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A Familiar Circus In Uncertain Times At The AU

By Ajong Mbapndah L

High profile delegations, pompous speeches, loud sounding resolutions, and a change of leadership from one African President to another -such is a summary of what everyday Africans have come to expect from African Union Summits. The continental body launched or transformed from the OAU with so much hope some twenty years ago has failed to live up to the high expectations of many Africans. Rather, the mix messages and the successions of all talk and little action summits have only reinforced the mindset of many that the AU is a club that caters to interests of the leaders and not the people.

At the recent 36th Summit of the AU in Addis Ababa, a number of key issues were in focus and strong resolutions taken. For instance on the issues of the military coups, the leaders did not mince words in continuing with a policy that makes unconstitutional takeovers of power anathema. In trying to match words with action, the suspension of countries like Mali, Burkina Faso, and Guinea was maintained. The three countries have are currently under military rule having deposed democratically elected leaders.

As salutary as this may be, many find it curious that a country like Chad where the constitutional channels of succession were thrown to the winds to facilitate the emergence of a filial succession continues to get a pass. How that does not qualify as a coup defies logic. As much as you try to polish his credentials, the current leader of Chad is a military ruler whose accession to power was not democratic or on any constitutional merits. So, when the AU gives Chad a pass, and hits on Burkina Faso, Guinea, and Mali, Africans at this age and time are bound to ask questions.

Besides the glaring double standards that the Chadian situation and many others highlight, the glee with which many Africans embrace or normalize military coups should be a cause for concern. To many in Mali, Guinea and Burkina Faso, keeping their countries out of the AU is no big deal at all. Talk to many there and the question will be

of what use is the AU or how has it been of help to their countries? While coups must be condemned and shun at all times, when it is the inept leadership of “democratically” elected leaders that results in coups, this must be highlighted. It certainly is a betrayal of public trust when a leader with the pedigree of Alpha Conde in Guinea could entertain the thought of changing constitutional term limits to remain in power. The same goes for leaders with questionable legitimacies as a result of flawed or rigged elections. Turning a blind eye to these only helps to erode the credibility of the continental body in the eyes of Africans.

At the recent summit, trade was in focus as well with discussions on advancing the AfCTA billed as the game changer for Africa. For all its potential, experts still peg intra African trade at about 16%. In a world of competition, how does Africa expect to move forward with these kind of numbers? Even with the AfCTA in place, the political will of individual countries to facilitate its implementation remains a big hurdle. Just last year or so, it was Uganda and Rwanda closing borders because of a dispute, there have been issues between Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea. Currently, it is conflict between Rwanda and the DR. Congo. Without trying to dampen the enthusiasm Africans have in the transformational potential of the AfCTA, there is every reason to highlight these concerns in the hope that leaders will take them seriously.

Talk about all talk and little action and everyday Africans will ask the question, what happened to the lofty dream of the African Union passport? For many Africans, traveling across the continent is a hellish experience. The complex visa processes makes Africans feel like strangers in their own continent. If it is not complex visa processes, it is nationals of Cameroon been expelled from Equatorial Guinea, it is other Africans bearing the brunt of xenophobic attacks in South Africa, it is Tunisians subjecting fellow Africans to blatantly inhumane treatment. With



Ajong Mbapndah L, Managing Editor

such artificial barriers, and no decisive leadership from the AU to respond to the pressing issues and needs of the people, Africa will continue to turn in circles.

It is not solutions that are lacking, and talking about resources is an easy excuse. Where there is the will there will always be the means. The political will has been lacking and few leaders are willing to look at the big picture - a picture which puts the interests of the people before their own, a picture which puts the people at the centre of all actions, one which means a continental wide agenda may mean even better tidings for the individual countries they lead.

At the recent high stakes elections in Nigeria, we saw the participation of a record number of former African leaders in diverse capacities. From openly partisan ones like former President Obasanjo, to Thabo Mbeki former South African President who led the Commonwealth observer mission group, to former President Joyce Banda with NDI/IRI observer mission, former Kenyan President Uhuru Kenyatta with the AU observer mission, and others like John Mahama of Ghana and Ernest Koroma of Sierra Leone, liaising with former President Goodluck Jonathan with the West African Elders Forum, the contribution of these leaders in shepherding through the complicated elections cannot be ignored.

If all these leaders could be active in

Nigerian elections, the AU could use more of them in addressing the numerous conflicts across the continent. In fairness, we have seen former leaders like Obasanjo working on the crisis in Ethiopia, Uhuru Kenyatta working on the crisis between Congo and Rwanda, but what about other conflicts like the one in Cameroon that have dragged on for some six years now? For a country that has over the years hosted refugees from Namibia to Niger, Chad, Nigeria, Liberia, and others, at its own hour of need with the vicious conflict in the English speaking North West and South West regions of

the country, one would have expected a more robust effort from the AU and the elder statesmen of the continent in seeking solutions.

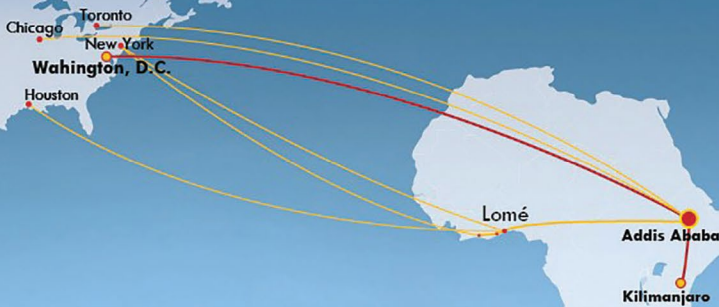
Like in previous elections, the 2023 elections in Nigeria had more than its healthy dose of controversy. As Tinubu claimed his turn, his partisans were ecstatic, still, millions who saw Peter Obi a better future for Nigeria are simmering in anger and frustration. Nigeria as we have opined several times sets the tempo for Africa. While it is fair to critique the electoral process and the gapping short comings of INEC, we should not lose sight of the positives that could be used as a better template in future elections. This is what Sam Mbonu Okey, a former presidential hopeful shares with us.

In this issue, we also visit the African Trade Insurance Agency with CEO Manuel Moses/ As a multilateral financial organization which provides export credit insurance, political risk insurance (investment insurance) and other financial instruments to help de-risk and decrease the cost of doing business in Africa, the ATI is primed to take on greater importance with the AfCTA.

Equally in focus are the changing dynamics of ties between Japan and Africa, and the ground breaking work of Africa CDC in keeping Africa healthy, the energy blues of South Africa, Raila Odinga at work in Kenya and more... Happy reading!!

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Kenya: Odinga Gets Polity Bubbling Again

By Samuel Ouma

Kenya's political temperatures are boiling again despite the East African country holding its general elections in August 2022. The atmosphere is politically tense as a result of the opposition, Azimio-La Umoja One Kenya alliance coalition's sustained onslaught on the government.

Raila Odinga-led team vowed not to recognize William Ruto as the President, saying they disagreed with the electoral commission, which declared Ruto the winner and the Supreme Court that validated the election. According to Odinga, the Independent Electoral and Boundaries Commission (IEBC) and the court had been hijacked by cartels who handed over their victory to their opponent.

"We as Azimio reject the 2022 election results. We cannot and will not recognize the Kenya Kwanza regime and we consider the Kenya Kwanza government illegitimate. We don't recognize William Ruto as President of Kenya and we equally don't recognize any officials in the office with him," said Odinga.



We cannot and will not recognize the Kenya Kwanza regime ,says Raila Odinga

"We know what happened next at the Supreme Court. A compromised court failed to either declare the true victors, annul the elections or order a rerun because of the glaring violations of the law and the constitution by the

IEBC. The Supreme Court itself was captured by the cartels that had also captured the IEBC," added Odinga.

Odinga's sentiments had been echoed by his running mate in the August 9 elections Martha Karua.

"The law recognizes him, I don't. I have a choice; he is the president courtesy of the law. I don't have to over praise that position," Karua said in an interview with a local radio station in November last year.

She added, "I still stand here to stay that the results were doctored. You can't stop my brain from working and force me to believe."

"My belief is based on my conscience but giving the way to the law is obeying the law. The court spoke we gave way but we are still seeking for the truth. I will continue saying that we were hoodwinked."

The commission announced that Ruto garnered 7,176,141 votes (50.49%), defeating Raila Odinga of Azimio, who received 6,942,930 votes (48.85%). However, in a bombshell revelation, an alleged anonymous whistleblower from the IEBC, which emerged recently, revealed proof of fraud and manipulation in the 2022 elections.

The whistleblower alleged that Raila Odinga garnered 8,170,353 votes representing 57.3 per cent, while William Ruto garnered 5,915,973, equivalent to 41.66 per



Kalonzo Musyoka (left), Raila Odinga (middle) and Martha Karua (right).

cent. The unnamed whistleblower also said that, contrary to electoral laws, illegal entities were formed inside the IEBC data transmission centre's «back office» to convert Form 34B from its original JPEG format to PDF.

Further, the whistleblower claimed that unauthorized individuals had been granted remote access or full access so they could modify JPEG Forms 34B using Microsoft Word or other applications, convert them back to PNG or PDF, and then post them to the commission portal.

The whistleblower also alleged that Form 34A of Book 2 was frequently used when forms 34A of Books 1 ran out at the polls. The original forms' background watermarks were changed by converting them to PNG to sway the results in favour of one candidate over another.

The IEBC leadership, according to the whistleblower, was well aware of the fraud and manipulations going on but did nothing to stop it.

Odinga's team is now demanding an audit of the 2022 elections by an independent institution and has called on Ruto to resign, saying he has neither the mandate of the people nor the ability to govern.

«We demand that the entire infrastructure and records of the 2022 elections at IEBC be made public and be audited by an impartial body. A forensic audit of the IEBC results and servers is non-negotiable,» stated Odinga.

To push Ruto out of office, Azimio resorted to political gatherings to mobilize Kenyans in opposition to William Ruto's administration. The first rally was held in Nairobi's Kibera on February 5, where they vowed not to stop until Ruto is out of office. Following the rally in Kibera, others were held in Mavoko, Kisii, Kisumu, and Githurai, and more rallies are anticipated in the future.

Odinga also, on February 22, during the opposition's prayer rally at Jevanjee Gardens in Nairobi, issued a 14-day ultimatum to the



Odinga's rally in Kisii, elections maybe over, but the opposition leader still excels in pulling huge crowds

Ruto-led administration to lower prices of essential goods and taxes failure to which they will call for demonstrations across the nation to coerce the government to act.

According to the ODM party leader, the Ruto administration's excessive taxes have caused basic commodity prices to skyrocket, subjecting millions of Kenyans to miseries. The opposition leader has likened Ruto's administration to the biblical tax collector Zacchaeus, calling Kenyans to refuse paying taxes, terming them «punitive».

He also blamed the high cost of living on President William Ruto's decision to eliminate food and fuel subsidies instituted by his predecessor, Uhuru Kenyatta, to help the populace. Odinga called the decision to withdraw subsidies amid a drought and famine reckless and callous and urged that they be reinstated.

«The government must tell the people why food remains unavailable and unaffordable. The financial stipend must immediately be made

available to poor families and youths who are struggling to make ends meet,» said Odinga.

The former Prime Minister is also calling for a halt to the continuing process of recruiting election commissioners, claiming that it is defective. Under the IEBC (Amendment) Bill, 2022, which has already received presidential assent, the Political Parties Liaison Committee and the Public Service Commission (PSC) have one slot in the selection panel.

The Inter-Religious Council will have two slots; the Parliamentary Service Commission boasts of a bigger share of four slots, while the Law Society of Kenya has a slot. Nevertheless, Odinga is pushing for a combined selection process and the decentralization of the IEBC.

«We demand that any attempts to reconstitute the IEBC single-handedly by Ruto cease forthwith so that Kenyans themselves can reconstitute the body after full and fair deliberations,» reiterated Odinga.

With the departure of IEBC

chairperson Wafula Chebukati, CEO Marjan Hussein, and Commissioner Boya Molu due to the expiration of their tenure, the suspension of one commissioner, and the resignation of three others, the commission is now managed by the secretariat.

Opposition actions should not be taken lightly since they risk sparking a revolution and political violence. Things will unlikely improve anytime soon, with the government daring Odinga to carry out his threats to stage statewide protests.

«As president, I am going to make sure we avoid and banish impunity. There is nobody who is going to threaten Kenyans with impunity. Everybody must respect the law. We will make sure that everybody obeys the constitution. I want to tell our friends who are used to impunity who are used to forcing their way. That they will have no way. And nobody is going to threaten Kenyans,» said Ruto.

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South Africa: Bad To Worse For Energy Crisis

By Prince Kurupati

The electricity crisis in South Africa is worsening by the day something which sees most communities going for 12 hours each day without power. The crisis has affected every facet of life in South Africa and as a way of dealing effectively with the crisis, South African President Cyril Ramaphosa at the start of February 2023 declared a state of disaster over the energy crisis.

Addressing members of Parliament during his State of the Nation Address (SONA), President Cyril Ramaphosa said, "The Minister of Cooperative Governance has just gazetted the declaration of the State

of Disaster, which will begin with immediate effect".

In declaring the state of disaster, President Ramaphosa said "extraordinary circumstances do call for extraordinary measures". The president said "the energy crisis is an existential threat to our economy and to the social fabric of our country," and in declaring the state of disaster, the government will suspend a range of regulatory requirements, such as environmental assessments for new power projects, as well as fast track procurement decisions that could help the state-owned power company Eskom to add generation capacity to the grid at a faster pace.

Apart from helping the government to procure much-needed energy equipment expeditiously without going through long bureaucratic processes, the state of disaster also allows the government to exempt essential services such as hospitals and water treatment plants from load shedding (scheduled and controlled electricity shutdowns). Also, it allows the government to incentivise all homeowners who install alternative



Extraordinary circumstances do call for extraordinary measures, says President Ramaphosa.

power sources on their homes such as solar. Additionally, it also allows the government to incentivise homeowners who feed excess power from alternative power sources to the national grid.

From the living who are working in factories, and industries and those in their homes who need power for home consumption (cooking and entertainment) to the dead in mortuaries, South Africa's power crisis is not sparing anyone. The crisis is now also extending its tentacles and bleeding other public services as several communities in the country are starting to face water shortages as there is no backup power for water pumps at some local reservoirs.

On the macro level, the power crisis is going to hinder economic growth in the country to just 0.3% this year – a near economic standstill. Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR) estimates that "the total economic impact of load shedding in South Africa over the past 10 years could be as high as R388 billion. In 2019 alone, there were significant impacts on the economy – the

estimated cost being between R60 billion and R120 billion".

Moving forward, however, the president said that he is going to appoint a minister of electricity who will focus solely on the crisis. At the same time, he pledged to continue with the country's partly donor-funded transition to cleaner energy. In the next half-decade, the South African government is looking to invest \$84.52 billion in clean energy.

Simon Trace who is the programme director at Energy and Economic Growth (EEG) said that alternative (clean) energy may be the only way to go for South Africa if it is to achieve electricity self-sufficiency. With Eskom heavily relying on coal-powered power generation, constant operational failures, maintenance issues and breakdowns of ageing equipment at the coal plants means that it may be a long time before a return to normalcy on the coal power generation front is achieved. Compounded with Eskom's underinvestment and high debts, the situation is grim.

Echoing the same sentiments,

Erwin Schwella a public affairs expert said, "It's a whole energy system that is collapsing and a situation that is probably impossible to resolve in the short term".

The main opposition party in South Africa the Democratic Alliance (DA) said that it doesn't agree with the calling of a state of disaster and will contest the decision in the courts. The DA said its main bone of contention with the decision stems from how the Ramaphosa government handled a previous state of emergency. At the height of the Covid-19 pandemic, President Ramaphosa declared a state of emergency which was

soon after associated with a range of procurement processes abuse. The DA says that the ANC-led government failed to act prudently during the earlier declared state of emergency as it abused procurement processes for the enrichment of a few connected individuals and likewise, this can happen this time around hence why it disagrees with the decision.

Peter Attard Montalto who is the head of capital markets research at South African research firm Intellidex agrees with the DA in disproving the declaration of the state of disaster on energy albeit arguing from the point of view that the energy crisis should not be viewed as a procurement problem but rather a political problem hence only political solutions are needed. "The energy crisis is a political problem, not a procurement problem, and so the state of disaster is a political fig leaf that will achieve very little, except open up huge risks of looting like we saw during Covid," Montalto said.

Nigeria 2023-One Small Step for Nigeria, One Giant Step for Africa

By Okey Samuel Mbonu *



A big win for Bola Ahmed Tinubu in the hotly contested elections to succeed President Buhari. Photo credit Emmanuel Osodi, AP.

On February 25, 2023, Nigerians went to the polls, to elect a successor, for outgoing president, Muhammadu Buhari. In the past twenty years, an election has happened every four years in Nigeria; in which candidates from Nigeria's two dominant political parties, the "People's Democratic Party (PDP)", and the "All Progressives Congress (APC)", struggle to produce a new president, for Africa's most populous country, and the largest democratic experiment in Africa. This time it was different, the Labour Party (LP) is now a serious contender as well, and this portends a bright future for Africa's most populous nation.

2023 has been different, because a massive youth movement has upended the political space in Nigeria. The exceptional performance of the Labour Party (LP), and its presidential candidate Peter Obi, has made the future of the two political behemoths of PDP and the APC very uncertain. Labour Party (LP) has been around

over the past twenty-plus years in Nigeria. However, Labour was a fledgling movement, with limited political clout, until the entrant of a relatively more youthful though conservative candidate, Peter Obi. LP has now detached PDP (and APC), from their previous dominant hold in at least 12 out of Nigeria's 36 states, including a highly prized victory in Nigeria's Commercial Capital Lagos State. Lagos state is the wealthiest and most populous state in Nigeria, with a population of about 25 million, and an economy that is bigger than several African countries.

The 2023 elections have certainly started the journey to a mature democracy, in the heart of Africa. The direction Nigeria heads to, eventually becomes the direction of sub-Saharan Africa. Several countries in sub-Saharan Africa have presidents who have been in power for 20, 30, or 40 years; and the majority of the population in many of these countries, have never witnessed a

political transition in their lifetimes; thus, though this is one small step for Nigeria, it is a giant step for Africa.

However, going forward, how did Labour Party (LP), upend a political system that has seen the two big parties PDP and APC dominate elections in Africa's largest democracy? The answers lie in several cogent issues, each of which has become a factor now and the foreseeable future.

The Youth Bulge: Most African countries have huge youth populations that are relatively more exposed than most old-style political leaders in Africa care to admit. In Nigeria, the youth bulge is particularly acute, because approximately 80% of the country's population are between 18 and 40. This demographic has been an under-utilized and potent political force for some time; and seeing a face that was not septuagenarian, running a serious presidential race was an instant motivation to many of them. Beyond the face, Peter Obi is seen

as a less corrupt candidate than the flag bearers of the other two parties, including former Lagos governor Bola Tinubu, and former Vice President Atiku Abubakar, both of whom are seen as guardians of the old order, under which the youths believe they would never live up to their potentials. Whether this is entirely true remains to be seen.

