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Kenya's Gen Z Message To Africa

By Ajong Mbapndah L

For Kenyan President Samuel Ruto, the Gen Z hurricane could not have come at a worse time.

With former ally and bitter political rival Raila Odinga shying away from domestic politics as he burnishes his statesman image in a dress rehearsal for the top job at the African Union, the opposition was subdued. On a visit to Washington DC, the Kenyan Leader was literally at the center of global attention as the Biden administration rolled out the red carpet and treated him to a reception with the kind of honors that no African leader has received in a decade or so. Within a twinkle of an eye, Ruto has gone from hero to zero as he fights for his political life.

Who would have thought that a leader who was envied by his peers, who had positioned himself as one of the most articulate voices on the international stage with views from trade to visa policies and more that had a popular fervor with those yearning for African integration will be so rattled not by the opposition but a youth revolt? The Gen Z hurricane has ruined President Ruto's parade, and his leadership is facing unprecedented challenges.

What started as a rejection of Kenya's Bill for 2024 and Tax hikes included there in to curb the countries burgeoning debt has morphed into a movement of sorts with a growing and shifting demands from corruption, to police brutality, unfulfilled promises, and increasingly, calls for the resignation of President Ruto himself.

Despite the continental leadership credentials that President Ruto has demonstrated, the challenges plaguing Kenya mirror the situation across many African countries especially South of the Sahara. Galloping unemployment, high corruption, a widening gulf between the rich and the poor, a sharp contrast between the opulence of most state officials, and the misery of the toiling masses. From Nigeria to Ghana, the complains are similar. It is therefore no surprise that while the leaders fret in fear of the Kenyan Gen Z growing across borders, everyday Africans have been the biggest cheerleaders of the youth revolt in Kenya.



Ajong Mbapndah L, Managing Editor

In the face of the crisis in Kenya and at a time when leaders are on their guard, it is puzzling to see a country like Cameroon indulging on the kind of policies that have put Kenya on the edge. Recently, the price of obtaining a national ID card went up by almost 300%, the price of a fiscal stamp needed in most administrative transactions more than doubled. The price hikes extended to passports, visas and other services. Add to the mix, a presidential fiat extending the mandate of Members of Parliament and local government authorities by an additional year. At a time when Ruto is sweating to quench the furor of Kenyans, his 91-year-old counterpart President Paul Biya of Cameroon seems to be consciously or unconsciously inviting chaos.

Such antics from the Cameroonian leader or whoever is running the country by proxy are not new. Cameroon is Cameroon President Biya has said in the past. Plagued with a vicious crisis that has literally crippled life in the English speaking North West and South West Regions of Cameroon, the regime in Yaoundé has remained tone deaf to criticisms on a failing strategy that prioritizes force over dialogue. It is probably the only country in the world today governed by special instructions from the President with no one knowing how and when the instructions were given. The country is often treated to the sorry spectacle of even government officials having conflicting views and thoughts on the veracity of the special instructions. Rubbing salt to injury are growing calls from the ruling party

for the President to seek another term when elections come up in 2025!

From unemployment, to corruption, inflation, unfulfilled promises from politicians, infrastructure and other banes, Cameroon will be Kenya on steroids. Yet, the reaction of citizens in both countries is starkly different. Perhaps as some suggested, the colonial legacies of Kenya and Cameroon are a factor in the way both countries react to perceived injustices or policies.

Even if Cameroon is Cameroon as President Biya and his government may believe, Africans are sending messages in diverse forms that it may not be business as usual again if things do not change. What should scare leaders is that the Gen Z uprising in Kenya had no leadership, or established structure, yet it has been largely effective. A structured opposition party may not have succeeded in forcing Ruto to make the concessions he is making. In credit to the Kenyan leader, at least he has not remained tone deaf, he is at least making moves and taking actions to assuage the frustrations of the protestors, In some countries, the response will have been brute force.

Over in Africa, the troika of Burkina Faso, Mali and Niger have surged ahead with the creation of the Confederation of Sahel States-AES. In a sign that it means business, the AES officially cemented its divorce from the regional body ECOWAS with its first Summit in Niger. For Niger's military leader General Abdourahamane Tiani, the formation of the AES is a testament to how "Our people have irrevocably turned their backs on ECOWAS".

In a statement released at the end of the Summit, the AES will be headquartered in Mali in its first year and its chairmanship will be rotational. The statement added that the formation of the AES is a step which fosters "greater integration" among the three countries.

