantly evolved since then. The e-conference showcased the latest developments, key market players and technologies available for green hydrogen in Africa.

Energy experts agree that the provision of cleaner energy sources at lower cost to power the African economy is central to African countries competitive positioning in the global market.

The experts add that the health and environmental costs of polluting fuel sources such as fossil fuels and diesel, coupled with the increasing costs to provide secure electricity supply for economic activity across many sectors of the regional African economies places a burden on the economies that is holding back the growth potential of the continent.

On a global perspective, due to the Russia-Ukraine conflict, the European Union has proposed a gradual embargo on Russian oil and India is facing unprecedented heat waves, putting lives, crops and power supply at risk in the country, according to the South African Energy Storage Association (SAESA).

According to SAESA, the economic growth case for Africa is clear. SAESA says that dealing with poverty is non-negotiable and is an immediate term imperative.

The health and environmental cost of dirty development is even clearer in South Africa which is an additional ZAR 1.00 per kWh for health costs, says SAESA.

The unserved energy cost in South Africa is R1 billion per stage of load shedding, per day as per statistics released by SAESA.

Also, according to the association, the massive investment in diesel as a dirty, costly option to shore up potential growth is evident and not sustainable rated at $0.30 per kWh for the fuel alone, which is approximately double the average cost of grid electricity. Grid under-investment means there is need to look for other options as grid build out happens.

SAESA adds that storage with renewables provides an immediate, viable solution including decentralized solutions with storage as a viable standalone option that make new energy options possible focusing on technology, ownership,
financing, energy system transition and creating jobs as the sector grows.

On the potential for green hydrogen adoption in Africa, SAESA says that hydrogen has been used for several decades by industrial companies because of its great convenience as fuel stock with regards to storage and transport. Due to the continued decreasing cost of renewables, the potential for green hydrogen is now growing exponentially and opening new avenues for its use.

The success of green hydrogen will be linked to its production cost and Africa is ideally positioned to play a major role in the global industry as the continent enjoys some of the best renewable energy resources in the world.

An e-conference held by the African Solar Industry Association on 23 to 24 March 2022 provided an opportunity for the best experts in the industry to deliberate on the potential of green hydrogen for economic growth in Africa.

It also helped to specify the fundamentals of green hydrogen and its advantages for the global economy, identifying the potential for green hydrogen production on the African continent, address the status of development of the green hydrogen ecosystem globally and in Africa, highlight key success factors for rapid development and growth of a green hydrogen ecosystem in Africa, discuss current challenges faced by African countries to embark on green hydrogen production and proposing mitigation strategies, highlighting the role and impact green hydrogen can have on African nations and identifying the role of the solar industry in building a strong green hydrogen industry in Africa.

Professor Dr. Ad van Wijk of Future Energy Systems in the Netherlands said hydrogen is necessary to decarbonize hard to abate sectors and will become the global carbon-free energy carrier to store and transport cheap solar and wind electricity all over the world.

Dr. Christoph Rövekamp, Head of Division, Energy and Hydrogen for the Federal Ministry of Education and Research in Germany in a deep dive on Germany’s green hydrogen agenda with Africa said that Africa’s energy transition will be crucial to the global achievement of the Paris Agreement’s pledges.

He outlined activities embarked on by the German Ministry in Africa which include Science and Technological Cooperation (STC-Agreements) in Egypt and South Africa, MoUs in Morocco, Tunisia and Ghana, bilateral calls in Egypt, Morocco, Tunisia and South Africa.

Rövekamp says that the ministry is on the move together with quite a few partner states on the African continent and uses the entire range of options for action, from scientific and technological cooperation (STC) agreements to MoUs. German also has a National Hydrogen Strategy adopted by the Federal Government in June 2020. It is a coherent framework for the generation, transportation and use of hydrogen also encouraging relevant innovations and investment. The strategy sets out the steps that are needed to meet the German climate targets, create new value chains for the German economy and foster energy policy cooperation at international level.

The strategy also supports international Research and Development energy partnerships and cooperation. It was developed by Ministries of Economic Affairs and Energy; Transport; Environment; Economic Cooperation and Development; and Education and Research.