The North-South balance in Nigeria's political Cycles: The Labour candidate Peter Obi hails from Southeastern Nigeria, a densely populated and highly enterprising region of Nigeria, populated by the Igbo. The Igbo are one of the major ethnic groups, and a group that has major presence across every region, especially in the urban enclaves of Nigeria. This Southeastern region of the defunct Biafra region has never produced a president in modern Nigeria (except for the ceremonial presidency of Nnamdi Azikiwe after Nigeria's independence). Thus, there was massive empathy for Peter Obi

who hails from this region.

Technology-Campaign Costs-Active Volunteerism: Traditionally, one needed a massive war-chest to contemplate running for the presidency in Nigeria. The idea of campaign volunteerism was non-existent in Nigeria; because in the successive evolution of Nigeria's democracy, monetary inducements of the electorate, and election officials, by candidates, were fairly normal. And so, if a candidate did not serve in a previous lucrative public role, where the candidate plundered the state, to amass a massive loot to share during campaigns, the candidate could not even compete in party primaries, because of the massive nomination fees.

The nomination fees for political office in Nigeria is bizarre, and could be as high as \$100,000 and beyond, notwithstanding the ordinary campaign expenses that would also run in the millions. Thus, the system would by default shut off credible and competent characters, who would have made a positive difference in public service in the lives of millions. In these regard, Peter Obi of LP also benefited from being from the wealthy class, even though he is reputed to be an extremely conservative person, and was frugal in his prior role as governor of Anambra, a southeastern



Peter Obi may have lost the elections, but the two party myth in Nigerian politics may have been shattered for good

state.

The use of social media and related technology also swung the pendulum in favor of Obi and the LP, along with active participation by youths, who seem to have embraced volunteerism for the first time, rather than sit around and wait for cash inducements by candidates.

Contesting The Results

The Independent Electoral Commission (INEC) has declared Bola Tinubu of APC, the winner of the polls, because INEC says that Tinubu

met the requirement of winning the majority vote at 8.7 million votes, and 25% of the votes in the required 25 out of 36 states, and the Federal Capital Abuja; while Abubakar of PDP won 6.9 million votes; and Obi of LP won 6.2 million votes. However, there are lingering issues of voter fraud, which the supreme court of Nigeria would need to resolve before the May 29 swearing in of a new president. Obi particularly has a strong case at the Supreme Court, whether the election is overturned in some areas or not, because the allegation of rigging, particularly in the southern state of Rivers State, where the sitting governor appeared desperately interested in the outcome of the election, appears credible. Whether there is sufficient evidence to out rightly prevent Tinubu from becoming president on May 29 is currently beyond the scope of this article; stopping a declared winner in a civilian regime, from becoming president can be rightly described as uncharted waters. Either way, Nigeria has registered an incredibly important step

in its march for political maturity, the African giant is getting closer to her destined greatness as a black super-power.

Beyond 2023

Many Nigerians are starting to see these political transitions as normal, and in the near future, starting in 2027, the world will see a clear winner in Nigeria's elections, powered by the Nigerian people themselves, as the country begins to play its role as the true "Giant of Africa" and the undisputed leading black country in the world.

With a nominal GDP of \$522 Billion (and more realistically \$750-\$1 trillion real GDP), a potent cultural export, which probably may not be matched by other countries in the world, because of the natural and peculiar talents in Nigeria (music-performance arts); a tech savvy youth bulge; a growing population that would be 400 million in another 15-18 years (making Nigeria the 4th most populous country in the world); Nigeria's destiny is almost assured. The signs are all in there, and the nations of the world know it; that's why no leading nation is betting against Nigeria yet.

*Mbonu was a former aspirant for the president of Nigeria, and ran in 2019 primaries.



Beyond the contentious nature of the elections, the best days of Nigeria are still ahead ,says Okey Samuel Mbonu.

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Peaceful but Flawed - NDI/IRI's Observation on Nigeria Elections

By Prince Kurupati



Despite real and troubling issues, Nigerians once again demonstrated their commitment to the democratic process, the NDI,IRI delegation opined.

In its preliminary statement following the work it did in observing the Nigerian 2023 election from days preceding the casting of votes to the voting day and subsequent collation of results, the International Republican Institute (IRI) and the National Democratic Institute (NDI) under the Joint Election Observation Mission concluded that the February 25 Nigerian election was largely peaceful but severely flawed.

In the NDI/IRI preliminary statement presented by the former President of Malawi Dr. Joyce Banda, the observation mission started by giving Nigerian citizens the thumbs up for exercising their democratic right peacefully. "Nigerians once again demonstrated their commitment to the democratic process... Voters displayed extraordinary resilience and resolve to have their voices heard

through the ballot, often waiting for several hours," to ensure that they cast their vote.

Dr. Joyce Banda however lamented the poor handling of the election by the Independent National Electoral Commission (INEC) saying that it failed to ensure that the election runs smoothly with many logistical and administrative obstacles impeding voters from timeously exercising their right to vote while in the most extreme of cases, inhibiting voters from casting their votes.

In laying the criticism, the NDI/IRI observation mission did highlight the fact that it "conducted its activities in accordance with Nigerian law and the Declaration of Principles for International Election Observation and collaborated closely with other international and regional observer missions that endorse the Declaration, while coordinating with

impartial and independent citizen observer organizations." As such, its findings (though preliminary) are objective, independent and devoid of any bias toward any individual or organization.

In summarizing the 'flawed' nature of the elections which it described as falling "well short of Nigerian citizens' legitimate and reasonable expectations," the observation mission said "Failures of logistics, challenges with voter registration and voter card distribution, inadequate communication by INEC, lack of transparency in the publication of election data, and unchecked political violence before and during the elections overshadowed incremental administrative gains achieved in the pre-election period, and impeded a substantial number of citizens from participating in voting... On election day, logistical failings caused late

openings across the country, creating tensions, and the secrecy of the ballot was compromised in some polling units given overcrowding". Owing to this, INEC as the organizing body "undermined citizen confidence at a crucial moment of the (election) process".

The NDI/IRI mission also weighed in on the reformed Electoral Act of 2022 saying that though it "introduced much-needed reforms aimed at increasing transparency in results collation and timely organization of pre-electoral processes," it still falls short of holistically addressing all the impediments which need to be removed for the successful and smooth holding of national elections. The observation mission called for the Electoral Act to further be amended such that it addresses all the facets of elections that enable the smooth operation of the electoral process.

One of the key areas which the NDI/IRI observation mission called upon the Nigerian authorities, civil society and general citizenry to consider in amending and further reforming the electoral space is to put in place enforcement mechanisms that ensure that all those found guilty of violating the Electoral Act 2022 are timeously and properly brought to book. The Electoral Act 2022 “prescribe stiff penalties for electoral offences, including vote buying, violence, and disruption of the voting process”. However, even though some individuals including contestants were publicly seen violating some of these measures, nothing was done to them.

The preliminary observations of the NDI/IRI significantly mirror those of the United States, European Union, Commonwealth and other international observer groups. While acknowledging that the elections were not the perfect model of peace, there was substantially a limited number of reported electoral (inter-party and intra-party) violence before, during and immediately after the voting day. However, what was quite evident before and during Election Day are widespread irregularities mostly



INEC as the organizing body undermined citizen confidence at a crucial moment of the election process , says the NDI report. Photo credit Cristina Aldehuela,AFP.

those which were a result of INEC's actions and inactions.

Former President of South Africa Thabo Mbeki who is Chairperson of the Commonwealth Observer Group in delivering his preliminary assessment of the Nigerian elections

acknowledged that there were administrative challenges but all those who want to lodge appeals and contest the handling of the elections should do so peacefully and properly. “We congratulate all Nigerians for their determination, patience and

resilience displayed throughout the electoral process. We call on all those with grievances to address disputes through prescribed legal channels,” Mbeki said.

The European Union preliminary report stated that “Nigerians went to the polls in highly anticipated presidential and National Assembly elections that INEC kept on schedule despite a volatile and challenging environment. Fundamental freedoms of assembly and movement were largely respected, yet the full enjoyment of the latter was impeded by insufficient planning, insecurity and the prevailing Naira and fuel shortages... Abuse of incumbency by various political officeholders distorted the playing field and there were widespread allegations of vote buying. Media provided extensive coverage of the three leading campaigns, while disinformation interfered with voters' right to make an informed choice on election day. The EU EOM is continuing its observation of the ongoing collation and tabulation of results throughout the country”.



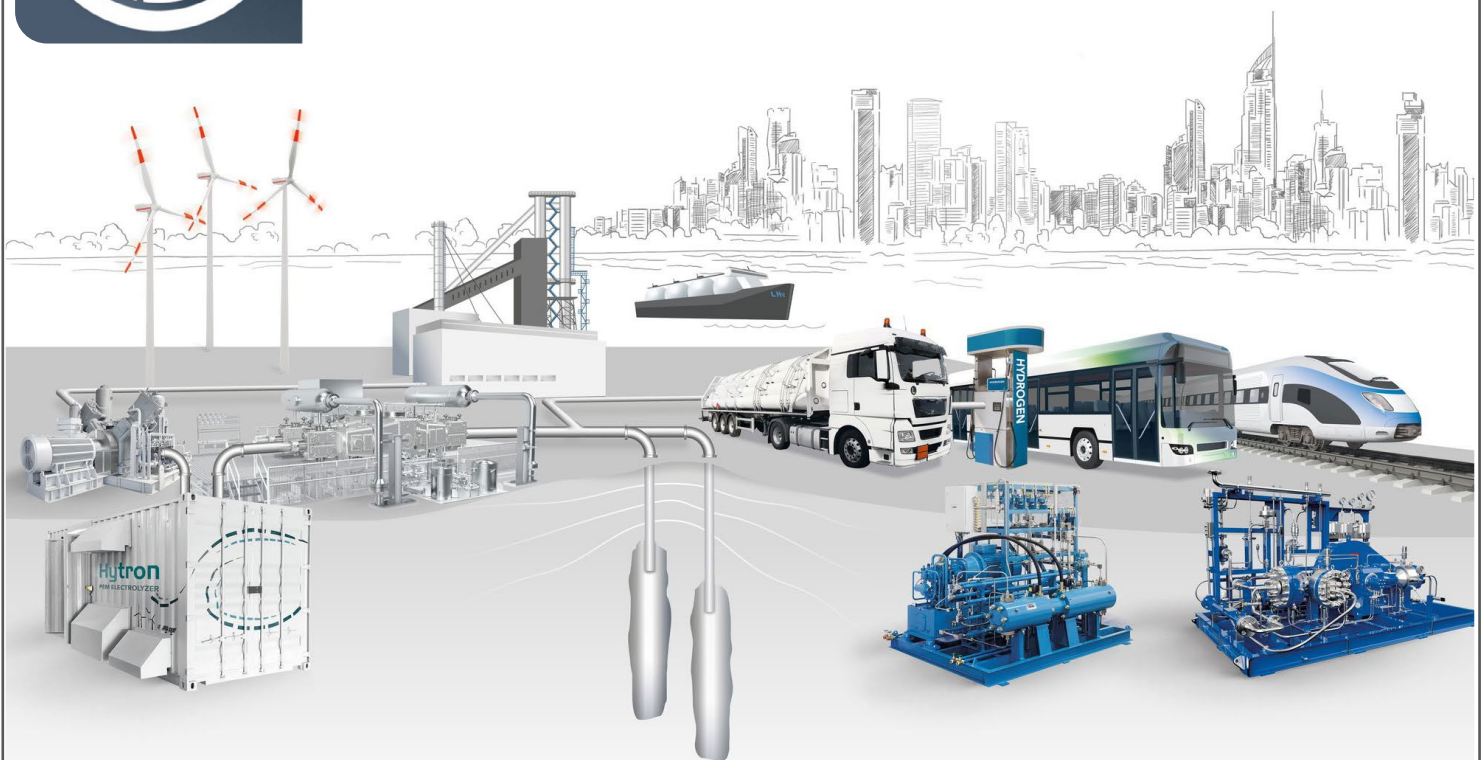
We call on all those with grievances to address disputes through prescribed legal channels,says Thabo Mbeki.

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Japanese African Insights with Ken Shibusawa

By Ajong Mbapndah L



Ken Shibusawa is leading the charge in opening fresh frontiers for Japanese-African relations.

In an interview with PAV, Ken Shibusawa, a seasoned entrepreneur in the investment industry says his country Japan is prioritising human resource development in its engagement drive with Africa. For Ken Shibusawa, «150 years ago, Japan was able to utilize its human capital to emerge from an emerging country over several decades and joined the advanced nations at that time,» the same reliance on human resources as a catalyst for development is what Japan wants to bring and share with Africa.

How will you define the current state of ties between Japan and Africa?

Ken Shibusawa: We are at a very interesting juncture. The historical context between Japan and Africa is

not there, in terms of the business relationship, it is there but not as much. The presence of Japan in Africa has been worked through the Japan International Corporation Agency; they have been in Africa for quite a long time.

As a member of the Africa project team at Keizai Doyukai «Japan Association of Corporate Executives,» we have found out that over the last ten years, direct investment of Japan into Africa was declining. This was unacceptable for us the project team and that is why we made a recommendation to the government to launch a public-private partnership initiative for impact investments into Africa, this was three years ago.

At the beginning of this year, we established the impact management company, and we will start fundraising for the fund in June, I think. The

investors of the fund will be members of the Keizai Doyukai. We are at this interesting juncture where many people in Japan, and Africa are at a new frontier, the concept of impact investing is a new frontier, and we are trying to make this through. From that respect, I think we are at a very interesting juncture between Africa and Japan.

When you say impact investing, can you shed light on that and how it is expected to work?

Ken Shibusawa: Impact investing is a concept that has been around for about ten years, and some impact investment funds are already active in Africa. The concept of impact investing is having the intent to solve economic and social issues through activities of the company; it's different from charity. By doing

what they are doing through their business, there may have a negative impact but a net positive impact on the environment and society.

I think as impact investors, we can have the access to new forms of capital that is different from this public spending or charity because as investors we must look for economic growth but at the same time solve these very important issues.

With regards to this innovative approach to partnership, at what point do you think this is going to improve ties between Japan and Africa, and in what way does it make Japan stand out in the pack compared to other powers like China, the USA, and Russia who are all trying to do a pivot to Africa?

Ken Shibusawa: If you think

about it, 150 years ago Japan was an emerging country and the only abundant resource in Africa was water and probably the forest and people. 150 years ago, Japan was able to utilize its human capital to emerge from an emerging country over several decades and joined the advanced nations at that time.

My proposition to the African continent is that concept of human capital and that is what I think Japan brings. We want to build, co-create with various stakeholders in Africa, and co-create a people-centric impact fund. It is for the people, and we can talk about the environment but in the end, what does that mean for the individual, and families with children growing up in Africa?

It is all about increasing the capacity, and human capacity of the local people. We are getting involved in building roads and bridges, and ports along with China. We have done that in the past and it is very important to have infrastructure in Africa. Our edge is the people-centric approach to investments in Africa.

What has been the reaction of African countries, African leaders and institutions to this pivot to human capital that you are talking about?

Ken Shibusawa: We are very positive. Rather than talking to each of the 54 African countries, as I mentioned we are building a very good relationship with the African development bank which represents the development of the African continent. They like our approach especially the fact that our potential LPs are investors in the impact fund. These will be Japanese corporations with technology and human capital.

At what point or what timeframe should we be able to measure the success or impact that the pivot is having on the fortunes of Africans?

Ken Shibusawa: That is a good question, but I think it depends on the sector, what kind of sector are we talking about whether it's in the health sector, agriculture or



Ken Shibusawa, KEIZAI DOYUKAI; Solomon Quaynor, African Development Bank vice president for Private Sector, Infrastructure and Industrialization at the signing of an MoU last year.

education? Obviously, in education, you don't know the result until the child has grown up. So, I think it depends on that. One thing I can say is that it's not going to happen overnight.

We are not short-term investors, but we are long-term investors, at least a decade and so, I would look at the pivot not annually but rather decades. But we are at a very interesting point for African development right now.

And for you who live in Japan, what is the general perception that the Japanese have about Africans, how knowledgeable is the everyday Japanese about issues concerning the continent of Africa?

Ken Shibusawa: Probably the same as the African's view about Japan. My experience of having conversation or interaction with corporations in Japan is that almost every large company always have a group of people that are very passionate about Africa. Another thing is that those kinds of people tend to be younger, and many of them are women. When I visit the African continent, I was in Kenya a couple of weeks ago, and there is a thriving Japanese venture capital and

venture businesses they're young and very ambitious and many of them are women.

Those kinds of people are still minorities in the entire scope of things in Japan, but everything must start from somewhere. They are a group of passionate people not just Japanese in Africa. There is a viable population of young Africans or Japanese who are interested in this interaction amongst the African continent in Japan.

What was the overall assessment of how TICAD in Tunisia took place?

Ken Shibusawa: It was under difficult circumstances because we weren't over the concerns of coronavirus. The organizers are foreign diplomats, and they are very conservative in making sure there are no hot spots for infections. There were a lot of constraints on the number of businesses who could go attend, even the side event.

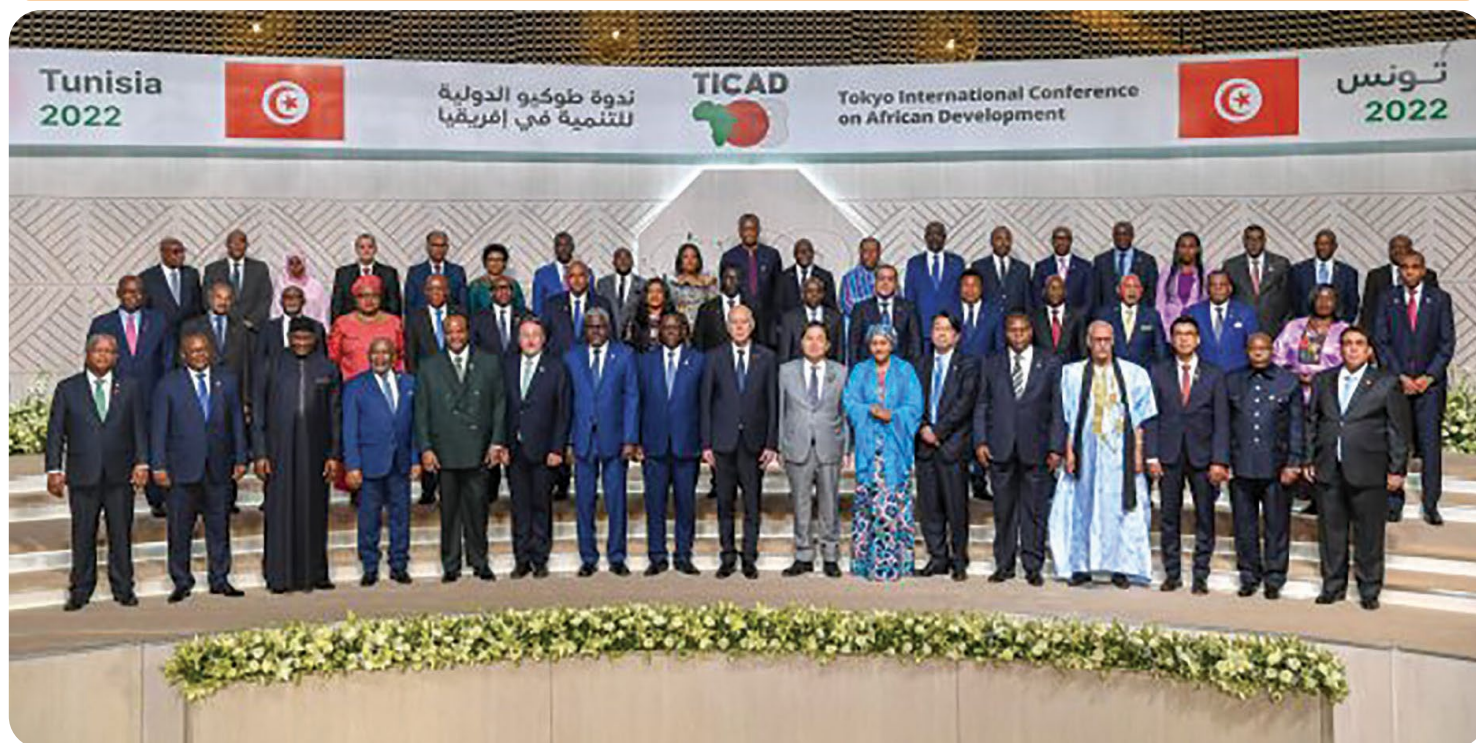
The next TICAD will be held if everything goes to plan 2025 and that is the year that Osaka will be hosting the world exposition 2025. 2025 will be an interesting year and I think we need to make sure that we kind of rebound from post-corona to reboot

the TICAD process.