"This summit marks a decisive step for the future of our common space. Together, we will consolidate the foundations of our true independence, a guarantee of true peace and sustainable development through

the creation of the 'Alliance of Sahel States' Confederation... The AES is full of enormous natural potential which, if properly exploited, will guarantee a better future for the people of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso," said Burkina Faso's leader Capt. Ibrahim Traore in a post on 'X'

Scenes like this would have been unthinkable, but Africans increasingly weary of pompous rhetoric from politicians who never deliver are seeking and embracing alternative paths forward. The gusto with which many Africans have embraced military rule with all the inherent dangers, the yearnings for many for Kenya style Gen Z uprisings should put many leaders on their toes. The revolt of the poor, oppressed, and downtrodden may have reverberations across the continent.

Instead of dwelling just on the crisis in Kenya or Mali, Burkina Faso, and Niger going rogue on ECOWAS, PAV opted to revisit a significant but under reported development in Africa – the signature of the Africa Energy Bank (AEB) Establishment Agreement and the Charter by APPO and Afreximbank.

The AEB is Africa's response to the looming financing challenge that the global paradigm shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy poses to the oil and gas industry in Africa, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim in an interview with PAV on the exciting development and what it could mean for Africa owning its energy future.

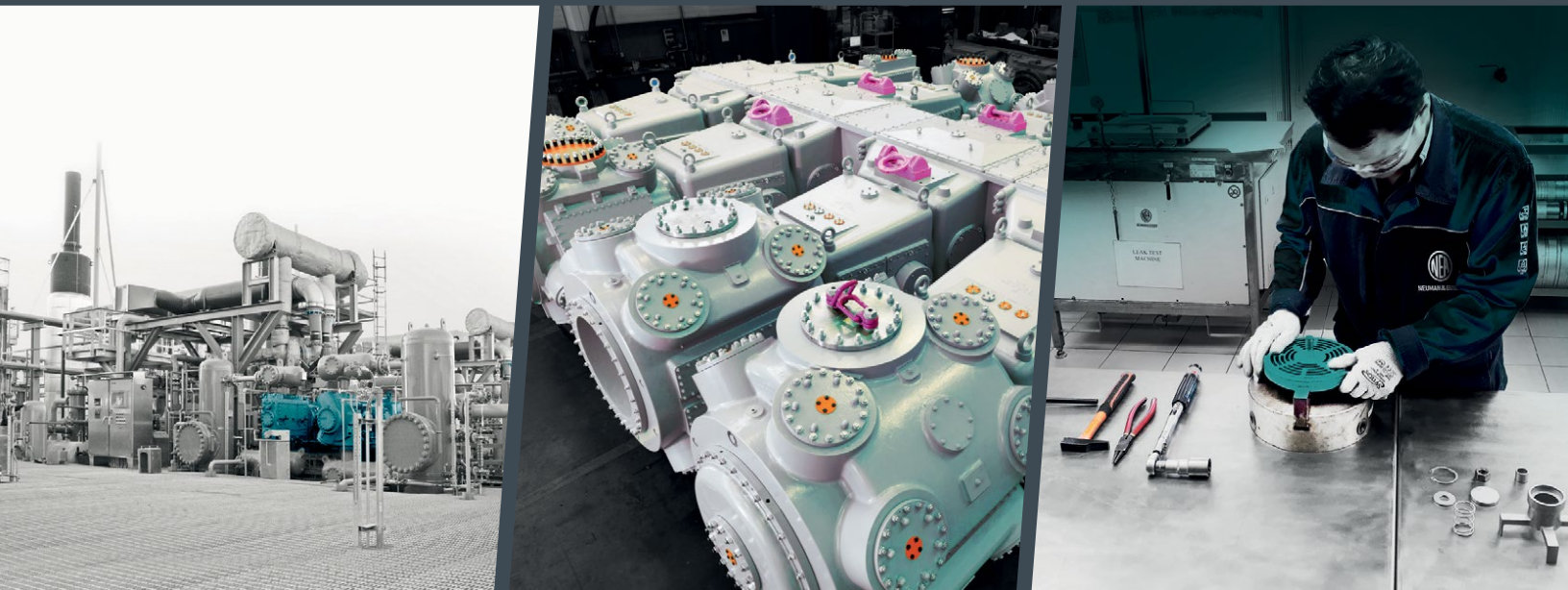
"With over 125 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves and over 600 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, and more findings being made; it does not make sense for Africa to abandon these energies when it has the largest proportion of world's population living without access to modern energy," says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, Secretary General of APPO.

Accompanying Dr Omar Farouk's interview are stories on the first one hundred days of Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye Faye, the dawn of a new political era in South Africa, and a panoply of other stories and seminal developments across Africa. Happy reading!!!