The Federal Ministry of Education and Research (BMBF) supports basic and application-oriented research in the fields of renewable energies, sustainable energy systems and green hydrogen technologies and its strategic focal areas are on capacity building, research, development and innovation including scientific exchange.

According to Rövekamp Research and Development projects have been embarked on in 32 African countries with a focus on the western and southern regions. Another initiative is the Beacon project H2 ATLAS-AFRICA.

Hydrogen is both an energy carrier and a source of energy and can be produced from a wide variety of energy sources, generated via electrolysis, using renewable energy and water and produces significantly lower carbon dioxide emissions than other pathways.

The H2 ATLAS-AFRICA initiative seeks to create a database to develop a green hydrogen-driven economy to support sustainable development and contribute to the fight against climate change in both Sub-Saharan Africa and in German, according to Rövekamp.

The main indicators of the initiative include renewable energy potential estimation data, renewable energy resources such as solar, hydro, wind and biomass promotion focus, including hydrogen generation and valorization data, just to mention a few.

The German Ministry also has a graduate school programme on green hydrogen with a new scholarship scheme for students from all 15 ECOWAS countries, an international master’s degree in Energy and Green Hydrogen Technology, 24-months’ programme in partnership with Forschungszentrum Jülich and RWTH Aachen University including preparing and training a new generation of interdisciplinary professionals capable of proposing adapted solutions to the ongoing energy crisis in West Africa.

Vincent Oldenbroek, Secretary General of the African Hydrogen Partnership (AHP), the only continent-wide African association covering fuel cells, hydrogen, related chemicals and carriers outlined initiatives being embarked under the partnership.

AHP is incorporated as a non-profit Private Company Limited in the Republic of Mauritius. Mauritius is a non-aligned country ideal for building constructive relationships across the entire African continent, according to AHP.

The vision of the partnership is to establish hydrogen economies in Africa and to promote, support and accelerate the deployment of green hydrogen and fuel cell technology, improve access to clean energy and mobility in Africa and treatment of political, legal and tax issues on a Pan-African basis.

On opportunities for all African Countries, Oldenbroek said that green hydrogen economies in Africa can replace importation of fossil fuels and chemicals such as ammonia and methanol, create new export markets of hydrogen and derived chemicals and products such as ammonia and carbon dioxide free steel.

African countries can benefit from creation of domestic hydrogen economies and replacing energy imports, Oldenbroek said.

According to him, Africa has a tremendous potential to decarbonize itself and the world and has all the resources to make it such as renewable, minerals such as Platinum Group Metals (PGMs), space and green field opportunities, new domestic and export markets including a young population. He adds that there is potential to create hydrogen landing zones and full hydrogen eco-systems around areas of metropoles, ports, mining zones, trading hubs and routes.

Great potential to create hydrogen landing zones is reported to be available in countries such as Morocco, Egypt, Nigeria, Ghana, Ethiopia, Djibouti, Tanzania, Rwanda, Kenya, Uganda, South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Zambia and the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).
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For the first time in the history of football’s elite competition, the FIFA World Cup, female referees will officiate at the 2022 Qatar World Cup. The good news for Africa is that our very own Salima Mukansanga from Rwanda is among the first female referees chosen to officiate at the World Cup.

Salima Mukansanga has already officiated a high-profile football match for men’s soccer when she became the first-ever female referee to take charge of an Africa Cup of Nations (AFCON) match at the just ended AFCON tournament. Mukansanga officiated a Group B match between Zimbabwe and Guinea. Other high-profile football tournaments that Mukansanga has also officiated include the 2020 Olympics in Tokyo and the CAF Women’s Champions League.

Mukansanga will make history with two other female referees that is, Stephanie Frappart from France and Yoshimi Yamashita from Japan. The FIFA Referees Committee also picked three female assistants. Namely, these are Neuza Back from Brazil, Karen Diaz Medina from Mexico and Kathryn Nesbitt from the USA.