In a recent post on LinkedIn, you announced that after five years in development, you were announcing the creation of And Capital. Do you want to shed light on the company and how its services could be of benefit to Africa?

Ken Shibusawa: This is the management company I talked about earlier. The reason why it is called, And capital is that it is Africa in Japan, and it also means profitability, economic richer, environmental and social richer and we want to make sure that it is a co-creative initiative. Lots of stakeholders will partake in it and that is where the name and capital come from. The reason for its formation is based on the recommendation by the business organization called Keizai Doyukai, and so there is backing, not directly by the organization but by members of that organization.

The management company and capital will be capitalized by Japanese corporations and partners including myself, and that is currently being put in place and is set to go in about a month or so. We are currently



African countries and Japan have taken turns in hosting TICAD Summits.

starting our initial round of LPs and investors in the fund, and we are talking to a wide range of companies, from electronic to banks, and printing manufacturing companies.

The interesting part of our proposition is that our investor base will be corporate and financial institutions and the corporates will be prominent Japanese companies in various industries. Our proposition which I think is different from the other funds existing in Japan is this relationship we have with large Japanese Corporations and financial institutions.

From Tunisia for the TICAD, I think you went to Morocco, and you have been to Ivory Coast where you met with African Development Bank folks and you just mentioned that you have been to Kenya. What are some of the things that fascinate you about Africa?

Ken Shibusawa: My initial personal interest in Africa came about 15 years ago when I saw the ranking of the population when Japan had

fallen off the top ten. I saw names like Nigeria in the top 4, I think, and Congo and Ethiopia and I thought whoa! Initially, it was about the large potential of a future market based on the growth of the population.

My first visit to Africa was in 2019 and my visit to Ethiopia was interesting because there was a pitch event for startups and one of the startups was an AI engineering firm, I'm sorry to say but back then I didn't click, I didn't think, Ethiopia, AI? That is when I realized that Africa is not just a future market but is a huge resource pool for human capital that up to the present day hasn't been fully utilized. It is part of not just Japan but other advanced nations not just to say you guys have the natural resources that we need but to work with people in Africa to engage and empower the human capital in Africa and I think there is a huge potential.

I was in Nairobi, Kenya, and I visited one of the largest slums in Africa. There is this one scene, there is a railway and alongside the road, there is a wall and on the other side, it is green. Why is it green? Because it

is a golf course and on the other side there are these small shacks, which is a contrast. That kind of contrast is mindboggling. At the same time, we visited a school which was started by a woman who grew up in this settlement. When she was 23, she lost her parents and she had to take care of her 17 siblings. She was able to make do and eventually started this school, not just for her children and relatives but a place where children can learn; her message is never to give up.

It was like an educational sanctuary within this informal settlement where things were not all that good, but they had hope. It drives the younger people to make a better life not just only for themselves but also for their families and communities. It was an uplifting moment there.

What gives you hope, fears and any policy recommendations on both sides?

Ken Shibusawa: It is about the people and there are good people I would like to work with for the co-creation of this fund. There is always a segment of the population

that wants to do good work and they should be rewarded. Seeing that kind of dynamic gives me hope. The reason for me to launch this impact fund with my partners is not just for the investment per se but to make a community of impact between Japan and Africa which will mean a lot of hopes and dreams and so that gives me hope.

There are a lot of risks, and changes in the political regime and a lot of these. Japan always worries about the potential for corruption, where the rule of law may not work as much as we expected or hoped. One thing that keeps me encouraged is that every person I meet so far in Africa, even from Japan, is an optimist and leaving in Japan there are a lot of pessimists.

For me going to Africa is very uplifting and people are always looking for a better tomorrow than today, which is an important message during this difficult time that the world is in currently.

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South Sudan: Government Bares Fangs At The Sentry Report - Asks for a Retraction and Public Apology

By Deng Machol

In a strongly worded response (report) to The Sentry over its publication of findings of a 2-year investigation into the government of South Sudan's relationship with energy firm Trinity, in which the South Sudan government was implicated for undertaking underhand and corrupt dealings, the South Sudan government has rubbished The Sentry's report and asked for a public apology.

The 134-page report from the government of South Sudan starts with bold and strong words aimed towards The Sentry. "The Government of South Sudan ('GoSS') demands the immediate withdrawal from circulation of The Sentry's publication "Undercover Activities: Inside the National Security Service's Profitable Playbook" (the 'Report') and the issuance of a public apology to each and every individual, company or entity that has been falsely or misleadingly described in the Report."

In requesting a retraction and public apology, the South Sudan government said that the findings purported by The Sentry to be a result of the two-year investigation into the operations of Trinity Energy Limited (TEL) and its business relationship with the South Sudan Government aren't credible and truthful. While the Sentry report "purports to be a fact-based document with commentary that has been widely disseminated internationally," the South Sudan government says to the contrary, the report contains false and/or misleading allegations that have either been made deliberately or recklessly."

Having gone through The Sentry's report, the South Sudan government says that it found the methodology used during the investigation to be heavily flawed, the credibility of the sources used to be highly questionable, overreliance on generic document collections/online sources



A festive mood as South Sudanese celebrate independence day. The country is grappling with challenges of fulfilling its great potential. Photo courtesy.

sold for profit and data breach.

In the Sentry report, the South Sudan government is alleged to have turned a blind eye to the operations of Trinity Energy Limited which the report considers corrupt. The South Sudan government is also accused of awarding a lucrative oil tender to Trinity even though the company had not majored in the oil business before. Even more worrisome, the Sentry report through its main source Mr Kaswaswa who is a former Trinity finance manager alleges "that Trinity Energy spent millions of dollars on 'facilitation' and 'business acquisition' costs for the Afreximbank deal, including 18.7 million South Sudanese pounds (SSP) (\$125,000) in payments to the government committee responsible for approving the deal".

Refuting the claims made in The Sentry report, the South Sudan government said its report (response) "does not seek to address all the allegations made by The Sentry, many of which are generic, based on anonymous sources or second-hand hearsay, but rather it focuses on

those aspects which specifically call into question the actions of named individuals and companies based on information which has been brought to the Government's attention of serious errors and misrepresentations, in respect of which the GoSS seeks to make a timely response." Over a dozen individuals and entities who were singled out for engaging or benefiting from corrupt dealings in The Sentry report were allowed to respond, refute the allegations made against them and substantiate the claims in the South Sudan report.

Providing the reasons why The Sentry's report is highly flawed, the South Sudan government said the non-adherence to one of The Sentry's key principles of endeavouring to contact "the persons and entities discussed in its reports" to "afford them an opportunity to comment and provide further information" led to the production of a flawed report. Only if the implicated parties were contacted for their responses before the publication of the report would The Sentry have got true and credible information about Trinity and its

operations with the South Sudan Government.

Moreover, South Sudan alleges that the main sources for The Sentry report are questionable characters while other sources used are anonymous. Though acknowledging that its standard practice for NGOs and the like to use anonymous sources in their investigative reports more so those of a criminal nature, "the overuse of anonymous sources denies those accused of being able to interrogate the reliability and credibility of the information and thereby challenge what has been alleged, particularly in circumstances where grave recommendations are made, namely the imposition of sanctions against named individuals".

Apart from the sources, the South Sudan government also stated that there was an overreliance on previous Sentry reports. The use of the "self-referential approach to evidence collection is sub-standard and lacks appropriate investigative rigour, particularly given the methodological flaws identified in the Report," writes the South Sudan government.

Moreover, “the heavy reliance on open-source media reports constitutes nearly 20% of all sources cited. The veracity of such hearsay reports cannot easily be verified and are open to bias. Only two media organisations of those cited are accredited in South Sudan, namely Eye Radio³⁵ and Juba Monitor.”

In its concluding remarks, the South Sudan government said its

quite clear that the intended results of The Sentry report were to harm the government. “The intended recipients of the false and/or misleading information published by The Sentry are: international agencies such as the United Nations and its satellite organisations; states such as the USA, UK, Canada, and Australia; collections of states such as the EU, AU and other international

institutions such as the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank, international and national NGOs, international and national media, and political parties in South Sudan and elsewhere that use such disseminated information to determine or advocate political, economic and/or development strategies for South Sudan and its people. The list of so-called Recommendations at the end of

the Report in which The Sentry seeks targeted sanctions, seizure of assets and notice of financial risks amongst many other measures, reveals its purpose of causing economic damage and harm to those falsely and/or misleadingly named, which in turn harms the development of South Sudan.”

African Trade Insurance Agency Insights With Manuel Moses

By Samuel Ouma

The African Trade Insurance Agency (ATI) is a multilateral financial organization which provides export credit insurance, political risk insurance (investment insurance) and other financial instruments to help de-risk and decrease the cost of doing business in Africa. ATI was established in 2001 by COMESA and African Governments with the World Bank's financial and technical assistance, to address a market gap in trade and investment risk in Africa.

In a span of 21 years, the organization's membership has increased from initially 7 East and Southern African Member States to over 21 member states across the entire continent. It now underwrites transactions in Angola, Benin, Burundi, Cameroon, Côte d'Ivoire, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Madagascar, Malawi, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe. Strategic plans to expand to the rest of the African countries and outside the continent are underway.

ATI is one of the highest investment grade credit rated financial organizations on the continent. We are rated A/Stable by Standard & Poor's (for 15 consecutive years) and A3/Stable by Moody's (for 5 consecutive years). Recently Moody's altered its rating on ATI from stable to positive outlook as a result of the “organization's



With our insurance policies and guarantees, Africa can attract and retain foreign direct investment and promote cross-border trade, says CEO Manuel Moses.

strong membership, equity growth, consistent improvement in financial performance, commitment of its shareholders who continue to uphold the preferred creditor status, its high quality and conservative investment portfolio and strong relationships with a number of global reinsurers that provide significant risk-bearing capacity.”

ATI is headed by its Chief Executive Officer, Mr. Manuel Moses, who has garnered over 25 years of experience in the fields of development finance,

banking, insurance, and investment across across Africa and the Globe. Before joining ATI, Manuel worked at World Bank's International Finance Corporation (IFC) for 15 years, where he held the post of Regional Manager for East Africa. Manuel has also held Senior-level positions at Eastern and Southern African Trade and Development Bank (TDB), the Commercial Bank of Zimbabwe, and the Zimbabwe Development Bank. He holds an MBA in Finance from the University of Leicester in the UK and

a BSc in Civil Engineering from the University of Zimbabwe. Additionally, he is an associate member of the UK Chartered Institute of Management Accountants.

Our Correspondent in Nairobi, Kenya, Samuel Ouma had a one-on-one interview with Mr. Manuel Moses. Below was the conversation:

May We Start This Interview with Some Background Information on the African Trade Insurance Agency (ATI)?

Manuel Moses: ATI is a pan African multilateral insurer that offers export credit insurance, political risk insurance (investment insurance) and other financial instruments, to help de-risk and decrease the cost of doing business in Africa. It was created 21 years ago by African Governments to promote intra-African trade, economic development and foreign direct investment into the continent. We support trade and investors on real or perceived risks associated with doing business in Africa across Private and Public sectors including non-honoring of sovereign obligations, currency inconvertibility, transfer restrictions, trade embargoes and non-tariff barriers, hindering trade and investment across the continent to mention but a few.

What motivated the creation of ATI and how do you situate its importance in modern day Africa?

Manuel Moses: ATI was created to fill an existing market gap in trade and investment risk mitigation in Africa. In the late 90s, risk mitigation tools and mechanisms for credit and political insurance were not available for many African countries, and where the cover existed, it was very costly.

ATI was thus formed by African Governments for the purpose of promoting trade and attracting investments into Africa. Being a Pan-African multilateral insurer, we understand better our business environment and therefore provide bespoke financial solutions adapted to the business climate in our Member States. We work in close partnership with national and regional stakeholders such as development financial institutions and commercial banks who understand their clients and their financing requirements. Also, through our international partners, we are able to deliver the needs of foreign investors and help de-risk the continent from real or perceived political and commercial risks for sustainable investments and cross-border trade.

With our insurance policies and guarantees, Africa is able to attract



ATI was formed for Africa, and all African governments and regional institutions are eligible to join as Members and Shareholders, says Manuel Moses.

and retain foreign direct investment as well as promote cross border trade under the auspices of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). We consistently come up with innovative financial solutions tailor-made for the market's needs. Since ATI's inception, we are proud to say that we have facilitated trade and investment transactions worth over US\$78 billion across Africa.

What does it take to be part of ATI, and how is its current membership like?

Manuel Moses: ATI was formed for Africa and all African governments and regional institutions are eligible to join as Members and Shareholders of ATI.

Over recent years, ATI has experienced a remarkable growth in Membership from its initial seven pioneer Eastern and Southern African Member States (Burundi, Kenya, Malawi, Rwanda, Tanzania, Uganda and Zambia) to currently twenty-one African Member States, one Non-African Member State and eleven Institutional Shareholders. While the majority of ATI shareholders are always the African governments (Class A shareholders) we have other classes of shareholders which include

non-African Member States, private corporations, regional economic organizations, African Public Institutions and Non-African Public Entities represented in Classes B to D category of shareholding.

It is therefore our open call and invitation to all African Governments and Regional Institutions not yet members of ATI to be part of this African Solution created to de-risk Africa for prosperity.

With a Pan-African Mandate, ATI intends to reach out to the entire African continent to benefit from the opportunities and risk mitigation solutions offered by ATI tailored at de-risking investment and cross border trade across the continent.

It is important to note that despite the global macroeconomic challenges of the COVID-19 Pandemic, Russian-Ukraine Conflict, Currency Inflation and rising Commodity Prices and their direct or indirect implications on Africa's Development, ATI has proven way beyond reasonable doubt to accompany Africa and its Member States in weathering the storm with its robust underwriting and risk management, continuous profitability and increasing returns on investments over the past decade.

For ATI to fulfil its mandate of

de-risking trade and investments for Africa, mobilizing ATI membership and shareholding remains key towards achieving our strategic vision of transforming Africa into a prime trade and investment destination.

How did ATI cope with pressures and ravages of COVID 19, what kind of support was provided to members?

Manuel Moses: During the Covid-19 Pandemic, everyone realized that anything could go wrong with existing measures inapt to cater for such a once-in-a-century unprecedented global crisis. Thus, ATI had to be innovative in developing an adaptive solution with the growing demand for our business.

We had to re-examine our portfolio and to devise a strategy to ensure sustainability during and beyond the pandemic. A good example was our innovative, stress testing of our live and pipeline portfolio which enabled ATI to identify risks that may be problematic and put in place mitigation measures to adhere from such unprecedented scenarios. We also implemented business improvement processes and embedded best practice in our underwriting thus supported more

deals despite the challenges. In 2021, capital increased by approximately 25%, which is an indication to member states recognition of ATI's role in delivering its mandate for economic development on the continent.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we remained conscious of our critical role as a facilitator of trade and development on the continent, to ensure African governments could persevere and subsequently rebound their economies from macroeconomic shocks. We wanted to build the resilience of Africa thus supported a lot of infrastructure based deals in our member states. In addition, we also supported CSR projects to build the capacity of teachers to be more effective in light of the COVID-19 global restrictions on movement and social gatherings and also donated funds to the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) to assist in vaccination efforts against COVID-19 across Africa.

Post COVID-19 pandemic, Africa was hit with another major global macroeconomic crisis that impacted global commodity prices and inflation due to the conflict between Ukraine and Russia. The conflict continues to present emerging challenges for the continent, including shortages of critical agricultural commodities, inflation and constraints to FDI hindering economic development across the continent. In an ever-changing world, the role of ATI cannot be over emphasized in playing the critical role of mitigating the continent against such unprecedented risks hindering sustainable development on the continent.

In terms of capital structure, how equipped or solid is the organization to support members in times of acute situations?

Manuel Moses: ATI's equity subscription model is based on no callable paid up capital. African governments represent the largest shareholding (85%) and our institutional shareholders representing 15% of ATI's equity. Our current capital structure standing at close to USD560 million, has been



With a Pan-African Mandate, ATI intends to reach out to the entire African continent to benefit from the opportunities and risk mitigation solutions offered, says Manuel Moses .

recognized as a major performance strength by international rating agencies (Moody's) as a sustainable model capable of supporting our member states in events of acute situations.

It is expected that ATI's Underwriting Capital will double to over US\$1 Billion in the next five years. This will result to an even greater impact in our activities across our member states.

Our steady membership and equity growth are some of the factors that support our consistent 15-year A/Stable investment grade credits by S&P and A3/Positive ratings by Moody's over the recent years. Our Credit ratings provide an estimate of an insurance company's ability to meet its financial commitments to its policyholders/clients. ATI is rated one of the strongest institutions in Africa with an investment-grade rating 'A/Stable' for over 15 years for Financial Strength and Counterparty Credit by Standard & Poor's, and in 2019, ATI obtained an A3/Stable rating from Moody's, which has now been revised to A3/Positive. Based on strong capitalization and a robust business strategy, we are able to help our investors obtain a healthy return

on their investment.

Additionally, ATI's preferred creditor status ensures reimbursement by African governments for any sovereign claims incurred over strategic transactions with development impacts in Member States.

For potential and interested members and partners out there, can you tell them what it takes to be part of ATI?

Manuel Moses: It is our open call and invitation to Interested shareholders to submit a formal membership application to ATI. The Membership application is then tabled for consideration and approval by our Board of Directors, who meets quarterly and subsequently tabled for consideration and adoption by our Annual General Meeting (AGM) of Shareholders chaired by African Ministers of Finance and Economic Planning.