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Gen Z Wave Sweeps Across Kenya

By Adonis Byemelwa

Kenya has hit the headlines in the media in the last few weeks following heavy protests organised by young people, popularly Gen Z, against the Government.

The protests were sparked by the punitive Finance Bill 2024, which proposed a series of tax increases to raise \$2.7 billion in revenue. The protests were motivated by fears that the law would increase the already high cost of living by imposing taxes on basic foodstuffs and critical services.

The protests began on June 18, 2024, and have since extended to several cities and villages in Kenya. Demonstrators have used social media to communicate their message, resulting in widespread participation without central leadership, making it challenging for police to crush the movement successfully. Protests have included peaceful marches and demonstrations.

Social media has played an important role in rallying and organising these protests. X, previously known as Twitter, Instagram, and TikTok, have been used to share information, gather support, and document cases of police brutality and government neglect.

Hashtags such as #OccupyParliament, #OccupyNairobiCBD, #OccupyStateHouse, #OccupyChurches, #TheyWillNotBelieveIt, #GenZ, and #RutoMustGo have trended often, bringing international attention to the cause.

“We should never let these guys breathe. They’ve milked us dry and continue to do so. It’s time we secure our future from the hands of these incompetent leaders. President William Ruto will not believe,” said activist Alinur Mohamed.

Angry Protesters set fire to a portion of the Kenyan Parliament on June 25 after a controversial finance bill was passed. Lawmakers passed the controversial Bill despite uproar from Kenyans. Two hundred and twenty



The scenes were chaotic as protests against tax hikes turned violent in Nairobi, Kenya. Photo courtesy.

(224) legislators voted in favour of the Bill against 115 who opposed the Government’s move to increase taxes, angering Kenyans more.

Demonstrators burst through police barriers, looted rooms, and destroyed vehicles. In response, police opened fire on the protesters, resulting in multiple injuries and at least four deaths outside Parliament.

In addition to the march to Parliament, the young Kenyans launched attacks targeting Members of Parliament who voted in favour of the Bill.

For instance, the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) office of Kikuyu MP Kimani Ichung’wah, who is also the Majority Leader in the National Assembly, was set ablaze by the protesters. There were no reported injuries, but major property damage occurred, including vital documents and office equipment.

Kuria Kimani, Molo MP and National Assembly Finance Committee chair, had his home in Nakuru County, northwest of Nairobi, also vandalised.

Furious rioters broke over the outer wall surrounding the multi-million dollar house, burning and destroying automobiles as others ransacked it for valuables. Some of the intruders also took animals with them.

Another MP, Njoroge Wainaina, lost property worth millions of shillings after his supermarket was burnt down in Nyeri, Central part of the country. Also, legislator Oscar Sudi’s club was broken into, and protesters made away with alcohol worth several coins.

Some MPs have reported being threatened and intimidated due to their vote. The Bill’s controversial nature has also intensified political division, with those who backed it facing allegations of corruption and betrayal.

President William Ruto was forced to withdraw the Bill following the public uproar. He sent it back to the Parliament for amendments.

“Listening keenly to the people of Kenya, who have said loudly that they want nothing to do with this Finance Bill 2024, I concede and therefore I

will not sign the 2024 Finance Bill and shall subsequently be withdrawn,” said Ruto.

Following the withdrawal, President Ruto swiftly conversed with IMF Chief Kristalina Georgieva to discuss the consequences of the decision for Kenya’s economic reform strategy.

The IMF has been vital in Kenya’s economic development, providing financial assistance and policy guidance to stabilise the economy and promote long-term growth. It was speculated that IMF and World Bank were the masterminds of the Bill.

During their call, Reuters reported that President Ruto had assured Georgieva of Kenya’s commitment to maintaining sound economic policies and working closely with international partners.

The report indicated that Georgieva noted the situation’s complexities and reiterated the IMF’s sustained support for Kenya. She underlined the value of conversation and teamwork in overcoming economic issues and attaining long-term stability.

The withdrawal of the Finance Bill has elicited diverse reactions. Many individuals and opposition leaders have applauded the decision, seeing it as a triumph for public participation and democratic governance. However, other analysts warn that the Government must address the underlying fiscal issues immediately to avert economic turmoil.

After the repeal of the measure, young Kenyans began calling for accountability from the Government. Generation Z activists have been outspoken about corruption, mishandling of public finances, and a lack of openness in government operations. They said these concerns slowed the country's progress and hurt individuals' lives.