Pierluigi Collina who is the chairman of the FIFA Referees Committee said he was happy with the selection process. In a statement, he said, “We are very happy that with Stephanie Frappart from France, Salima Mukansanga from Rwanda and Yoshimi Yamashita from Japan, as well as assistant referees Neuza Back from Brazil, Karen Diaz Medina from Mexico and Kathryn Nesbitt from the USA, we have been able to call up female match officials for the first time in the history of a FIFA World Cup... This concludes a long process that began several years ago with the deployment of female referees at FIFA men’s junior and senior tournaments. In this way, we clearly emphasise that it is quality that counts for us and not gender”.

Collina went on to say that “I would hope that in the future, the selection of elite women’s match officials for important men’s competitions will be perceived as something normal and no longer as something sensational. They deserve to be at the FIFA World Cup because they constantly perform at a high level, and that’s the important factor for us”.

Mukansanga’s selection is something to celebrate as it takes grit, determination and commitment to succeed in the world of referees. According to Duke University, “referees must move up the ranks by officiating a minimum number of games, passing written and fitness tests, and earning the recommendations of assessors. A failure in any one of the requirements completely prevents a referee from advancing grades.” The mere fact that Mukansanga has managed to reach the top echelons of the refereeing pyramid thus demonstrates her determination and commitment to succeed.

In an interview with DW, Salima Mukansanga said that the desire to inspire many young women to move into football, particularly refereeing keeps her going even when the going gets tough. “Some countries still don’t allow women and girls into football. They say it is not for girls. This is the moment to give them a chance and support them,” she said.

Salima Mukansanga Profile

The 34-year old Salima Mukansanga was born in Rwanda. She grew up in Rusizi District in the West Province. She did her secondary schooling at St Vincent de Paul Musanze Secondary School before proceeding to the University of Gitwe where she attained her bachelor’s degree in Nursing and Midwifery.

Though very sharp and intelligent in her studies, Mukansanga from an early age had great affection for sports. In her early days, she preferred basketball but owing to a lack of resources, she ended up opting for football. During an interview with the New Times, Mukansanga said, “I liked basketball and wanted to take it very seriously, but access to basketball facilities and coaches was hard. That’s how I ended up refereeing, which I have also never regretted. I love it.”

Mukansanga’s first refereeing job came when she was still in secondary school when she officiated in a school tournament final game. She loved the job and from then, she started to learn more about refereeing. Upon completing her secondary schooling, she joined the refereeing body for the men’s Second Division league in Rwanda. Her membership with the refereeing body also allowed her to officiate the women’s top tier league. During these days, she officiated as an assistant referee.

Four years lapsed with her officiating various matches in the men’s second division and the women’s league. After four years, she received her CAF license. The license started to open the big doors for her as she received invitations to officiate in matches across Africa. It was only after she attained the CAF license that she was assigned the centre referee position. Her first job as the centre referee was a CAF African Women’s Championship battle between Tanzania and Zambia.

Mukansanga believes it was the way she handled her first centre positions referee match that opened doors for her to greater success. In a statement during her interview with New Times, she said “It is because of how I handled that match that I proved my ability to lead matches at any level on the continent. It was an exciting experience. Since that day, I have been trusted to officiate countless international matches in Africa and beyond.”

After the match between Tanzania and Zambia, she went on to take the duty of more international matches starting with the 2015 All-Africa Games in Brazzaville. From there, she officiated at the 2015 Cecafa Women Challenge after which she took charge of various CAF Women’s Champions League matches, then the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and now, the FIFA Men’s World Cup.

Mukansanga has received rave reviews from many she has worked with over the years including former Cecafa secretary general Nicholas Musonye who said, “I worked with Mukansanga at many Cecafa tournaments across the East African region and I can tell you I knew straight away her star was on the rise... She could always approach me after every match she had officiated at Cecafa to ask me if she got it right if she did it wrong, and if there are any areas she needs to improve on... Salima was ready to learn and I was, therefore, not surprised to see CAF give her the game between Zimbabwe and Guinea, she deserved it and congratulations to her.”
HOW TO BECOME A SUCCESSFUL PROFESSIONAL FOOTBALLER
THE 4P’S TO A SUCCESSFUL CAREER

Foreword by Samuel Eto'o Fils

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