Government shareholders then need to ratify and sign ATI's Legal Status (ATI Treaty and Participation Agreement) through their respective competent authorities (mostly Cabinet and Parliament) for onward ratification and deposition with the ATI Depository of Legal Instruments

- the African Union Commission. The Treaty grants ATI the Preferred Creditor status as a multilateral institution recognizing the need to reimburse ATI for any claims paid as a result of sovereign actions. Governments pay their equity subscription by either budgetary allocation or concessionary financing or grants from development financial institutions such as the African Development Bank, KfW Development Bank or the European Investment Bank, among others Development partners.

For the other classes of shareholders, once membership approval is granted by the ATI AGM, they are required to submit a legal instrument acceding to the ATI Treaty then subscribe for allotted shares approved for membership by the AGM.

The minimum share subscriptions to qualify for membership in ATI, is detailed as follows:

1. African States, a minimum of 75 shares
2. Regional Economic Organizations and African Public Institutions, a minimum of 10 shares
3. Non-African States, a minimum of 100 shares

4. Export Credit Agencies and Non-African Public Entities, a minimum of 75 shares
5. Private Corporations, a minimum of 100 shares

It is worth noting that our prevailing share prices are evaluated at the beginning of each Financial Cycle at Adjusted Net Asset Value (ANAV).

With the advent of the African Continental Free Trade Area, what role do you see ATI playing in complementing its smooth functioning?

Manuel Moses: The African Continental Free Trade Area is a game changer for Africa's Development. It is certainly creating Africa as one market. You can look at Africa, not as 55 countries but as the equivalent of China and India. So certainly, Africa can execute on the AfCFTA to experience the same developmental trajectory that we saw in China and India. Consequently, this is the biggest game changer because we can now execute on the promises of that one market and trade within Africa will increase.

The critical role of de-risking the continent for cross boarder trade and investment cannot be over emphasized to permit traders, exporters, SMEs Merchandise and services mover across Member States. It is therefore imperative for ATI's Insurance Policies and Guarantees to serve as natural vehicle for promoting intra-African trade and cross border

investment.

ATI's complementary role is imperative in supporting AfCFTA as Africa's largest Business Risk Mitigation Institution (by portfolio size) facilitating investment and trade across the continent for the past 20 years.

ATI is working in close collaboration with the African Union Commission, AfCFTA Secretariat and other continental and regional bodies as delegated by African Ministers of Finance, Economic Planning and Regional Integration to support the AfCFTA and Africa's Development Agenda 2063, with ATI's trade credit insurance helpful for de-risking the continent for cross boarder trade and investment.

From your perspective, how conducive is the business climate in Africa for services like the ones offered by ATI, any policy recommendations to governments?

Manuel Moses: In general, the business climate is improving but provision of cover to the SME sector is still problematic. SMEs are key to Africa's economic growth and poverty alleviation but their access to finance is limited due to their being perceived very high risk by lenders. As ATI, we have developed solutions to help SMEs access finance from commercial lenders but there are challenges that make these solutions unable to help many of our SMEs.

To enhance access to finance for

SMEs, there are a number of policy actions governments on the continent need to take. Firstly, there is need to reform access to information, to enable insurance service providers such as ATI to obtain data held by government credit reference bureaus so that they can better assess credit risks. This will enable efficient structuring and pricing of transactions, based on the risks assumed. Secondly, there is need to reform the risk weighted capital provisioning imposed by central banks to include Insurance cover as a substitute for collateral so that banks can get relief when providing credit to SMEs if their portfolios are insured. Third, there is need to improve the registration and tracing systems for natural persons such as using biometric identification. Additionally, there is need to accelerate the simplification of business registration processes to enable more SMEs formalize their businesses across the continent. These policy changes would improve the business environment for both SME business as well as the larger corporates, enabling insurance service providers such as ATI to support larger volumes of trade and investments.

It's been two years since you became CEO. What are some of the changes that have taken place at ATI under your leadership?

Manuel Moses: As ATI enters the next phase of its business

operations, it has become necessary to revamp our institutional strategy. With business footprints in more than half of the continent, we have repositioned our internal operations to cope with rapid growth and demand of our insurance solutions across the continent. This includes digitally transformation of the organization's operations, increased global focus on Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG), review of our Enterprise Risk Management (ERM) Framework to support the risk management function, implementation of IFRS 17, a revamped organization structure, rebranding to realign our brand to the business strategy and to grow the brand identity, reputation and visibility in the market. The new brand will be unveiled in July 2023. These are some of the few initiatives I have undertaken in my two years at ATI.

How is the new year shaping up like so far, and any big projects or plans in view from ATI?

Manuel Moses: Over the next five years, our aim is to grow our core business, that is double our gross exposure to US\$12 Billion, double our capital to US\$1 Billion, extend geographical reach and play a more strategic role in the development of our member state' economies, while supporting African and regional development initiatives such as the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

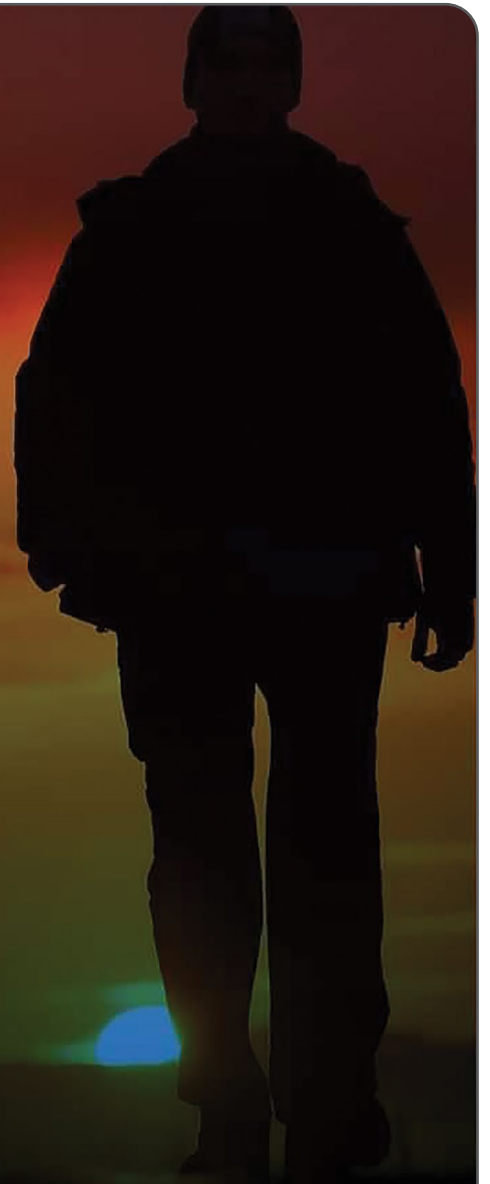
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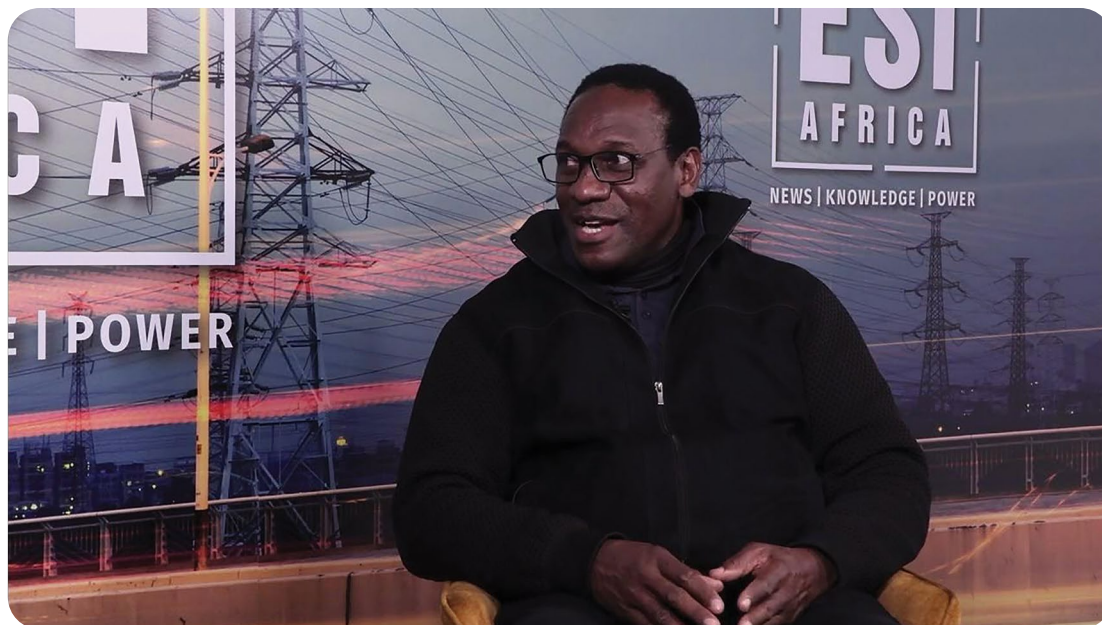
Zambia-Lights On As Load Shedding Ends

By Prince Kurupati

In a development that has been warmly welcomed by all Zambians, the Managing Director of Zambia's power company the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (ZESCO) Victor Mapani announced at the start of February 2023 that the country will now enjoy a steady supply of uninterrupted electricity. This officially means that the country has bid farewell to load shedding.

The good news has been widely received by Zambians both those who need electricity for home consumption as well as those that rely on electricity for work purposes. Beyond the Zambian borders, the news also instils hope in many around the region that load shedding isn't a persistent problem but rather, it's a problem that can be addressed for good with the right leadership.

Announcing the news, Mr Mapani said "We (ZESCO) are proud to announce that Zambia will no longer experience load shedding. Thanks to our efforts in restoring and upgrading our power generation facilities, Zambian households and businesses can now expect a reliable source of 24-hour electricity."



Managing Director of the Zambia Electricity Supply Corporation Limited (ZESCO) Victor Mapani.

Mr Mapani went further stating that at all the major power generation stations in Zambia, the government has taken initiatives to increase the power generated. "The Victoria Falls Power Station has been revamped and is currently feeding around 20 Megawatts into the National Grid," Mr Mapani said. In addition to this, the upgrades at the Kafue Gorge

Upper and Lower Power Stations have also increased power generation by over 150 megawatts. The negotiations that ZESCO is currently involved in with their Mozambican counterparts will also add a further 120 megawatts in the near future.

The news by Mr Mapani comes barely two weeks after acting Minister of Energy Hon. Douglas

Siyakalima announced at a press briefing that the country had reduced load-shedding hours from 12 hours to 8 hours. Announcing the news, Hon. Siyakalima said that this was necessitated by the restoration of a 150 megawatts generator at Maamba Collieries Limited a move which increased available generation to 1,910 megawatts as of January 19, 2023, against a peak demand of 2,380 megawatts. The revamp of the Victoria Falls Power Station and the Kafue Gorge Upper and Lower Power Stations have thus reduced the power deficit hence the end of the load shedding.

In addition to the efforts made by President Hakainde Hichilema's administration to address the power crisis locally, the government is also working with other external partners to ensure that the issue is addressed once and for all. Through the networks he has established in recent times with the United Arab Emirates (UAE), President Hichilema enabled Minister of Energy Peter Kapala to sign an MOU on behalf of Zambia's power utility in Abu Dhabi during the Sustainability Week in the UAE.

Both ZESCO and MASDA (UAE



President Hichilema has earned credit for his support of efforts to resolve the energy crisis.

power utility) are already working on the initial modalities to ensure that the deal is implemented quickly. The deal has been warmly received by the National Energy Sector and Allied Workers Union (NESAWU) which through its General Secretary said "The National Energy Sector and Allied Workers (NESAWU) has welcomed the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between ZESCO and MASDA of the United Arab Emirates worth \$2 billion joint venture to set up 2,000 megawatts solar plant. The development has come at the right

time when the country is threatened with a serious power shortage and will go on a long way to boost electricity generation. The signing of the MOU is a demonstration of the seriousness that President Hakainde Hichilema attaches to finding long-term solutions to the power deficit and the joint venture once operationalised will drastically reduce the power shortage in the country. The injection of \$2 billion is a massive and must be supported by all well-meaning Zambians including the leftists that are blaming the New Dawn Government for the current

load management the country is facing".

President Hichilema also received praise from Mr Siyakalima who said the maintenance works at Maamba Collieries Limited were finished ahead of schedule thanks to the president's hands-on work ethic. He said that after the President visited the site to assess the situation on the ground, "maintenance works at Maamba Collieries Limited were scheduled to take place from 6th January to 20 January 2023 however the works were completed on 17th January 2023, three days ahead of

schedule and the power plant is now operating at full capacity". He went on to thank the President for his "prompt response".

With Zambia and the entire southern Africa region receiving normal to above normal rainfall, the water levels in Lake Kariba are slowly rising and in so doing, gives Zambia another avenue of increasing its power generation output. ZESCO's Managing Director said that they are also looking to increase power output from Lake Kariba by 100 megawatts hence further safeguarding Zambia's electricity self-sufficiency. _____

Cameroon: Unending Battle Against Female Genital Mutilation

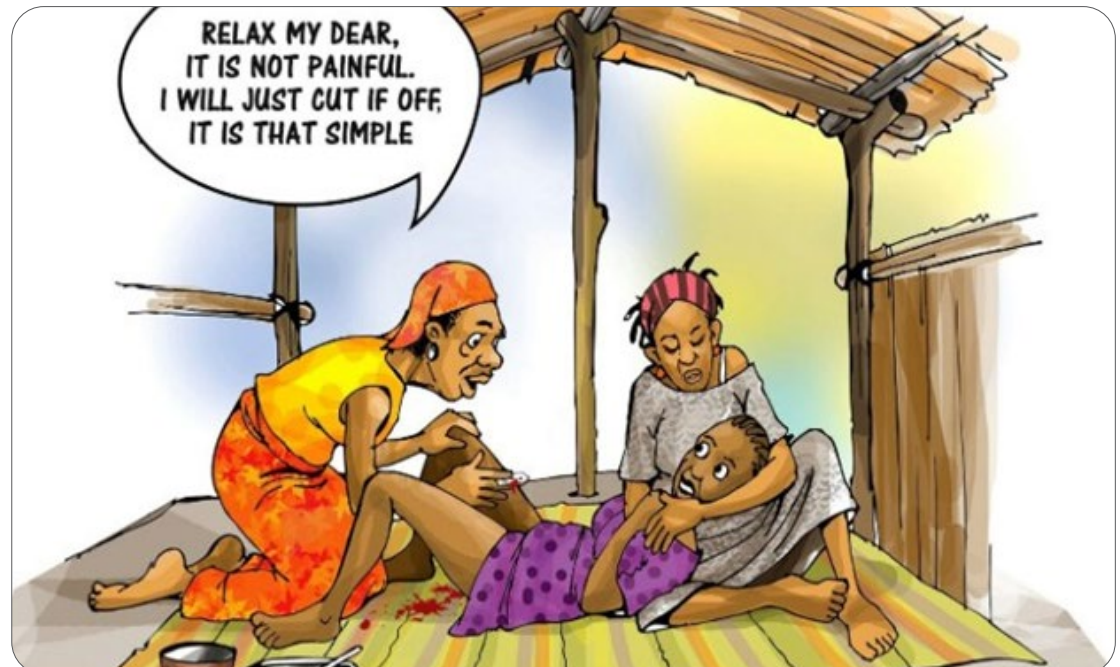
Boris Esono Nwenfor

Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) is ostensibly the removal of female organs for cultural and traditional beliefs. Although Cameroon's government outlawed female circumcision in 1994, it is still being practised in some parts of the country, including the Logone-et-Chari Division, Far North Cameroon.

The government says COVID-19, the country's separatist crisis and Boko Haram terrorism have stopped campaigns on the dangers of the practice and made providers return to Female Genital Mutilation, which had been abandoned.

Cameroon's Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Marie Therese Abena Ondo said «it all begins from the family. The family head should not be the instigator but rather the protector of the girl child aged between 5 years to 9 years from such a cruel practice on grounds of fetish beliefs of wanting them to remain faithful to their husbands. This girl should rather be cautioned and advised by their parents and guardians on the need to lead decent lives, grow up avoiding moral decadence, get married and live happily ever after."

She adds that «despite the stop in weekly campaigns against FGM



Although Cameroon's government outlawed female circumcision in 1994, it is still being practiced in some parts of the country.

along the Cameroon-Nigeria-Chad northern border and the drop in government financial assistance to FGM providers to start other businesses since COVID-19 was first announced in March 2019, pushing them back to the practice, we need to all join forces to see the complete eradication of FGM which is very much detrimental to the health of women."

Today, men and boys are more

educated and receptive to change than before, and in some countries, they are more likely to disapprove of female genital mutilation and domestic violence than women and girls. Partnering with men and boys, without detracting the focus from women and girls, ensures families, communities, institutions, and policy-makers support and invest in girls to promote the elimination of female genital mutilation.

"The practice of Female Genital Mutilation is a tradition, which is why the theme of this year is a partnership between men and boys to fight it together. When we involve all of these people, it can work. But, because of tradition, belief, and because some women have commercialized it, it is very difficult to combat it," Veronica Njenu, Chief of Service, Women's Rights at the South West Delegation of the Ministry of Women's

Empowerment and the Family said. «It is still going on even without our knowledge and it is difficult to eradicate it. Men, boys and traditional rulers need to step up in the fight against Female Genital Mutilation. Even men and boys are involved, it will at least change the dynamics and narratives of Female Genital Mutilation in Cameroon.»

What the law says on FGM

The Constitution of the Republic of Cameroon (1996), 1 as amended in 2008, does not explicitly refer to violence against women, harmful practices or FGM. The Preamble states, however, that everyone has the right to physical and moral integrity and that under no circumstances shall any person be subjected to torture, to cruel, inhumane or degrading treatment.'

Law No. 2016/007 of 12 July 2016, commonly known as the 'Penal Code' of the Republic of Cameroon, contains a section specifically referring to the criminalization and prohibition of 'genital mutilation', this is the main law relevant to FGM in Cameroon.

The Penal Code (Section 277-1) of the Republic of Cameroon does not provide an explicit definition

of FGM nor reference solely female genitalia; rather it refers to mutilation of 'the genital organ of a person, by any means whatsoever'. It outlines the criminal offences related to the performance of genital mutilation, including repeat offences and those for commercial purposes.

It does not, however, criminalize aiding and abetting FGM or failure to report the practice. Section 350 ('Assault on Children') of the Penal Code specifically addresses genital mutilation committed on children and provides a more severe punishment if the offence is committed against a person under 15 years of age. Genital mutilation is not criminalized in Cameroon if it is 'performed by a qualified person and to save life' (Section 277-1[4]). The Penal Code does not, however, define a 'qualified person', nor does it specify under which conditions it would need to be used to 'save life'.

Endless trauma for many survivors

Many young girls, however, are currently battling various

FGM is still being practiced in some parts of the Logone-et-Chari Division, Far North Cameroon.

complications as a result of Female Genital Mutilation. A 15-year-old victim who prefers to keep her identity anonymous recounts her ordeal. "I live in Cameroon but my family is based in Chad. During one school break my mother came and took me home. I was only 12 years old then. They circumcised me once I got there and ever since I haven't been the same."