They also issued ultimatums to President Ruto demanding that he axed incompetent and corrupt Cabinet Secretaries. Furthermore, they called for reducing government expenditures, significantly curtailing incessant foreign visits by government officials, including Ruto.

A few weeks after issuing the demands, Ruto acted by axing, leaving only the Prime Cabinet Secretary Musalia Mudavadi and the Deputy President.

While announcing the move to sack the Cabinet, President Ruto said he was keen on implementing radical programmes to deal with corruption, debt, domestic resources, jobs and wastage in Government.

"During this process, the operations of government will continue uninterrupted under the guidance of Principal Secretaries and other relevant officials," he said.

When picking the new cabinet, Ruto plans to interact with all sectors and political formations to choose those who can help him accelerate Kenya's development.

The call for the resignation of police chief Japhet Koome bore fruit, as the inspector General resigned on July 12, 2024. Koome's resignation was announced by the State House.

Ruto expressed his gratitude to Mr. Koome for his service to the nation and extended his best wishes



A military vehicle in flames, outside the Parliamentary building that also suffered severe damage. Photo credit Daniel Irungu, EPA-EFE.

in his future endeavours.

In his place, President Ruto appointed Mr. Douglas Kanja as the acting Inspector-General of the National Police Service.

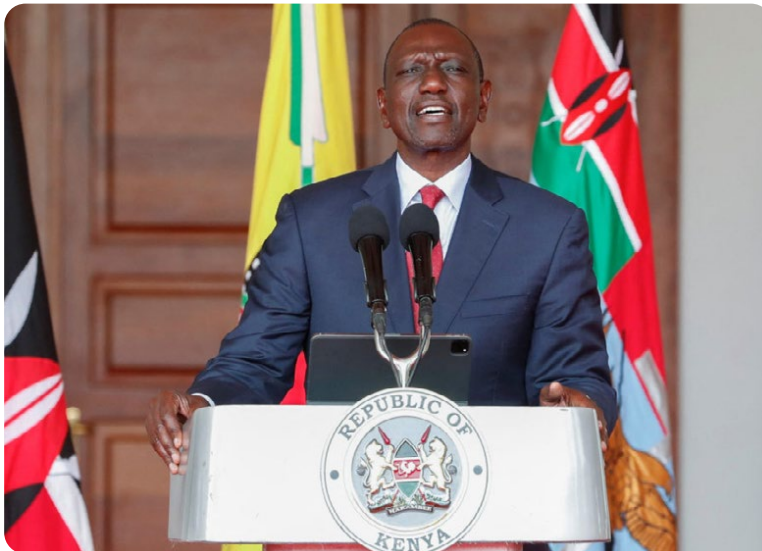
Mr. Koome is alleged to be the mastermind of the young anti-finance protests. It is purported that he ordered security officers to open fire at the unharmed protesters who were agitating for their rights. There are increasing calls to have him arrested and persecuted for losing young lives.

The young Turks are further advocating for the institution of the Independent Electoral Boundaries

Commission (IEBC) within 10 days. The commission has fewer commissioners after the chairperson, Wafula Chebukati, retired after his term elapsed, and four others resigned.

To add insult to injury, Generation Z calls for the Government's dissolution, claiming that Ruto and his administration have failed to properly serve Kenyan citizens' interests.

The protesters' gains were not free, as some people paid a high price. Police brutality claimed lives, injured many, abducted others, and left some



In addition to dropping the planned tax hikes, President Ruto fired his entire cabinet. Photo credit Thomas Mukoya, Reuters.

missing.

Police fired on peaceful protests, while certain government officials allegedly used thugs to control demonstrators, provoking condemnation from human rights organisations.

According to the Kenya National Human Rights Commission (KNHRC), 42 people were killed during the protests, 361 were injured, 627 were arbitrarily arrested, and 32 forcibly disappeared.

The Police Reforms Working Group-Kenya (PRWG-K) condemned the violence witnessed during recent protests, which was caused by both law enforcement's disproportionate use of force and the presence of what appear to be hired goons.

"The police's use of lethal crowd control weapons like water cannons, tear gas, and live ammunition against peaceful demonstrators has led to unnecessary injuries and fatalities, escalating tensions and undermining the citizens' rights to assemble, demonstrate, picket and petition, which is enshrined in Article 37 of the Constitution of Kenya, 2010," said Police Reforms Working Group-Kenya.

The group asked the Government to take stern action against people who hired goons to attack protesters and destroy and loot property.

«Who is hiring the goons to discredit and delegitimise protestors and justify the use of excessive force by the state that has contributed to widespread chaos? Such actions undermine the credibility of peaceful demonstrations and constitute severe violations of human rights and democratic principles. Immediate accountability is imperative to restore order and uphold the rule of law,» it added.

As the campaign gains momentum, it becomes evident that Kenya's Generation Z is a formidable force. Their bravery and tenacity have ignited a national dialogue about the nation's future, and their deeds may bring about the revolutionary change they hope for.



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Senegal: A Hundred Days Of President Bassirou Diomaye Faye

By Prince Kurupati

On 2 April 2024, President Bassirou Diomaye Faye was sworn in as Senegal's new president. In doing so, he became one of the youngest democratically elected African presidents. His ascension to power was widely welcomed both in Senegal and beyond as it was viewed as a move that ushered in a refreshingly new political wave. His criticism of former colonial master France was the cornerstone of his electoral victory as the youthful population of Senegal which contributed much of the voting population has a disdain for French influence in their country's internal affairs.

Soon after his inauguration, the first action that President Bassirou Diomaye Faye took was to appoint his friend and firebrand politician Ousmane Sonko as prime minister. President Faye said the appointment of Sonko was a matter of urgency as he needed helping hands to execute his duties effectively. Responding to this, Sonko happily welcomed the appointment and said, "There will be no question of leaving him (Faye) alone to assume this heavy responsibility."



Bassirou Diomaye Faye speaks after his swearing in April 2024. Photo courtesy.

President Faye, however, cautioned the citizens saying the quick appointment of Sonko was by no means an indication of how quickly he will implement new policies, programs and projects. Rather, he pledged gradual "systematic changes" in his quest to deal with the mess of

years of deadly turmoil the country experienced under the leadership of his predecessor, Macky Sall. True to his words, the first 100 days of President Faye are characterized by systematic gradual change.

Notably, many eyes, when President Faye came into office centred on how

he would deal with France. During his rather short election campaign, President Faye pledged to sever with France citing a non-reciprocal relationship, which benefited only one party France to the detriment of Senegal. The citizens who voted for him based on this message and the international community that was eagerly waiting to see how President Faye aimed at severing ties with France all watched with keen eyes.

To the surprise of many, once in office, President Faye toned down on his anti-French rhetoric choosing to focus on internal matters. Conspicuously, President Faye actually travelled to France on his first trip outside of Africa albeit responding to an invitation to attend the Global Forum for Vaccine Sovereignty and Innovation hosted by France. During the trip, President Faye met with French President Emmanuel Macron over lunch at the Elysee Palace where the two discussed trade agreements, the CFA franc, and French military presence in the country.

In the lead-up to the meeting, many



President Bassirou Diomaye Faye and Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko have huge campaign promises to deliver on. Photo courtesy.

looked forward to gauging President Faye's tone during his one-on-one with President Macron considering that his lieutenant Prime Minister Ousmane Sonko had berated France just a few weeks before. Speaking at a joint conference with the French left-wing politician Jean-Luc Melenchon in Dakar, Senegal, Prime Minister Sonko said, "More than 60 years after our independence... we must question the reasons why the French army for example still benefits from several military bases in our country and the impact of this presence on our national sovereignty and our strategic autonomy... I reiterate here the desire of Senegal to have its own control, which is incompatible with the lasting presence of foreign military bases in Senegal."

Also, to the surprise of many, President Faye in the meeting seemed not to share the same fiery stance towards France as Prime Minister Sonko. He also seemed to have backed off from his stance to abandon the CFA franc. Essentially, the meeting proved that he had deviated from the anti-establishment stance that he preached during his election campaign.

The one area where President Faye has stuck to his guns when his election message is juxtaposed with his actions once elected is his desire to bring back the trio of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso to the ECOWAS grouping. President Faye in his first 100 days has already visited Mali and Burkina Faso in a drive to persuade the junta to return to the ECOWAS grouping. His efforts, however, seem to have hit a brick wall as recently, Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso all entered into a pact that effectively officialised their



President Faye traveled to France for his first international visit outside Africa. Faye promised a clean break from the shackles of the former colonial master.

divorce from ECOWAS. In addition to pursuing his mission, President Faye had also been appointed as a special envoy by ECOWAS to Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Domestically, President Faye is systematically effecting changes but moving at a snail's pace. Perhaps, the Faye administration is afraid of rocking the boat too early hence failing to grasp full control of matters. Suffice it to say, the changes that have been effected have been welcomed by many in the country as most of them seek to bring transparency in government dealings. Chief among these is the annulment of a water desalination deal with Saudi firm ACWA Power.