"I felt so much pain in the process, and when I came back to Cameroon I went through trauma, endless day

and nights of tears, and refusal to go back to school. After more than three months I resumed school and life normally. I must say I can't wish this for any young girl.»

Activists say more needs to be done to reach the U.N. goal to end FGM worldwide by 2030. «It is estimated that around 200 million girls in the world alive today have undergone one form of FGM or another globally,» said Anne Njuguna, Plan International's Regional Disaster and Risk Management Specialist. «It is further estimated that 15 million more girls will undergo FGM by 2030, and these girls are between the ages of 15 and 19 years old. This is a huge number that we cannot allow to happen.»

While the United Nations and various humanitarian organizations are continuing to make an impact, there is still room for improvement. Cameroon has made progress regarding female genital mutilation over previous years, yet much of it has stagnated in recent years. Despite the negative impact of COVID-19, the nation is continuing to fight for progress. For Cameroon to reach its full potential, all of its citizens will have to receive equal respect, appreciation, love and empathy. This is what ending female genital mutilation in Cameroon will achieve. Only then will Cameroon be able to function as it should domestically and within the international community?



Cameroon's Minister of Women's Empowerment and the Family, Marie Therese Abena Ondo.

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The Africa CDC Equation In Healthcare

By Ajong Mbapndah L



Africa CDC remains resolute in achieving its goal of safeguarding Africa's health, says Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye.

Established in January 2016 by the 26th Ordinary Assembly of Heads of State and Government and officially launched in January 2017, Africa CDC has wasted little time in establishing itself as a leader on health care issues across the continent.

In a bid to get more insights into its mission and perspectives, PAV caught up with Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye, Interim Coordinator for Central Africa and Head of Policy and Diplomacy and Communication at Africa CDC. Despite the many challenges faced by the health systems across the continent, Africa CDC remains resolute in achieving its goal of safeguarding Africa's health, says Dr Djoudalbaye.

Could we start with an overview of how the CDC has fared since it went operational some six

years ago?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: From an institutional perspective, I would say Africa CDC is doing very well executing the mandate given by the heads of state and government. We have a functioning instructional structure that effectively responds to Member States' requests in times of outbreaks, which is a critical part of our work. Despite the many challenges faced by the health systems across the continent, Africa CDC remains resolute in achieving its goal of safeguarding Africa's health.

Can you situate the overall importance or place of Africa CDC today in the African healthcare landscape?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: Looking back on how far we have come, I think Africa CDC is gradually taking place as the lead institution to drive Africa's

continental health security agenda. Africa CDC is a specialized agency of the African Union (AU), established in April 2017. Its mission is to strengthen Africa's public health systems by improving surveillance, detection, and response to infectious diseases and providing technical guidance and capacity-building in critical areas such as laboratories. The decision by the AU Assembly in 2022 to elevate Africa CDC to an autonomous status has given the organization more leverage to implement its strategic objectives with an agenda for a New Public Health Order for Africa. This agenda focuses on strengthening public health institutions and the workforce on the continent, supporting domestic financing for health and local manufacturing, and seeking respectful and action-oriented partnerships based on Africa's priorities.

How are the services of the CDC rendered or structured in a way that every day Africans feel its impact?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: As per the Africa CDC mandate, we work directly with Member States, with our entry point being the National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) and the Ministries of Health in countries where the structures of NPHIs are yet to be established. This engagement with the AU Member States, I must say, is based on the specific country's priorities and needs. Our support covers building capacities of the health workforce, strengthening Laboratory, surveillance, and other key areas within the health system.

May we know how much of a funding stake the AU and its member countries have in Africa CDC?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: Africa CDC is fully funded by the African Union Member States. Yes

The CDC got great credit from its handling of the COVID-19 pandemic, what are some of the major lessons learned as an institution and what policy recommendations for African countries to better prepare for future pandemics?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: The pandemic has caused immense disruption to African countries, particularly those already crisis ridden.

Lesson 1: Preparedness is crucial

The COVID-19 pandemic showed that being prepared is essential in a global health crisis. Many African countries were ill-prepared, with limited healthcare facilities and resources to cope with the pandemic. This has highlighted the need for African countries to develop comprehensive and comprehensive plans for dealing with any future health or economic crisis. Countries must also be prepared to take rapid and decisive action when faced with a new health crisis, rather than relying on international support.

Lesson 2: Strengthening Health Systems

The pandemic has shown the importance of strengthening health systems and investing in health care to respond to future pandemics. Many African countries have insufficient healthcare infrastructure and resources, making it difficult to respond to the pandemic. Sub-Saharan countries, in particular were already dealing with the burden of diseases such as malaria, HIV/AIDS, and tuberculosis, and the pandemic revealed the urgent need to invest more in healthcare systems in Africa. This means increasing investment in public health and primary healthcare services, which could help to improve access to medicines and vaccines and reduce health inequalities.

Lesson 3: Promoting Health Security



In the wake of Covid-19, governments in Africa must proactively invest in public health systems, economic transformation and efforts to reduce inequality, says Dr Djoudalbaye.

African countries should take steps to promote health security by investing in research, preparedness and surveillance. This can be done by strengthening international health regulations to ensure African countries are better equipped to detect and respond to public health threats. This includes increasing resourcing and capacity building at national and regional levels and supporting collaborations between African countries for rapid response.

Lesson 4: Strengthening Collaboration

The pandemic highlighted the importance of international collaboration, from sharing best practices to ensure equitable access to tests and treatments. This demonstrated the need for African countries to strengthen their cooperation and collaboration with each other and international partners.

These lessons highlight the need for long-term, comprehensive and comprehensive strategies, even in the wake of a pandemic. In the wake of Covid-19, governments in Africa must proactively invest in public health systems, economic transformation and efforts to reduce inequality,

and undertake additional measures to ensure the resilience of country populations and society.

May we know some of the primary healthcare issues facing the continent?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: Access to Quality Health Care: A major healthcare issue facing Africa is the lack of access to quality and affordable health care. With limited resources and infrastructure, many countries in the continent cannot provide adequate health services to their population. Furthermore, even when affordable healthcare is available, it is often of poor quality or unavailable in remote or rural areas.

- HIV/AIDS and Other Infectious Diseases: HIV/AIDS is a major public health challenge in the African continent. Although rates of HIV transmission have decreased over the years, the disease is still a major cause of mortality in many countries. Other infectious diseases such as malaria, tuberculosis and schistosomiasis and other Neglected Tropical Diseases are also major issues, and continued efforts to control and prevent their spread is critical to improving the

population's overall health.

Non-communicable diseases such as cardiovascular diseases, diabetes, cancer and chronic respiratory diseases are also the leading causes of death and disability in Africa.

3. Counterfeit Drugs: Counterfeit drugs are another major healthcare issue facing Africa. As the drugs are often cheaper than their legitimate counterparts, many people are willing to purchase them, unaware of the risks of consuming such medications. Sometimes the medicines are fake, substandard or non-existent quality and can even be dangerous to health.

4. Lack of Health Insurance: Many countries in Africa do not have a functional healthcare insurance system, and thus, a significant number of the population is unable to access healthcare services due to financial constraints

The 36th AU Assembly of Heads of State and Government ended recently, how did Africa CDC feature in the deliberations and any major policy decisions?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: Our major outcome was the new Director General appointment by



For Dr Djoudalbaye, African countries should take steps to promote health security by investing in research, preparedness and surveillance.

Heads of State and Government as the Chief Executive Officer. He will be responsible for the overall management of the Africa CDC.

What kind of relations does the CDC have with other international bodies operating in the continent, like the WHO?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: Africa CDC has a very close working relationship with international bodies operating in Africa. With WHO, we collaborate on many programmes across the continent, providing technical support to Member States.

What are some of the most serious challenges the CDC has faced in the implementation of its programs across the continent?

The challenges are not different from what I mentioned earlier. I can

cite the following:

- A lack of finances, medical equipment, and medical personnel challenges the African health system. This has left some parts of Africa with insufficient resources to provide essential healthcare services adequately.

- Many African countries suffer from poor infrastructure that hinders the delivery of essential healthcare services. Poor roads, limited access to clean water, and inadequate electricity contribute to the poor delivery of healthcare resources in Africa.

- Despite improvements in recent years, many African countries still lack access to healthcare services. Barriers such as geographical distance or financial instability

prevent individuals from accessing vital healthcare services.

-African healthcare systems often suffer from poor quality of care. Low pay for healthcare workers, a lack of training, or drug shortages contribute to inadequate quality of care in African nations.

-Non-communicable diseases significantly contribute to death in Africa, yet they are often not given adequate attention. This is due to the focus of healthcare systems on infectious diseases such as HIV/AIDS, TB and malaria, which receive the bulk of medical funding.

For 2023, what are some of the major projects that the CDC will be working on?

Dr Benjamin Djoudalbaye: I will talk about priorities rather than

projects. We will continue supporting the African Union Member States in the following areas:

- Strengthen health-related surveillance systems for improved public health decision-making and action.
- Develop and strengthen information systems that inform and support African public health needs and actions.
- Ensure effective public health emergency preparedness and response capabilities
- Strengthen public health institutions and improve evidence-based decision-making and practice.
- Strengthen Africa's clinical and public health laboratory systems and networks.

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Exploring Investment Vehicles And Structures In Mauritius As A Leverage And Strategy To Overcome Your Business Challenges In Africa. Part 1

The State Of Doing Business In Africa

By Michael Adjei*

According to the world Bank Group, Doing Business 2020 Fact Sheet: Sub-Saharan Africa report, Mauritius, ranked number 13 and number 1 in Africa is the highest-ranking Sub-Saharan African economy overall. It is also the only economy from this region in the top 20 cohort. The second highest ranked economy in the African region is Rwanda 38. Mauritius (13) and Rwanda (38) are the only two Sub-Saharan African economies in the top 50 on the ease of doing business ranking.

South Sudan (185), Eritrea (189), and Somalia (190) are the lowest ranked economies in the region. Other large economies in the region and their rankings are Kenya (56), South Africa (84), Ghana (118), Nigeria (131), and the Democratic Republic of Congo (183).

Sub-Saharan Africa remains one of the weakest-performing regions on the ease of doing business ranking with an average score of 51.8, well below the OECD high-income economy average of 78.4 and the global average of 63.

Although certain countries like Togo, Nigeria and Kenya made some significant strides to improve the ease of doing business through regulatory reforms, several economies in the region continue to lag thereby having adverse effects on business operations in the region.

For example, the cost to obtain a permanent electrical connection in Sub-Saharan Africa is 3 times higher than the global average and 52 times higher than in the OECD high-income group. Whilst it takes over 200 hours in Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon to comply with export border procedures for maritime transport, compared with 13 hours in



Michael Adjei is International Business Development Executive at Órama.

OECD high-income economies. Ports in Sub-Saharan Africa are the least efficient of any region.

Despite some level of progress in the reforms to ease the doing business recorded in some of these areas, protecting minority investors and trading across borders were the areas with the least number of reforms.

Doing business in Africa continues to remain a challenge to navigate despite the seamless opportunities the continent presents. Nonetheless, Africa is a continent on the rise with vast untapped resources and favourable demographics, Africa stands to be the next great force of global demand and growth. Considering the rapidly urbanising population of its youth, it is no surprise that Africa is the target for many international companies.

Africa is currently amid a structural change promising to happen for some

time now, whilst recent trends show that investors' interest has shifted from extractive activities to consumer-oriented ones, encompassing new sectors such as technology, media and telecommunications, financial services, consumer products and retail & real estate, hospitality and construction, as well as next-generation industries such as business services, clean tech, automotive, life sciences, amongst others.

The rewards promise to be substantial. The McKinsey Global Institute projects that by 2025, African household consumption and business-to-business (B2B) spending could reach \$5.6 trillion. That is equivalent to nearly a third of current US gross domestic product. To get there, the continent has enormous infrastructure gaps to fill. Those gaps themselves represent huge opportunities.

Today, several factors still hinder the progress of sustainable business growth in the region, energy deficit, ease of doing business, lack of policies protecting investors, security, travel restrictions, foreign exchange control policies, unpredictable government policies, banking infrastructure, high tax rates and lending rates but to mention a few.

Very Small Enterprises (VSE's) and Small Medium Enterprises (SME's) represent more than 90% of businesses and employ nearly two-thirds of workers in Africa, however, very few are sustainable enough to make it through from start-ups to public offering and generate an annual revenue of \$1 billion. The question then is, how does one position his business to successfully utilise a comprehensive approach to overcoming such challenges?

Apparently, the answer lies within a

tiny island nation in the Indian ocean, a paradise nation in Africa called Mauritius. Mauritius has long been the jurisdiction of choice for firms wanting to expand their business into Africa. The tiny but powerful Indian ocean island nation has great political and economic stability, risk mitigating avenues, sound legal and regulatory framework, state-of-the-art infrastructure, a highly skilled and bilingual workforce (English and French) and a well-developed banking sector. It is no surprise why Mauritius ranks 1st in Africa in the World Bank's Doing Business Ranking report.

Mauritius also offers a compliant and reliable platform for doing business, notably acclaimed for its business-friendly and investment-friendly jurisdiction, with sound legal and regulatory frameworks, a transparent and internationally-compliant jurisdiction.

To complement its business-friendly position, the country has long-standing relationships with key African and international bodies, including the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA), the World Trade Organisation and the Commonwealth of Nations. It has also established a network of agreements, comprising 23 signed Investment Promotion and Protection Agreement (IPPAs) and 46 Double Taxation Avoidance Agreements (DTAAs) with African and international states, which means that global investors,



Mauritius has long been the jurisdiction of choice for firms wanting to expand their business into Africa.

traders and private equity companies gain preferential access to a number of key African markets and hundreds of millions of customers. It comes as no surprise why the Mo Ibrahim Index of African Governance has consecutively rated Mauritius as the top ranking country in overall governance in Africa.

Mauritius is also a fully collaborative and responsible international financial centre that has taken significant steps to adhere to international best practices. To enhance its transparency and collaboration framework, Mauritius signed the OECD Multilateral Convention on Mutual Administrative

Assistance in Tax Matters in June 2015. Mauritius is also a member of the Early Adopters Group committed to the early implementation of the Common Reporting Standard (CRS) on the automatic exchange of financial account information.

The OECD Global Forum has rated Mauritius as a "Largely Compliant" jurisdiction – a rating which equals that obtained by developed economies such as the US, the UK and Germany. It was the first African country to sign up to an Intergovernmental Agreement with the US for the implementation of the Foreign Accounts Tax Compliance Act (FATCA) and has joined the OECD's

Inclusive Framework to implement the Base Erosion and Profit Shifting (BEPS) recommendations and the new initiative on exchange of beneficial ownership information.

In the next article, we will discuss in detail some of the investment vehicles and structures as well as their benefits to leveraging your business opportunities when using Mauritius as the springboard to spread across Africa.

* Michael Adjei is International Business Development Executive at Órama . The article is the first in a three part series

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New Summit Same Problems For The AU

By Prince Kurupati



The surge in coups is making many African leaders uncomfortable.

With the Covid-19 pandemic slowly sinking into oblivion albeit its financial effects are still being felt across the continent, African leaders now face a more common problem – political and social strife as well as conflict. From West Africa's Sahel to the Horn of Africa, conflict on the continent is on the rise. To try and come up with measures to prevent the loss of life in these conflicts, African leaders gathered in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia for the African Union Summit with armed conflict being one of the main agenda points.

Though the theme of this year's AU Summit centred on free trade – “The Year of AfCFTA: Acceleration of the African Continental Free Trade Area Implementation” – African leaders saw it fit to also consider addressing armed conflict which threatens to disrupt the implementation of AfCFTA.

On the security and armed conflict front, first on the agenda was the rise in coups on the African continent. Over the past year, Africa witnessed several unconstitutional changes in governments in Burkina Faso, Guinea, Mali and Sudan. In all these countries, it was the military which extended its tentacles to civilian affairs by deposing democratically elected officials and

appointing military leaders. In the aftermath of each coup in these countries, AU quickly took decisive action by imposing sanctions on the military governments to force them to revert to civilian rule.

With regards to all four countries, the AU Summit agreed to keep the sanctions in place until civilian rule is brought back. AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security Bankole Adeoye had this to say after the leaders had convened, “The assembly reaffirmed zero-tolerance against unconstitutional change (of government). The Commission is ready to support these member states to return to constitutional order, the idea is that democracy must take root and must be promoted and protected”.

While maintaining sanctions on these countries is generally considered to be a proactive decision in forcing the military leaders to relinquish power and return to the barracks, AU Head of Commission Moussa Faki Mahamat prefers more radical actions as he says the sanctions “do not seem to produce the expected results. It seems necessary to reconsider the system of resistance to the unconstitutional changes to make it more effective”. With such strong views, it is to be seen what the Head of Commission will propose in the coming months as

he possesses the power to drum up support from many African countries and effect the changes he desires.

Also, on the agenda on the security front was the rise in tensions between the Democratic Republic of Congo and Rwanda. The M23 rebel group in the DRC has seized swaths of territory in the country and in so doing, caused a diplomatic rift between DRC and Rwanda as the former accuses the latter of sponsoring and abating the rebels.

Leading up to the AU Summit, UN Secretary-General Antonio Guterres weighed in on the diplomatic rift between the two countries saying African leaders should quickly address the matter. “I am deeply concerned about the recent rise in violence by armed groups in the eastern Democratic Republic of Congo and the rise of terrorist groups in the Sahel and elsewhere,” Guterres said.

Adding to the UN Secretary General's voice, Kenyan President William Ruto speaking at a mini summit on the side-lines of the AU Summit said “We cannot walk away from the people of DRC, history will be very harsh on us. We must do what we have to do”.

Another key issue that the African leaders highlighted when it comes to combating the spread of armed

conflict on the continent is to promote free, fair, credible, and verifiable elections. The leaders agreed that elections should not just be held for the purposes of marking the register but there is a need for the elections to be the true will of the people. By doing this, the continent prevents any possible post-electoral violence which may claim the lives of many innocent souls as the people strive to have their voice more pronounced. On this front, African leaders called on the AU election observer missions to Nigeria and Zimbabwe – two countries that are holding elections soon – to ensure that elections in these countries pass all the metrics and reflect the true will of the people.

While the major focus on the security agenda was to come up with measures to combat the spread of armed conflict on the continent, African leaders also took time to appreciate the efforts made by the AU late last year when it mediated a 2 November 2022 agreement that ended fighting in the devastating conflict centred in Ethiopia's Tigray region. The victory recorded in Ethiopia is one major step towards Agenda 2063 – a charter that lists ending conflict on the continent as a key goal.



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Ukraine Looking To Strengthen Economic And Diplomatic Relations With Africa- Daria Zarivna

By Ajong Mbapndah L

The Zelenskyy administration is working to create stronger diplomatic, economic, and social ties with Africa, all of which will help ensure long-term prosperity and stability for Africa and Ukraine, says Daria Zarivna, Communications Head at the Office of President Zelenskyy's Chief of Staff.