The water desalination deal had been signed just a few weeks before President Faye came into office as that was the last deal to be signed by Macky Sall. Initially touted as a landmark deal by the Sall administration, the water deal was viewed by the Faye

administration as a huge strain on the country's resources. Valued at \$800 million, the project was said to be the largest of its kind in sub-Saharan Africa with the plant's production capacity of 400,000 cubic meters per day ascertained to alleviate shortages of clean water.

In President Faye's first 100 days, Senegal also commissioned its first offshore oil project. The project is a partnership between the Senegalese government and the Australian group Woodside Energy. A statement from Woodside Energy said that the vessel extracting the oil is moored about 100 kilometres (60 miles) offshore at the Sangomar oil fields. The project aims to produce 100,000 barrels of oil per day.

Having taken the reigns of a country whose economy has been on the rebound, growing by 4.3% in 2023 as reported by the World Bank, the general citizens will want nothing more than a continuation of the

trend. Well, gauging the sentiments of the populace, President Faye is on the right track. The move that has been praised the most by the general citizens, in the process, earning President Faye massive support is the tax suspension policy. The President has indefinitely suspended tax on basic commodities such as rice, oil, and bread, as well as, customs duties on importers. A week before, the President had issued a \$750 million Eurobond to meet government financing needs ahead of the start of the oil and gas production this year.

Commenting on the snail's pace at which changes are happening domestically, Jeanne Ramier, an Africa associate at the Eurasia Group consultancy said President Faye is "taking time to take stock of state affairs, refine policy plans, and learn the ropes of governance... the administration is still drafting the 'Project' document, which will replace (former president) Macky Sall's Emerging Senegal Plan and has been slow to come up with and rollout concrete policies."

Ramier also adds saying another obstacle in President Faye's path is the lack of a parliamentary majority. Because of this, enacting any drastic measures is quite tough. Ramier did say that President Faye may be waiting until mid-September, when it would be two years since the current crop of legislators took office, to dissolve parliament and call for new elections, which may give his party a parliamentary majority and hence enable him to push for drastic measures.

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Burundi At Crossroads: Navigating a Legacy of Political Turmoil and Uncertain Future

By Adonis Byemelwa



Burundi's President Evariste Ndayishimiye addressing the UN General Assembly in New York on Sept. 21, 2023, Photo courtesy.

Burundi's current political landscape is shaped by the tumultuous events of 2015 when President Pierre Nkurunziza secured a controversial third term through constitutional manipulation. This move, unlike in Rwanda where President Paul Kagame faced no opposition to similar changes, plunged Burundi into a political and security crisis.

Nkurunziza's decision to seek a third term, seen as a violation of term limits, sparked intense public opposition. In response, Nkurunziza employed repressive measures, including arbitrary arrests and politically targeted assassinations, isolating Burundi in the international arena.

Nkurunziza eventually announced he would not run for a fourth term in the 2020 elections, a decision met with relief by both domestic opposition and international observers.

General Evariste Ndayishimiye, a veteran of Burundi's civil war, was chosen by the ruling party, the National Council for the Defense of Democracy – Forces for the Defense of Democracy (CNDD-FDD), as Nkurunziza's successor.

Ndayishimiye won the 2020 elections and took office earlier than expected following Nkurunziza's sudden death in June.

In March 2024, Agathon Rwasa, leader of the main opposition party, the National Freedom Council (CNL), announced his intention to return to Burundi. Rwasa had left for Tanzania after a faction within the CNL called for his removal, accusing him of failing to unify the party.

Rwasa emphasized the need for his contribution to national development and called on the international community to prevent democratic backsliding in Burundi.

Despite initial optimism surrounding Ndayishimiye's

presidency, recent developments suggest that Burundi's political and security situation remains precarious.

Although Ndayishimiye initially pursued a reformist agenda and opened up political space, the continuation of CNDD-FDD's rule has been marked by repression and violent measures against opposition groups. The suspension of the CNL and internal divisions within the party have further weakened the opposition.

A worrying sign of regression is Ndayishimiye's rehabilitation of the Imbonerakure, the ruling party's youth wing.

Acting as a militia force, the Imbonerakure has around 50,000 members and has been accused of committing abuses against opposition members.

This indicates that, despite Nkurunziza's departure, authoritarianism persists in Burundi, sustained by a hegemonic party and

patronage networks.

Reforming the military is essential for Burundi's stabilization. However, a 2022 legislative initiative suggests the armed forces will remain politicized.

The CNDD-FDD-dominated National Assembly passed a law establishing the Reserve and Development Support Force (FRAD), a paramilitary group tasked with defending Burundi's territorial integrity and supporting development. Critics argue this initiative aims to create a parallel army and legitimize the Imbonerakure.