Fielding questions from PAV, Zarivna says President Zelenskyy has stressed the importance of deepening areas of trade and working to achieve representation in 30 countries across the continent, with ten states already identified where new Ukrainian embassies will open.

With Africa experiencing what some consider its worst drought in 40 years, the Ukrainian government have come up with an ambitious plan to provide provide grain to 5 million people in Africa by delivering up to 60 ships of wheat by mid-2023.

"Russia's war in Ukraine has disrupted Africa's development and recovery from the pandemic by raising food and fuel prices, disrupting trade of goods, and reducing the flow of finance in the continent. The cooperation of African countries and the influence they may have over the Russia's aggression in Ukraine will have long term positive consequences for all parties involve," says Zarivna.

May we start with an idea of the situation in your country, how are Ukrainians coping with the war and Russian attacks?

Daria Zarivna: Since February 2022, Russia has been attacking Ukrainian cities from different directions with different weapons, killing thousands of people and injuring many more. Some people were forced to flee their homes and loved ones, and others live in fear under constant shelling. Our reality has become a life of hiding in basements and bomb shelters – with no means of livelihood left.

However, we remain brave,



The Zelenskyy administration is working to create stronger diplomatic, economic, and social ties with Africa, says Daria Zarivna.

determined, and united. The Ukrainian people continue to show incredible strength and resilience, while they fight for their integrity and sovereignty. We have gained incredible support from the international community, our partners in the EU and the West, as well as the humanitarians who continue to work collectively in aid of Ukraine and its people. For us, victory is just a matter of time.

Prior to the war what was the nature of ties between Ukraine and Africa, and what impact has the war had on these ties?

Daria Zarivna: Historically, Ukraine's ties with Africa have been focused on economic cooperation and mutual collaboration, much less so in terms of political alliance and diplomatic relations. But now more than ever, Ukraine's potential partnerships with African countries is so important to help increase international pressure on Russia and

to allow Ukraine to continue to export its grain and support the continents ongoing battle with food security.

As the war erupted in Ukraine, the world witnessed one of the most valuable grain corridors close off, plummeting the global food supply and deepening the food security crisis. According to the latest World Food Programme (WFP) report, an all-time high of 970,000 people are facing catastrophic levels of famine in Ethiopia, South Sudan, and Somalia – ten times more than five years ago.

Ukraine is looking to strengthen its economic and diplomatic relations with Africa. President Zelenskyy stressed the importance of deepening areas of trade and working to achieve representation in 30 countries across the continent, with ten states already identified where new Ukrainian embassies will open. Ukraine offers many opportunities for cooperation with Africa, from agriculture to some food products, which could help facilitate a stronger socio-economic

tie between both nations.

With all the challenges that Ukraine is facing what prompted President Zelensky to launch the "Grain from Ukraine" humanitarian programme?

Daria Zarivna: Ukraine, known as the breadbasket of Europe, has significant global market share by volume of several vital foodstuffs including corn (16,2%), wheat (11,6%), barley (17,6%) and sunflower oil (50%). While the country remains a victim of an illegal war, struggling with food shortages, devastated farmland, and widespread blackouts, we will never forget our role as a responsible global citizen – especially having experienced famine as a nation ourselves, when millions of Ukrainians starved to death in a famine from 1932-1933. Africa is in desperate need of food and Ukraine stands ready to support vulnerable people in their hour of need.

The programme will not only help nations on the brink of starvation but will also help Ukraine shift vast stores of food supplies stuck in our warehouses, which has not been able to be exported overseas due to a blockade imposed by the Russian armed forces. Through this initiative, the Ukrainian government also aims to assist one of our own economic backbones – our farmers – in addition to strengthening local food systems and promoting sustainable agricultural practices. By destroying traditional supply chains, Russia has brought at least 70 million people around the world closer to starvation.

Over USD 200 million in donations raised for Grain from Ukraine programme so far, where are the donations coming from?

Daria Zarivna: The programme is supported by a number of international partners that are subsidizing the grain. Several EU countries, as well as the US, Canada, Great Britain, Norway, Japan, Korea, and Qatar have contributed to the Grain from Ukraine programme. We are in ongoing discussions with additional partners to garner their support and continue to provide relief to societies that need it the most.

How was the mood like with the Zelenskyy Administration with recent arrival of Grain from Ukraine Ship in Djibouti?

Daria Zarivna: The ship arrived at the port carrying 30,000 tonnes of grains, which will be stored in Djibouti before being dispatched to Ethiopia. This is extremely encouraging as we aim to ensure the safe transportation of grain and agricultural products through Ukrainian ports to Africa to prevent famine across the continent's most vulnerable countries. Africa is experiencing the worst drought in 40 years, with millions of people in need for food relief.

How long is the grain from Ukraine program expected to last and when criteria will be used in selecting beneficiary



The Ukraine government aims to provide grain to 5 million people in Africa by delivering up to 60 ships of wheat by mid-2023, Daria Zarivna.

countries?

Daria Zarivna: The Ukraine government is very ambitious – we aim to provide grain to 5 million people in Africa by delivering up to 60 ships of wheat by mid-2023. The programme is in partnership with the UN World Food Programme (WFP) who are supporting us in finding out which countries need help and what kind of grain specification they need. We then assess the country's readiness to receive the grain and its ability to distribute fairly and responsibly on the ground. The ships undergo a specific process of inspection, monitoring and surveillance from the beginning of the process (loading the grain) until the end of the trip (docking and distribution).

Former President of Malawi Joyce Banda, Dr Christopher Fomunyoh and Dr Oby Ezekwesili are prominent African Names accompanying the initiative, may we know their specific role?

Daria Zarivna: The Ambassadors are a part of a new International

Coordination Group for the Prevention of Hunger (ICGPH), who directly influence the provision of food needs of millions of people around the world. The ICGPH hopes to build international support for the Ukrainian agricultural industry, protect cultivated areas, maintain production, and strengthen supply chains. It also hopes to source international customers who can guarantee the purchase of Ukrainian agricultural products.

They assist the Ukrainian government in attracting more partners for the programme, as well as raise the programme's visibility in Africa, while ensuring the smooth receiving and distribution of Ukrainian wheat to Africa's most vulnerable societies.

Are there any conditions or expectations from African countries that benefit from the Grain from Ukraine initiative?

Daria Zarivna: None at all – our only aim is to support African countries battling the severe food insecurity crisis, while providing relief to the

world's most vulnerable societies on the brink of famine.

In what way do you think African countries could be of help in resolving the conflict between Ukraine and Russia, and how does the Zelenskyy Administration envisage the future of ties with Africa?

Daria Zarivna: Russia's war in Ukraine has disrupted Africa's development and recovery from the pandemic by raising food and fuel prices, disrupting trade of goods, and reducing the flow of finance in the continent. The cooperation of African countries and the influence they may have over the Russia's aggression in Ukraine will have long term positive consequences for all parties involved.

The global food security crisis is a core part of the peaceful plan suggested by Ukraine. The Zelenskyy administration is working to create stronger diplomatic, economic, and social ties with Africa, all of which will help ensure long-term prosperity and stability for both.

Mozambique: Trail Of Destruction From Cyclone

Freddy is the latest cyclone to leave a trail of destruction in Mozambique before moving on to Zimbabwe and South Africa. There have been fatalities and several public and private infrastructures have been flooded and destroyed in Mozambique and electricity pylons have toppled leaving many families in the dark and without internet. However, the floods caused by cyclone Freddy have caused major obstacles and inaccessibility of some locations, which contribute to the delay in restoring basic services. The impacts of climate change increase the frequency and intensity of these storms, leading Mozambique to be ranked 1st out of 180 countries in the Global Climate Risk Index for 2019 and the United Nations World Food Programme reports it as the 38th most vulnerable and 13th least prepared country for climate change.

By Jorge Joaquim

Mozambique remains vulnerable to climate change in a context where it is not investing in resilient infrastructure, a fact that makes any storm affecting the country cause severe damage. Tropical Storm Freddy caused seven deaths after it hit the country in late February, causing severe flooding. Many people had to be transferred to reception centres and about 163,300 people were affected and 27,800 houses were destroyed.

The cyclone made landfall on the coast of the southern province of Inhambane on 24 February 2023, but rapidly weakened as it moved inland towards the Zimbabwean border. After that, it dissipated and presented no further threat, although heavy rains associated with Freddy continued to fall in parts of the country.

The present moment is a scenario of death and destruction, caused by intense rains and water upstream, in which citizens have been left



homeless, patients without health centres for medical assistance, children without classrooms. Thousands of hectares of crops are affected, with the possible occurrence of pockets of famine foreseen in the not too distant future, mainly in the southern and central regions of the country.

The victims have nothing to eat, their food reserves have been washed away by the waters and all that remains of their clothes are the ones they carry on their bodies. Therefore,

on the faces of these people the marks of pain and facial expressions of great suffering are clearly visible. Some people, however, hesitate to leave the area for fear that some evildoers may vandalise their houses and remove materials such as doors, windows, zinc sheets, beams, electricity meters and taps.

In view of the occurrence of Tropical Freddy, which may worsen sanitary problems in the affected areas, the Ministry of Health says it is ready in terms of human resources and medicines for the clinical and diagnostic approach of the cases of water-borne diseases.

Humanitarian drama

As a result of the continuous rainfall, some homes in Mozambique were submerged and others collapsed. Faced with the impossibility of living



amidst the muddy waters and full of debris, many families were forced to abandon their homes, even without any refuge. A considerable number of families who lost their homes and all their possessions because of the heavy rains that accompanied Cyclone Freddy are calling for urgent intervention by the authorities to help, but the government has said it is unable to do so and is relying on the goodwill and faith of its international partners.

Several supports have been announced to tackle the situation. ForAfrika staff are working with approximately 200 000 people whose lives have been affected by the cyclone and its aftermath.

"Many people in Mozambique face food shortages, a possible cholera outbreak in Inhambane and loss of income due to the heavy rains we have suffered in the past week," says ForAfrika's country manager for Mozambique, Arsenio Mucavele, who grew up and was educated in the country.

ForAfrika is providing communities with food assistance, and providing kitchen kits, blankets, tarpaulins and water purification equipment, with 20 staff members on the ground. In Sofala, ForAfrika is partnering with the World Food Programme to provide humanitarian assistance.

More than 27 800 houses were destroyed or damaged, of which 12 430 were flooded. Public

infrastructure was damaged, with 408 classrooms destroyed, affecting nearly 20 700 pupils, and approximately 685km of road has been damaged. Nearly 270km² of crops were affected.

The European Commission has announced €200,000 in humanitarian funding to help those most affected by the storm. The EU funds will support the Mozambique Red Cross to provide relief to communities already affected by heavy rains and flooding, as well as awareness raising and early warning.

The three-month project will benefit 60,000 people in the provinces of Gaza, Inhambane, Manica, Maputo, Sofala, Tete and Zambezia.

The Chinese community in Mozambique has donated several tons of supplies for flood victims in southern and central Mozambique. In total, the Chinese community donated 50 tons of cereals, 6,200 litres of cooking oil and other products (including food, clothing and blankets). The products will benefit victims affected by floods in the provinces of Gaza, Inhambane and Maputo in the south, and Sofala in the centre.

In Mozambique, the occurrence of floods is recurrent at this time of year, but even so, rainfall has been above the expected: only in the week of 06 to 12 February it rained almost three



times the average of the months of February.

Losses

The railway linking Gaza province, southern Mozambique, and Zimbabwe has been interrupted since 24 February due to floods and the heavy rain that continues to fall mean it is impossible to say when it will reopen. In addition to trains to the border town of Chicualacuala and Zimbabwe, the Limpopo line is also used to transport minerals from Botswana to Maputo port. There is a risk of food shortages in districts in the region that depend on rail traffic for supplies of essential products.

Also, the railway line connecting Mozambique to Eswatini has been cut for a fortnight due to heavy rain, preventing cargo transport and the movement of about 1,000 passengers

per day.

Mozambique's publicly-owned electricity company, EDM, has recorded losses of about \$781,000, due to the heavy rains and flooding that struck much of the country last month. According to a document made public by EDM, about 30,000 customers were left without electricity following the flooding in parts of southern and central Mozambique.

In Maputo, the most affected areas in southern Mozambique, there are about 4,200 families still without electricity due to network breakdowns and cuts. The flood waters and tropical cyclone Freddy brought down 80 medium voltage pylons along eight kilometres of electricity transmission line.

Due to the passage of the cyclone last Friday, about 130,000 customers in the provinces of Maputo, Manica and Sofala were left without electricity. Several EDM technical teams are on the ground, aiming to restore the normal supply of electricity to the affected areas as quickly as possible.

However, the floods caused by Cyclone Freddy have caused major obstacles and inaccessibility of some locations, which contribute to the delay in restoring power.

Between October and April, Mozambique is cyclically hit by floods, a phenomenon justified by its geographical location, subject to the passage of storms and, at the same time, downstream of most of the hydrographic basins of southern Africa.



An aerial night photograph of Cape Town, South Africa, showing the city lights and the surrounding green hills. The Enlit Africa logo is overlaid on the image, featuring the text 'Enlit Africa' in white, with 'Enlit' in a larger font. To the left of the text is a circular graphic composed of yellow dots of varying sizes, connected by thin yellow lines, resembling a molecular or network structure. A large yellow circle is positioned to the right of the text.

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Javnyuy Joybert: Climbing Cameroon's Entrepreneurship Ladder to Success

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

Known as Mr Remarkable, Javnyuy Joybert, is a multiple international award-winning business and productivity speaker, trainer & consultant with 11 years+ of experience spanning various countries. Javnyuy's mission in life is to turn slow-growth institutions (businesses) into high-growth institutions, and average individuals into productive peak performers.

Venturing into the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Cameroon as an active stakeholder in 2011, Javnyuy is the CEO of COSDEF Group LTD, a service disruptive business with subsidiary operations in Financial Services, Corporate Training/Consulting, Skills Training & Recruitment Services, and Technology and Investment Advisory Services.

"I have always been fascinated by business which is why decided to choose the path of commercial education in secondary school where I started reading subjects like accounting, business mathematics, commerce and finance, economics etc. I started selling stuff like biscuits, chocolate and other eatables during my school days," Javnyuy said.

Javnyuy is a Queen's Young Leader Award Winner Runner-Up, 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow at Clark Atlanta University USA, 2018 & 2020 Class of 100 Most Influential Young Africans, Tony Elumelu Entrepreneur 2019, OBAMA Foundation African Leader, YALS 2019 Young African Entrepreneur of the Year, The Masters' Mind Africa Awards Speaker of the Year 2020, Forbes Business Council Nominee March 2020, and Advocate Leadership Award Winner 2022.

What is the overall state of entrepreneurship in Cameroon today?

Javnyuy Joybert: I ventured into the entrepreneurial ecosystem in Cameroon as an active stakeholder



Javnyuy is a Queen's Young Leader Award Winner Runner-Up, 2018 Mandela Washington Fellow at Clark Atlanta University.

in 2011. Looking back then and now I can say the overall state of entrepreneurship in Cameroon has greatly grown and is experiencing consistent growth. We have more institutions both private, mission and government promoting entrepreneurship, we have more startups rising daily, we have more international agencies venturing into the space, we have universities creating entrepreneurship clubs, and we have churches organizing entrepreneurship seminars for their Christians. We have authors writing books on entrepreneurship across Cameroon and boot camps and conferences on entrepreneurship all over the nation of Cameroon. Buea has been referred to internationally as silicon mountain and more. For the culture of entrepreneurship to grow, education remains critical and we have seen that on the rise year in and year out

Looking at the youth population and the unemployment dynamics, what potential do

you see in entrepreneurship Cameroon has, what will it take for things to change profoundly?

Javnyuy Joybert: I strongly believe entrepreneurship is the saviour of Cameroon and Africa. First of all, the entrepreneurial mindset is beyond starting a business. It is about having a mindset of a contributor, initiator, creator, value manifestation and growth. When companies have more people with an entrepreneurial mindset (Intrapreneurs or corporate entrepreneurs), the companies will experience more growth and employ more people.

When citizens have an entrepreneurial mindset, they will have the capability to create more sustainable businesses which will employ more people across the nation.

One thing that excites me is seeing more universities organizing entrepreneurship boot camps and clubs to promote entrepreneurship. This will position students to leave school with the creators' mentality and not a consumption mentality.

With the potential that

Javnyuy Joybert: There are a couple of things that come to mind but are not limited to these. I strongly believe for Cameroon to experience significant growth opportunities in the next 5 to 10 years core parties involved must do their work. The government must do its job and the private sector plays must be doing its work.

The government and private sector should work on some of the following; Strengthen institutions and service to citizens: As long as we struggle to get access to certain government institutions and experience slow service delivery to citizens, economic growth will be affected

Improving infrastructure: Energy and roads top the list. In a nation where people cannot move with ease and cannot consistently depend on energy to create value, the economy will struggle.

Strong policy design and implementation: In a real sense, the government does not provide jobs to people, it is the private sector that

provides jobs. In a nation where the government is the highest employer of labour, that government is failing to empower the private sector. This is a strong sign of weak and inadequate policies to promote the private sector to thrive.

Accelerate technology adoption: In this century the countries that will lead in value creation and delivery and those who have successfully accelerated technology adoption among the citizens especially young people in universities. Cameroon should step up on this.

Enhancing employability and enterprise development skills: It is citizens that make up a nation. It is productive citizens that make up a productive economy. For Cameroon to change profoundly, the citizens must have the right skills to create value, deliver value and monetize value. This can be done when citizens have the right skills. Citizens must become employable with relevant skills. Citizens must be able to create sustainable institutions and for this to happen they need enterprising skills.

At the moment in Cameroon, may we know some of the institutions, structures or programs that are trying to empower young people?

Javnyuy Joybert: I think it is hard to even highlight. So much is going on. From universities going beyond just providing lectures to organizing conferences to empower their students, to churches going beyond church services and prayer programs to organizing empowerment programs for their youth, from youth-led associations organizing youth training programs in communities, from individuals who have changed making mindsets creating projects and initiatives to empower young people and much more. We can all see these institutions and individuals around us.

May we get an idea of your background and journey into the world of entrepreneurship?

Javnyuy Joybert: I have always been fascinated by business which



Pursuing your dreams takes hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance.

is why decided to choose the path of commercial education in secondary school where I started reading subjects like Accounting, business mathematics, commerce and finance, economics etc. I started selling stuff like biscuits, chocolate and other eatables during my school days.

In 2011 due to my educational background in business and concluding a Bsc in financial management, I started training in communities on the basics of business startup and management and in 2012 I started The Center for Entrepreneurship, Leadership & Business Management Development (CELBMD) Africa. 10 years+ later, I have started over 7 businesses with 3 failing and 4 still striving at the moment.

Based on your own experience, what are some of the recipes or success tips that you can share with young Cameroonians?

Javnyuy Joybert: Success recipes depend, however, there are some foundational recipes I always strongly recommend for young people to embody; Define what success means to you; Do not live life copying what everyone is doing. Determine what success means to you. Do not use another person's success to rate yourself. You can be inspired and walk your path.