Regionally, President Ndayishimiye has made efforts to mend diplomatic ties with neighboring countries. However, tensions between Burundi and Rwanda, which peaked in 2015-2016 amid accusations of mutual interference, remain a significant challenge, according to Pascal Niyonizigiye, a political science professor at the University of

Bujumbura.

Ndayishimiye sought to ease these tensions after taking office. However, recent accusations against Rwandan President Paul Kagame for supporting rebel groups have reignited regional conflicts. During a visit to Kinshasa, Ndayishimiye condemned Kagame's regime, further straining relations.

The border between Burundi and Rwanda was closed for seven years, reopening in 2022 after diplomatic efforts, including Rwanda's extradition of RED-Tabara rebels. Nevertheless,

Burundi has since closed the border again, citing Rwanda's continued support for rebels. These ongoing tensions contribute to regional instability and hinder economic development.

The refugee crisis resulting from decades of conflict also poses a significant challenge. Burundi, with a population of 13 million, is one of Africa's most densely populated countries.

The 2015 crisis saw over 400,000 Burundians flee the country. Those returning now struggle to regain access to land, crucial for their livelihoods.

Burundi's fragile economy, hit by the COVID-19 pandemic and the conflict in Ukraine, faces high inflation and fuel shortages, exacerbating living conditions in a country where two-thirds of the population lives below the poverty line.

Despite re-engagement with international donors and a \$271 million IMF loan facility secured last year, economic development remains elusive due to persistent patronage networks and political tensions.

The upcoming 2025 general elections will be pivotal for Burundi's future. Two scenarios emerge: under the first, most likely scenario, the CNDD-FDD and Ndayishimiye will consolidate power, with increased state repression against the opposition.

This scenario may see Burundi realigning its foreign policy towards alternative partners like Russia, further isolating itself from Western



Burundi's President Evariste Ndayishimiye . While his succession to Pierre Nkurunziza initially eased Western concerns, old tensions have since reignited. Photo courtesy.

donors.

In the second, less likely scenario, the absence of a strong opposition in 2025 could lead to a peaceful reelection of Ndayishimiye and a continuation of the status quo. However, this scenario offers little hope for substantial political or economic reforms.

The regional dynamics, particularly tensions between Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of the Congo, will continue to impact Burundi's stability. As historian Mussa Lugete, a graduate of the University of Dar es Salaam notes, "The interplay of domestic repression and regional conflicts suggests that Burundi's path to stability will be fraught with challenges."

Despite some changes since Pierre Nkurunziza's controversial

third term, Burundi continues to grapple with significant issues such as repression, regional tensions, and economic challenges. A critical aspect of the current political climate is the persistent intimidation faced by opposition leaders, notably Agathon Rwasa.

Rwasa, a prominent opposition stalwart and the leader of the National Congress for Freedom (CNL) has been a consistent target of harassment and threats. His rallies are often disrupted by the police, and his supporters frequently report being intimidated or attacked.

Critics, including an international political analyst based in Dar es Salaam, argue that the Burundian government's tactics against Rwasa and other opposition figures are part of a broader strategy to stifle dissent

and maintain a tight grip on power.

«The systemic intimidation of Agathon Rwasa and his supporters is indicative of a regime that fears genuine democratic competition,» the analyst notes. «Such actions not only undermine the democratic process but also contribute to a climate of fear and uncertainty among the populace.»

Further complicating Burundi's political landscape are its strained relations with neighboring Rwanda.

The tension between the two countries, rooted in historical animosities and geopolitical rivalry, has significant implications for Burundi's internal stability.

Rwanda has been accused of supporting Burundian rebels, a claim it denies, while Burundi has periodically accused Rwanda of meddling in its domestic affairs. These frosty relations exacerbate regional insecurity and impede efforts towards political reconciliation and economic cooperation.

The 2025 elections in Burundi are expected to be a pivotal moment for the country. The way these elections are conducted and the extent to which they are free and fair will be critical in determining Burundi's trajectory in the coming years.

Regional developments, including the dynamics with Rwanda, will also play a crucial role in shaping the political and economic landscape.

While Burundi has made some strides since Nkurunziza's third term, the challenges of repression, regional tensions, and economic instability remain deeply entrenched. The treatment of opposition figures like Agathon Rwasa and the ongoing conflict with Rwanda highlights the complexities and hurdles facing Burundi.

As the 2025 elections approach, the eyes of the world will be on this small but strategically important nation, watching to see if it can navigate these challenges and move towards a more stable and democratic future.