To succeed in any field, you need mastery. Build mastery. Study to

become the best in your field. Pay the price to upgrade your skills and mindset. Build relevant relationships. You need the right people around you to win in this life. Believe in possibilities: No matter the challenges you face, be agile, learn, improve and believe that something good is coming your way. Many times, success is on the other side of uncertainty. Taking the risk can be all that you need to manifest that success.

Can you shed some light on the COSDEF Group that you lead, what kind of services does it offer?

Javnyuy Joybert: COSDEF Group LTD is a full-service institution will operations in financial and investment consulting, corporate training and consulting, recruitment and digital transformation consulting.

You recently announced the international launch of some six books, can you give us a quick synopsis of the books, and why the launch at this point?

Javnyuy Joybert: The launch at this point is due to the goals I set for myself.

How to Make Money from social media & Physical Attention

- Building, Managing & Monetizing Attention: Discover the art of capturing and capitalizing on attention in business and life.
- From CPO to CEO: From Chief

Procrastination Officer to Chief Execution Officer: Techniques to Overcome procrastination and become a successful leader.

- The Business Idea Handbook: Finding Business Ideas in Unexpected Places: Unlock innovative business ideas from everyday experiences and places.
- Skyrocket Your Profits: 30 Marketing & Sales Proven Strategies to Boost Your Sales: Elevate your marketing and sales game with proven strategies.
- 40+ Business Models & Examples: Practical Ways Different Businesses Make Money: Explore practical business models for success.
- Business Lessons from Drug Cartel Lords: 17 Lessons to Learn & Execute: Shocking observations reveal valuable business insights.

For potential readers out there, what will the books cost, where can copies be procured and how could their own lives be changed by what you share in your books?

Javnyuy Joybert: Follow this link to order paperback/Kindle on Amazon <https://www.amazon.com/author/drjavnyuyjoybert>

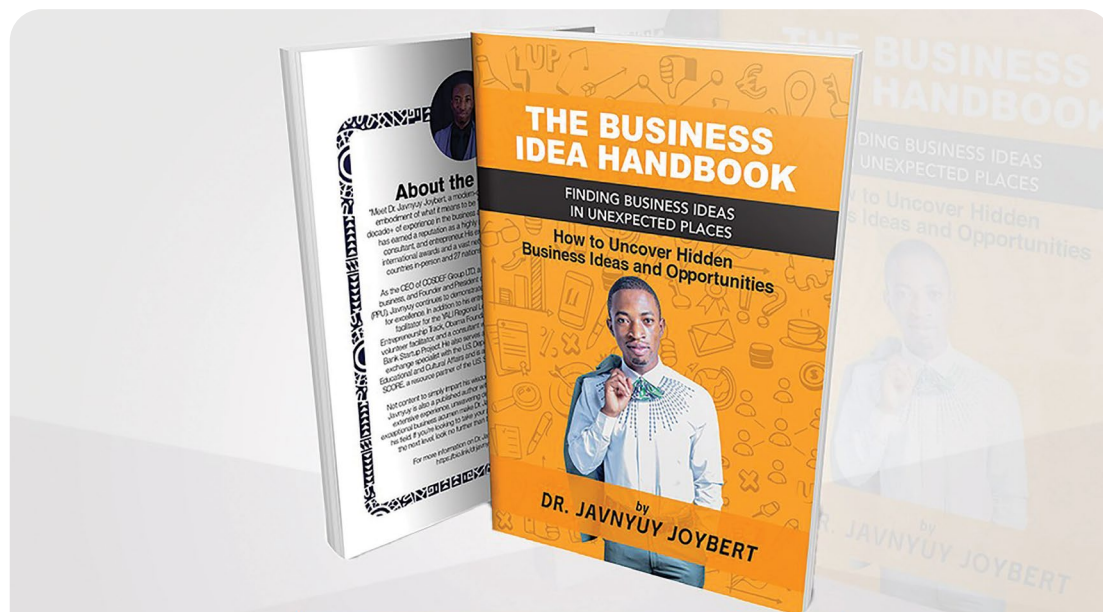
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Any last word to the young, dynamic but heavily challenged young people in Cameroon struggling to change their fortunes?

Javnyuy Joybert: We all have dreams. Whether it's to become a successful business owner, a world-renowned artist, or simply live a happy and fulfilling life, we all have something that we strive for. But, as we all know, dreams don't come easy. They take hard work and often sacrifice. In this chapter, we're going to take a closer look at what it takes to pursue your dreams and how to persevere through the challenges that come with them.

First, let's talk about hard work. Pursuing your dreams requires a lot of dedication and effort. It's not going to be easy, and there will be times when you want to give up. But, it's important to remember that anything worth having is worth working for. So, if you truly want to achieve your dreams, you have to be willing to put in the time and effort to make it happen.

Another important aspect of pursuing your dreams is sacrifice. To achieve your goals, you will have to make sacrifices. This could mean sacrificing time with friends and family, sleeping in, or even giving up something you love. But, as difficult as these sacrifices may be, they are necessary for you to achieve your dreams.



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Joybert is author to many books such as The Business Idea Handbook - Finding Business Ideas in Unexpected Places Unlock innovative business ideas from everyday experiences and places.

One of the most difficult things about pursuing your dreams is learning to say «no». When you're working towards something, it's easy to get caught up in the excitement

and want to take on every opportunity that comes your way. But the reality is, you can't do everything. You will have to say «no» to some things to focus on your dream. It's important

to remember that not every opportunity is the right one for you, and that's okay.

With that being said, it's also important to remember that the pursuit of your dreams is not a straight path. There will be setbacks and obstacles along the way, but it's important to persevere. When things get tough, take a step back and remind yourself why you started on this journey in the first place. And remember, failure is not the opposite of success, it's a part of it. Each setback is an opportunity to learn and

grow, and to come back stronger. The process of pursuing your dreams can be difficult and at times it may seem impossible. It's okay to feel scared and unsure, but remember that these feelings are normal. But, with hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance, you can achieve your dreams. Surround yourself with people who support and believe in you and always stay true to yourself.

In conclusion, pursuing your dreams takes hard work, sacrifice, and perseverance. You will have to say «no» to some things to focus on your dream, but it's important to remember that every setback is an opportunity to learn and grow. With the right mindset and a support system, you can achieve your dreams. Remember to keep your eyes on the prize and never give up on what you truly want.



Javnyuy is the CEO of COSDEF Group LTD.

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	ACTIVITY	STARTING	COUNT	ON-HAND	
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ug/h PATCH 98	Dispensed	20	-20	40	***
Today, 14:09 Anastasia S. Fentanyl 87.5 ug/h PATCH 0378-8127-98	Received	30	30	60	***
Today, 13:45 Jeff M. Oxycodone HCL and APAP 2.5/300 mg TAB 72245-193-03	Lost/Stolen	15	-15	0	***

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NJ Ayuk Releases 'A Just Transition: Making Energy Poverty History with an Energy Mix'

Representing the third publication released by the best-selling author, the book sheds light on the sobering reality that is unfolding in Africa's energy sector.

Entrepreneur, attorney, and best-selling author NJ Ayuk has officially released his most recent book, titled 'A Just Transition: Making Energy Poverty History with an Energy Mix.' The book is now available to purchase on Amazon!

Following years of diligent research and in-depth analysis, the book sheds light on the sobering reality that is unfolding as the International Energy Agency's (IEA) ambitious green energy policies continue to stifle and cripple energy economies across Africa.

While the rest of the world is faced with one, momentous crisis: climate change, Africa is faced with two: climate change and energy poverty. In pursuit of addressing the impacts caused by the climate crisis, world leaders have put in place the Paris Agreement, designed to keep global temperatures from rising in the long-term through the immediate transition to renewable energies. As the continent which faces the harshest impacts of the climate crisis, the immediate transition will result in Africa lacking the chance to develop, providing the over 600 million people currently without access to electricity with reliable energy, while at the same time standing to bear a disproportionate share of the consequences of climate change. Simply put, this immediate transition called for with the Paris Agreement will have devastating impacts on Africa.

Against this backdrop, the book's overall objective is to answer a series of important questions. Firstly, Africa bears a disproportionate share of not only the anticipated future problems of climate change, but the present-

day, here-and-now problem of energy poverty. So, what should we do? Should we prioritize the goal of preventing climate change over the goal of addressing energy poverty? Or should we focus on ways to deliver power to the hundreds of millions of Africans who currently lack access to electricity? Obviously, we should try

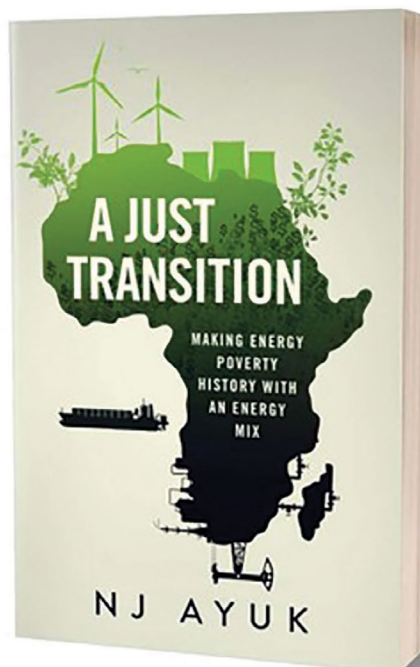
to achieve both objectives. Both are important. But how do we do this? And which should come first?

The book investigates the best way forward for transitioning to a cleaner energy future while prioritizing Africa's socioeconomic prosperity. The answer put forward by the IEA being that renewables are the solution to Africa's energy poverty. However, as the book details, this is simply not true. Renewable technologies cost more than most African countries can bear to pay, and while the global community has offered to help the continent make the transition, international pledges have consistently fallen short, with Africa and other developing regions still waiting to receive the assistance they were promised.

Ayuk posits Africa can approach the energy

transition in its own way. In his pursuit for an answer to the aforementioned questions, Ayuk considers the role natural gas will play in achieving dual objectives of energy transition and economic prosperity in Africa. By looking at the quantities of gas in Africa, Ayuk makes a strong case for utilization of this fuel, with details given into its role in other economies, opportunities for development in Africa and why Ayuk recommends gas over other resources.

What separates the book from other energy-focused publications is that it is rooted in what Africa needs. Ayuk emphasizes that Africa needs to chart its own destiny; make its own choices; and decide whether to use its own resources. Simply put, Africa's journey to economic prosperity starts with gas. 'A Just Transition: Making Energy Poverty History with an Energy Mix' is available for purchase on Amazon at <https://a.co/d/3uzPpJ2>. Get your copy now!



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amazon



The book represents a third publication from NJ Ayuk.

Zimbabwe-The Menace From Hard Drugs

By Prince Kurupati

In a factual but grim statement, Zimbabwe's leading state newspaper in an article published at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic stated that "crystal meth is perhaps the only substance that has competed with the Covid-19 pandemic in taking Zimbabwean lives over the past year or two". The statement brilliantly albeit in a spooky way exposed how serious the issue of hard drugs is affecting the Zimbabwean population in the process claiming many lives while leaving many others exposed to various lifetime risks.

Crystal meth which is scientifically known as methamphetamine is a highly addictive stimulant used for its powerful euphoric effects. In Zimbabwean townships, crystal meth is popularly referred to as mutoriro or dombo (stone).

While Zimbabwe like many other nations across the globe has had its fair share of drug-related problems, it's only in recent years that the problem has become a huge problem. It won't be far from the truth to say that the Covid-19 pandemic not only ushered a new way of living as espoused by the concepts of social distancing but also drove hordes of people, especially the young to start taking hard drugs as a way of coping with the effects of the pandemic.

With the Zimbabwean economy has taken a nosedive since the early 2000s when the country was slapped with economic sanctions, the working population has shifted from formal to informal employment. In the informal working space, many however only manage to sustain themselves on a day-to-day basis. The coming in of the Covid-19 pandemic changed all that as most were restricted to staying indoors and in so doing, they lost their livelihoods. Faced with poverty, economic hardship and unemployment, many found solace in hard drugs that 'heal' their pain.

An unemployed agriculture graduate who is addicted to crystal meth said "We were at home (at the height of the Covid-19 pandemic), had



A growing menace from drugs in Zimbabwe. Photo Credit Health Times Zimbabwe.

nothing to do, so we ended up taking drugs to forget our troubles... Doing drugs is a way of healing the pain and stress of being unproductive... When I take crystal meth, I get lots of energy".

Another addicted young man while speaking to the Guardian said, "This drug (crystal meth) will just make you get into another zone altogether; we can spend the whole night talking and enjoying ourselves. We live in a world of our own and can even forget about our daily troubles... These days you find little girls taking the substance. Most of them are coming here to smoke this thing. At 1 am, you will find most kids flooding the streets smoking meth – it's like you are watching a movie. These children have become wild".

Some say they take crystal meth, not for its supposed euphoric effects but rather, as a way to cope with their job. A security guard based in Highfield, one of the oldest townships in Zimbabwe's capital Harare said that "I like this stuff, it just does it for me. I can do my work all night without even dozing. It is good if you

want to do something productive with your time. But I do not advise young ones to get this drug".

The high prevalence of hard drugs in the country according to psychiatrist Anesu Isabel Chinoperekwei can also be attributed to their affordability in comparison to alcohol. "Crystal meth is a drug which has recently become more available and more widely used. It's cheaper than alcohol and ubiquitous, one can find it anywhere," she said. She went further stating that the high prevalence of hard drugs is also evidenced by the fact that more than two-thirds of the mental health caseload at public hospitals is drug-related. Such is the huge spike in drug abuse cases that Nelson Makore who is the senior nursing officer for the psychiatric unit at one of Zimbabwe's largest hospital Sally Mugabe Hospital said they recorded a spike in drug abuse cases from 150 in 2019 to 825 in 2020.

Zimbabwe does have a legal framework in place which prohibits the importation and/or use of harmful substances such as crystal

meth, heroine, cocaine, marijuana, codeine and spirituous beverages among others known as the Dangerous Drugs Act. However, thanks to the porous Zimbabwe-South Africa border, most drugs are smuggled from neighbouring South Africa into Zimbabwe with ease. Law enforcement agents have also been implicated as being part and parcel of the smuggling cartels.

Cutting the supply chain would be the best route to detoxify the country but the involvement of law enforcement agents in the smuggling cartels makes this difficult if not impossible. The other solution most people call for is for stiffer and tougher penalties to be given to all convicted drug peddlers. Unfortunately, law enforcement agents have been found wanting when it comes to apprehending those accused of dealing in drugs while the few arrested have just been given slap on the wrist punishments.

Russia's Vaccine Business Stumbles in Africa

By Kestér Kenn Klomegâh

Until recently, Africa has not been high on Russia's policy agenda. African leaders have to understand that Russia, for the past three decades, Africa was at the bottom of its policy agenda. After the end of Soviet era, Russia has focused broadly on the United States and Europe, dreaming of becoming part of Europe, part of the configuration of Global North. The low economic presence of Russia from 1991 until 2019 was a testament to that fact that Africa was at the bottom of its priority list. Of course the October 2019 summit was symbolic, but after that Russia has left most of bilateral agreements undelivered across Africa.

With its «special military operation» on Ukraine that necessitated imposition of stringent sanctions from the United States, European Union and their allies, the United Nations Security Council mounting pressure on Russia since February 24 2022, pushes Russia to begin soliciting aggressively for support in Africa. Last July, article posted to its official website, Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov wrote: «The development of a comprehensive partnership with African countries remains among top priorities of Russia's foreign policy, Moscow is open to its further build-up multifaceted relations with Africa.»

In his Op-Ed article, Lavrov argues: «We have been rebuilding our positions for many years now. The Africans are reciprocating. They are interested in having us. It is good to see that our African friends have a similar understanding with Russia.» Lavrov, however, informed about broadening African issues «in the new version of Russia's Foreign Policy Concept against the background of the waning of the Western direction» and this will objectively increase the share of the African direction in the work of the Foreign Ministry.

Lavrov consistently displays his passion for historical references.



Soviet's support for struggles for political independence and against colonialism should be laid to rest in the archives. The best way to fight neo-colonialism is to demonstrate by investing in those competitive sectors, make a departure away from hyperbolic rhetoric on endless list of sectors. In practical terms, we rather face today's development challenges and what are in store for the future generation. Africa today does not need anti-Western slogans, Africa simply needs external players who would passionately and genuinely invest in the critical economic sectors. The fundamental fact is that Africa is making efforts to transform its economy to create employment, modern agriculture and industrialize the continent, especially with the introduction of the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA).

Despite criticisms, China has built an exemplary distinctive economic power in Africa. Besides China, Africa is largely benefiting from the European Union and Western aid flows, economic and trade ties. That compared, Russia plays very little role in Africa's infrastructure, agriculture and industry, and making little efforts in leveraging unto the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA). Our monitoring shows that the Russian business community hardly pays attention to the significance of African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) which

provides a unique and valuable platform for businesses to access an integrated African market of over 1.3 billion people.

Lavrov's efforts toward building non-Western ties this crucial times is highly commendable especially with Africa. But, the highly respected Minister easily and most times forget the fact the during these two-three years of global pandemic, the coronavirus that engulfed the planet, in every corner of the world, Africa was desperate looking for vaccines. Health authorities are still warning that Covid-19 has not completely faced out throughout the world.

Quartz, a global reputable media, reported early this year that «as of the end of 2022, about a quarter of the population of African countries has been fully vaccinated against Covid-19, according to the latest figures shared by Africa CDC. The coverage varies drastically depending on the country. In Liberia, for instance, nearly 80% of the population is fully vaccinated, while only 34% is in neighboring Sierra Leone. Congo, Sudan, Senegal, and Madagascar all have vaccination rates below 10%.

In his briefing, Ouma said the target for Africa remains to vaccinate 70% of the population. That goal, however, was set by the World Health Organization (WHO) for the overall population. These numbers are about to change - and not because of an increase in vaccinations. Africa CDC acting director Ahmed Ogwell

Ouma announced in a video briefing on December 22 that it will modify the way it reports vaccination rates. Rather than reporting coverage of the overall population, it will only report vaccinations of eligible population aged 12 or more.

Due of delays in international vaccine deliveries, Africa lags behind the rest of the world in Covid vaccination rates, and is the only continent where less than 50% of the population is fully vaccinated. Currently, just more than 800 million doses of vaccines have been administered in Africa, or 80% of the total received. About a third of the vaccinations have been made with Johnson & Johnson's vaccine, followed by Pfizer (22%), AstraZeneca (17%), China's Sinopharm (15%) and Sinovac (7%).

Several reports monitored by this authored show that Russia has played a minimal role in the entire health sector in Africa. With the Covid-19 vaccination, Russia randomly sprinkled few thousands as humanitarian assistance among its «Soviet friends» including Egypt, Ethiopia, Guinea, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and South Africa. Nevertheless, the worse was Russia's sudden failure to supply the 300 million vaccines through the African Union (AU) especially during the times of health crisis.

In an authoritative policy report presented November 2021 titled 'Situation Analytical Report' and prepared by 25 Russian policy experts headed by Sergei A. Karaganov, noted explicitly the failure to supply Sputnik vaccines to the African Union. The report criticized Russia's current policy and lukewarm approach towards Africa.

«In several ways, Russia's possibilities are overestimated both publicly and in closed negotiations. The supply of Russian-made vaccines to Africa is an example. Having concluded contracts for the supply of Sputnik V to a number of African

states, Russian suppliers failed to meet contractual obligations on time,» says the report in part.

The coronavirus outbreak a pandemic on March 11, 2020. Worth noting that Russia claims that it was the first to find cure for coronavirus. The World Health Organization (WHO), until today has not certified Russia's vaccines though. On the other hand, all the vaccines have been registered in Russia - Sputnik V, Sputnik Light, CoviVac and EpiVacCorona - are produced in large quantities by Russian pharmaceutical companies and are currently used for vaccination.

Director of the Gamaleya National Research Centre for Epidemiology and Microbiology Alexander Gintsburg has several times highlighted aspects of the vaccine production and marketing. He noted to raise the attractiveness of the vaccines on foreign markets, including countries in the Middle East, Africa and Latin America.

The Russian Direct Investment Fund, tasked to engage in marketing the vaccines abroad, got messed up especially in Africa. Of course, it took steps and speedily registered the vaccines in more than 20 African countries, but terribly failed on delivery deadlines. Worse was the Russian Direct Investment Fund supplied, at exorbitant prices, through middle-men in the Arab Emirates to a number of African countries. Russia's Foreign Ministry has however held series of African Foreign Ministers, during this Covid-19 period and desperate moment, reiterated to assist with direct supplies to Africa. That is Russia, considered as a reliable partner for Africa.

The above thoughts on the part of Covid-19 business offered the reasons why Russia absolutely refused to join and be part of the Covax facility, which acts as a global collective bargaining initiative to secure vaccine doses for countries who signed up, including those which are self-financing their purchases, as well as assistance from donors for poorer developing countries. The first vaccines purchased through



Covax were indeed destined to reach the Africa. That was, monitored by this author, some 88.7 million doses of the AstraZeneca and Pfizer vaccines distributed to 47 countries including Africa during the first half of 2021. This same year, during the virtual meeting of G7 leaders, the European Union announced it had donated a further 500 million euros to the COVAX program. The World Bank also committed \$12 billion as concessional loans to assist African countries access foreign vaccines.

That is not all from several reports monitored. In April 2022, writing under the headline: «How Russia's Hollow Humanitarian Hurt Its Vaccine Diplomacy in Africa,» - the co-authors, Matthew T. Page and Paul Stronski, both noted in 2020, that Russia touted deliveries of medical and protective supplies to several African countries, while the Russian-developed Sputnik V vaccine offered hopes that African countries would soon be able to launch large-scale immunization drives. Russian efforts to promote Sputnik V in Africa have floundered for a variety of reasons, including regulatory worries, production and logistical shortfalls, bureaucratic inertia, and even sticker shock. There is, however, another key factor behind Moscow's failed vaccine diplomacy: its traditionally diminutive post-Soviet development presence on the continent.

Compared to Australia, Canada, the European Union, Japan, the United

Kingdom, the United States, and even many foundations, Russia has provided a tiny share of international development assistance to African countries since the end of the Cold War. Unlike India and Cuba, it has provided scanty medical assistance to - or investment in - African countries.

If Russia wants to be influential on the continent, African political and economic leaders should demand more of Moscow, not simply settle for the symbolic diplomatic engagements or agreements at which the Russian leadership excels. Indeed, Africa has not ranked high on the Russian foreign policy agenda for much of the past three decades, getting barely a mention in the country's key security documents except as either a partner in an emerging multipolar world or a source of instability.

Indeed the time has come for African leaders to rally together to ensure that no effort is spared in facilitating and supporting the building of large-scale vaccine manufacturing capacity on the continent. The African Vaccine Manufacturing Summit held in April, 2021 was an encouraging start. Focus needs to be on developing real vaccine R&D capacity which must necessarily lead to health products. This requires substantial investment and a long-term commitment. In a similar vein, under the aegis of the African Union, leaders have to begin looking for inside solutions, rather than base hopes on these geopolitical games, external great powers seeking

only support for their peculiar or parochial interests.

Understandably, while making efforts to maintain and expand its presence in Africa, Russia simply lacks the capability to deliver on its various promises in Africa. Surely, African countries have to begin to re-evaluate their relationship with Russia. African leaders should not expect anything tangible from meetings, conferences and summits. Since the first Russia-Africa summit held in 2019, very little has been achieved. At this point, it is even more improbable that Moscow would commit adequate financial resources to invest in economic sectors, given the stringent sanctions imposed following Putin's invasion of neighbouring Ukraine.

In stark contrast to key global players, for instance the United States, China and the European Union and many others, Russia obviously has limitations. Notwithstanding that, for Russia to regain part of its Soviet-era influence, it has to address its own policy approach, this time try to shift towards new paradigms - implementing some of the decade-old pledges and promises, and those bilateral agreements; secondly to promote development-oriented policies and how to make these strategic efforts more practical, more consistent, more effective and most admirably result-oriented with African countries.



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A Tale Of Trials And Tribulations For 50th Mount Cameroon Race of Hope Celebration

By Sonita Ngunyi Nwohtazie & Boris Esono Nwenfor

The 28th edition and 50th Anniversary of the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope produced some spectacular displays of brevity, endurance, determination and a never say die attitude as some 600 athletes from 14 countries participated in the yearly race in Buea, South West Region of Cameroon.

It was the second time lucky for Adamu Issa Buba, with the Ngoketundjia native picking up his first title while serial winner Tata Carine claimed the female category. Issa won the race in 4 hours, 40 minutes, and 2 seconds. He was ahead of Amadou Abdou (4hrs, 40mins and 26sec) and last year's champion Elvis Nsambila (4hrs, 40mins and 41secs).

«I am happy to win the race and having crossed the line I feel fine. When I was coming down, I was around the sixth position around Hut One, but I had to put in enough effort. By the time I reached the tar, God gave me some extra power which I used to dominate,» Adamu Issa Buba said.

Pan African Visions now takes a look at some of the striking moments observed during the yearly race in Buea.

Tata Carine Is On Course To Be The Greatest Female Athlete

26-year-old Tata Carine continues to dominate in the female category picking up her second successive title (in 5hrs, 13mins and 19secs), having won the 2022 edition. She was ahead of Kitan Mildred (5hrs, 23mins and 17secs) and Adamu Irine (5hrs, 31mins and 9secs). Interestingly, Kitan Mildred is the only woman at the moment that has gone toe-to-toe with Carine and emerged victorious. That was in 2021 when Mildred stopped Carine from



Hundreds lined the streets of Buea, cheering athletes from 14 countries

picking up her fourth consecutive title.

The victory for Tata Carine takes her to five titles (2018, 2019, 2020, 2022, 2023) and third on the list of most titles won in the female category, jointly with another great Ngwang Catherine.

Carine who runs under FAP athletic club still has a bit of work to do to catch up with two women who are seen as the greatest in their

category in Sarah Etonge and Ngwaya Yvonne, with both ladies having won the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope 7 times each. Carine is surely on course to become the most successful female athlete in the race and why not set her footprint as the greatest of all time?

«I am so happy for winning the race for the fifth time. This year, I went through a lot of difficulties. I didn't even know if I would participate in the race this year,» Tata Carine told



Tata Carine has now won five of the last six Mount Cameroon Race of Hope races.

journalists. «Two weeks into my training, I fell and got injured. I was discouraged, tired and praying that God should make it possible for me to pull through and emerge the winner with Orange Cameroun sponsorship. I am happy today I could emerge victorious.»

Orange Brings Back The Feel

2023 saw the birth of Orange Cameroun as the main sponsor of the Mount Cameroon Race. The telecommunications giant signed a two-year deal with the Cameroon Athletics Federation. Both organizations are looking at a long-term partnership, and the «successful» organizations of the race this year will only go to strengthen that bond.

The coming of Orange Cameroon into the mix led to the reintroduction of the Miss Mount Cameroon Race, and diverse competitions such as tennis, and table tennis, in the prelude to the D-day and the gala night with popular artist Ko-C dazzling the population, Buea was truly transformed, Orange style.

«Orange is all about letting us go down to the community and make their life better. Mount Cameroon Race is here to make the life of the community better and that is what Orange is all about,» Gisela Musi Lum, Project Management Officer, Orange Cameroon told Pan African Visions.

«Orange is not going anywhere. We feel comfortable, we were welcome this year by the people of Buea. The growth who came about to witness the gala night is a testament that they have accepted us and that is why Orange is not going,» Lauriane Ngameni, a representative of Orange Cameroon said.

Promise That Never Came

Assembling journalists on

February 1, during a press conference with the new sponsor Orange, the president of the Cameroon Athletics Federation Motomby Emmanuel Mbome made a bold promise, that of maintaining the prize money at ten (10) million FCFA without tax.

For years now, the winners and runners-up of the race have always seen their prize money deducted due to the tax levied on it, 8.9 million as opposed to 10 million for the winner. This bold projection from the Federation's chief was one of the innovations of the race this year. Sadly, that turned out to be a promise that wouldn't be kept.

The athletes and coaches were disgruntled and felt cheated as the federation could not match their words with actions. Interestingly, they only found out that taxes will be levied on the winner's amount when the winners were being recognized. As of now, many are still waiting on the Athletics Federation to explain what transpired.

Kenyans Dominate Junior

Though Kenya performed poorly in the senior categories this year, the country made up for that in the junior categories, completely obliterating the field. Indeed, Kenyan athletes won gold in both the junior male and female categories, as they did so in 2022. In the female category, Chepkoech Eileen (Kenya) won the race in 2hrs12mins and 46secs. She was ahead of Chinwen Sandrine (Cameroon - 2hrs, 13mins, 15secs) and Layu Nancy (Cameroon - 2hrs15mins, 2secs).



Oraange Cameroon joined the Mt Cameroon Race as sponsor this year after signing a two year partnership.



Athletes caught by an IED during the 28th edition of the Mt Cameroon Race of Hope in Buea on February 25.

In the male category, it was the same as Kenyan athlete Lagat Amos won the race in 1hr, 45mins, 32secs. He was ahead of Cameroonian athletes Zakariyahu Ibrahim (1hr47mins, 5secs) and Kari Seth Bolack (1hr47mins, 14secs).

Before 2022, North West athletes had completely dominated this category, sweeping medals in the top three positions in both the junior male and female categories. The tide is thus shifting to the foreigners and Kenyans in particular, and it begs the question if Cameroonian athletes can succeed in wrestling the top spot away from them in years to come.

The Greatest Male Athlete Retires

The 50th Anniversary of the Mount Cameroon Race saw the closing of an era for a man regarded by many as the

greatest male run in the race. Godlove Gabsibuin retired from the race have come a distant seventh. A five-time champion (no other male athlete has won more than three titles), 34-year-old Gabsibuin first won the race back in 2012 and dominated again in 2013.

The height of his GOAT status came in 2021 when he orchestrated one of the greatest sporting moments the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope has ever seen. Having already won five titles, Godlove was on course for a sixth title. Running down the slope of Bongo Square with Ali Mohammadou, the former slowed down and allowed Ali to take the lead and eventually won the race.

When asked about that historic moment, Godlove said: "When you win, you let others win too so that they can be happy with you, because if you are the only one dominating, anytime they see you they will be angry. That is why I use to exchange my position to make them happy."

Gabsibuin owns an athletic club where he trains younger athletes who, he says, will take over from him when he is not there anymore. His son, Prophet Gabsibuin emerged second in the junior men category in 2021 while Mamoudou Dahirou, another member of his club, was first in the junior men category.

Explosion Kills One

Linda Nji died in the early hours

of Tuesday, February 28 at the Buea Regional Hospital where she had been in intensive care. She and her children had stood along the roadside cheering the more than 500 athletes who took part in the Mount Cameroon Race of Hope before the explosion went off at Bonduma gate.

Three explosions went off with that in Bonduma, the most disastrous, injuring many civilians, including a local football player, and the late Linda with her children amongst those injured. Many of the survivors have been released from the hospital.

The armed wing of Ambazonia Governing Council, one of the separatist militia groups, claimed responsibility for the blasts. "Our primary target was the Cameroon elite forces... that were providing security for the athletes. We will not allow Cameroon to continue its occupation," the group's spokesperson Capo Daniel told Reuters.

"We received twenty persons, with the youngest being one year and six months. There are three children amongst those injured including two athletes, one from Cameroon and the other from Gabon," Dr Martin Mokake, Director of the Buea Regional Hospital told Pan African Visions. «At the moment, we have also seen injuries that are related to visual injuries and chemical burns, and we have three such patients."

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Cameroon: - The Perils Of Being Referees, Linesmen In Football

By Boris Esono Nwenfor & Sonita Ngunyi Nwohtazie

End this match like this and remove your hand from it ooh! We know where you live! And the use of the “f” word! These are all words that referees officiating across various levels of Cameroon football have to contend with when they step their foot onto the green turf on any match day.

Referees are seen as an integral part of the beautiful game of football, but what is not so beautiful about this game is the abuse that referees receive when officiating. Match officials encounter an array of hostile behaviours from players, coaches and spectators ranging from verbal abuse to physical assault. The most common form of abuse exhibited is verbal aggression.

In football, protesting against the referee's decisions is, in a way, part of the folklore. However, these protests exasperate both the refs and some of the spectators. «When I see a whole team surrounding the referee, I tell myself that we have messed up somewhere,» said Tony Chapron, a former Ligue 1 referee, now a consultant for French TV channel Canal+. Like others, he believes that these arguments, which have



Referees and assistant referees assaulted by fans in Cameroon due to unfair decisions.

always existed, are now becoming increasingly toxic.

The pattern of abuse seems to be consistent across all levels of football, a worrying trend when you consider that some amateur referees are very young. And with a considerably lower presence of security and protection within amateur football matches – often none – referees are more exposed to aggressive conduct, which explains why more serious assaults on referees often take place during amateur matches.

Players and spectators often engage

in abusive behaviour in part due to what's known as “in-game triggers”. These can be frustrations towards a decision they believe to be unfair – or as a method of externalizing their problems in the game.

Our Lives Sometimes Are Not Safe

“It's sometimes sad for me that am not respected. They sometimes think that we are the cause of them not winning their games so they turn to disrespect us,” Gilbert Lekelefac, a referee in the South West Region told

Pan African Visions.

“I have received all types of insults from coaches, players and others for no good reason. If u love football, then u have to know the 17 laws of the game and you should be able to interpret them. Some people think we are only referees and so think we are nothing, that is why they keep insulting us.

“Many times, I feel as if to give up because anybody just insults you, big or small. Some people who are your children turn to insult you as if you are not a human being. FECAFOOT should check well before accepting somebody as a referee; something meaningful should be given to the referee. More security men should be added, our lives sometimes are not safe.”

Norbet Nfor, another referee in the South West added: “I will first tell you that you don't have to be money minded and you have to love your job. Yes, you have to love your job. I cannot blame the FECAFOOT office of people, I mean the referees cannot do their job well.”

“Some of my colleagues in society must be respected but if you're in the field of play and they don't respect you that means you are the cause of your problem. You cannot be a referee and during a game, you take sides after seeing a foul play against another team and you start favouring



The Cameroon Football Federation, FECAFOOT, has taken the measure of suspending some match officials found wanting in the games they officiated.

one automatically that will create unnecessary tension among the other team.”

“The truth is we all are humans and are bound in making mistakes that’s why we have VAR which helps in assisting us. But sometimes when I go to the field of play to watch how my colleagues officiate games it is not something to talk about,” Norbert said.

A worrying trend across the African continent

The trend of assault and abuse of match officials cuts across the African continent. Even across the world, referees in Europe, America, and Asia have not been spared from the players and fans, who feel the decisions from these referees go against them.

On February 17, players from the Congolese women’s football club DC Motema Pembe chased after and assaulted a referee in protest of his decision to not grant them a penalty during a match. A widely shared video shows the referee desperately running across the pitch, in an attempt to get away from Motema Pembe players, seven of whom were running after him and throwing punches as they

went.

Some called for disciplinary action against the Motema Pembe women’s team and for the players involved to be fined and suspended. Others sympathized with the referee, arguing that he was only doing his job. “What a disgraceful act, the whole team should be disbanded for life,” said a Twitter user. Another social media user described the players’ behaviour as «shameful» calling on FIFA to «severely» punish them.

In November last year, South Sudan’s Wau Local Football Association (WLFA) banned two Al-Hali FC team members from playing in the local league after they insulted and physically attacked a female referee during a match. The prominent female referee in Wau, Sezarina Gabriel, who officiated the match between Al-Tadamun FC and Al-Hali FC, was targeted after she warned the footballers over rough play and sent one of them off after

repeated offences.

What next?

It is unlikely that abuses and assaults on match referees will end anytime soon when referees in Cameroon have been pointed out for making bad decisions that have changed the outcomes of many games in the country’s top two tiers of football. The decisions have caused teams such as PWD Bamenda, Foncha Street and many others, but that is not to say that the best option

for the players, and fans are that of assaulting the match officials.

The Cameroon Football Federation, FECAFOOT, has taken the measure of suspending some match officials found wanting in the games they officiated, while there has been a ban on the Bafang Municipal Stadium due to the violence witnessed there. These are just small steps but more needs to be done to give more training to the match officials and clubs too, need to educate their fans on how to approach a game, even in defeat.



The pattern of abuse seems to be consistent across all levels of football, a worrying trend when you consider that some amateur referees are very young.

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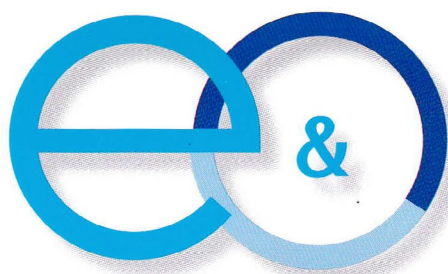




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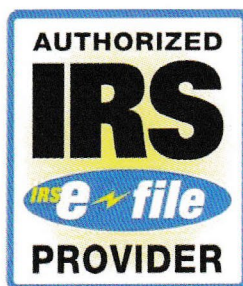
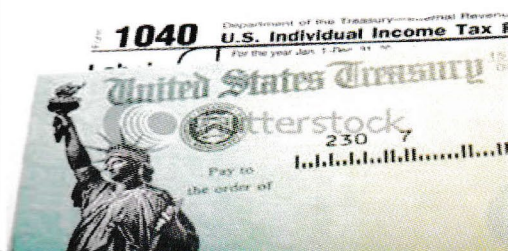


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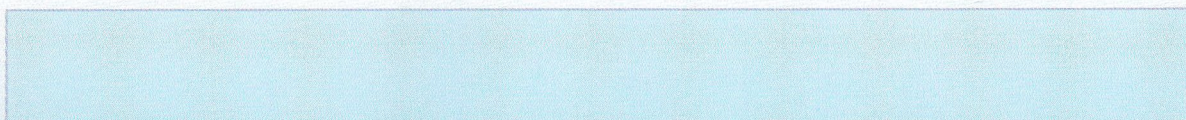
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