Tensions between Rwanda, Burundi, and the Democratic Republic of Congo, will continue to impact Burundi's stability. Photo courtesy.



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South Africa-Dawn Of A New Political Era

By Prince Kurupati



Cyril Ramaphosa was re-elected President but the ruling ANC is now forced to share power with the opposition to govern. Photo Credit Financial Times.

Following the historic May 29 general elections which ushered in for the first time a Government of National Unity (GNU) in South Africa, the country this past week saw 32 ministers, 43 deputy ministers and one deputy president take their oath of office. The swearing-in ceremony of the ministers and deputy minister officially heralded South Africa's newest Cabinet - a cabinet drawn from 11 different political parties tasked with propelling the nation to ever greater heights.

The African National Congress (ANC) which lost its parliamentary majority in the May 29 elections but still managed to rack in the highest number of seats got the King's share of the Cabinet posts. Also, thanks to its greater bargaining power, it got the leeway to appoint the deputy president of its liking - a move which saw Paul Mashatile retained as the deputy president. ANC also got two

of the most sought-after portfolios that is, the Finance Ministry which was retained by Enoch Godongwana and the International Relations and Cooperation Ministry which was given to the youthful Ronald Lamola aged 40 who replaced Naledi Pandor.

Announcing the new Cabinet, President Cyril Ramaphosa said his party and all others that are part of the GNU decided on the portfolios and ministerial names after due consideration of different factors which include the interests of the political parties and the future of the country. "The establishment of the government of national unity in its current form is unprecedented in the history of our democracy. We have had to consider how to form the new government in a manner that advances the national interest, that gives due consideration to the outcome of the election and that makes use of the respective capabilities within each of the parties."

Alongtime opponent of the ANC, the Democratic Party (DA) also received a fair share of the seats with the party leader John Steenhuisen appointed the new minister of Agriculture. Following the swearing-in ceremony, Steenhuisen promised the nation that the DA through the various ministries it now controls will work to make the lives of South Africans more bearable. Surprisingly, the mere fact that he is part of a bloated cabinet while his party has for long pursued Vision 2029 which among other things calls for a reconfiguration of the executive to only 15 ministries did not mean much to him.

David Everatt, a politics professor at the University of Witwatersrand saw the irony in this when he said, "However, the Cabinet has ballooned to a remarkable 75 people, ministers and deputy ministers... the most ironic part of that is that the Democratic Alliance, which is a fairly conservative liberal party, has

for many years lambasted the ruling African National Congress for having these very large Cabinets, giving jobs to pals, et cetera. They're now sitting in exactly those seats."

The previous Cabinet had 30 ministers and no other administration post the Apartheid era exceeded this mark. However, this time around, an additional two portfolios have been added to increase the total of ministerial positions to 32. To some political analysts, this "bloated" nature of the government is a huge expense as different positions have been opened up from top to bottom to accommodate the interests of the different political parties which are part of the GNU.

Marius Roodt who is an analyst at the Institute of Race Relations (IRR) said the Cabinet is bloated and that may impede it from achieving realizable goals. "The Cabinet could be reduced to ten portfolios. The Cabinet must have a laser-like focus

on one thing: economic growth,” he said. Conquering these sentiments was the Free Market Foundation (FMF) which in a statement had this to say;

“The size of the Cabinet, in particular, the large bureaucracy and contingent of civil servants represented by each portfolio, is a significant burden on the economy... Consequently, reducing the size of government is more important than which political party controls a department at any given time.”

However, some argued that the bloated nature of the Cabinet is a necessary evil as it guarantees stability. Professor Andre Duvenhage of North West University said, “The Cabinet is by far too big compared to other countries. But it is important that we have a far big cabinet because we need room to accommodate different people for stability.”

Away from the debate on the merits and demerits of a bloated government, the newly appointed ministers have hit the ground running as demonstrated by the news coming out of their stables. Minister of Public Works and Infrastructure Dean Macpherson said his department will not procure new houses or offices for the executives and MPs as resources will be channelled to transforming the “country into a massive construction site that drives growth which creates jobs”.

As reported by the Africa Report, «Home Affairs Minister David Maynier, from the Democratic Alliance (DA), extended temporary



The International Relations and Cooperation Ministry is now led by the youthful Ronald Lamola.

visa concessions for tourists, skilled workers and other applicants left in limbo by long waiting times for visa decisions due to a 145,000 backlog. This backlog has also impeded new investments and businesses setting up shop in the country.

Minister of Basic Education, Siviwe Gwarube, from the DA, topped her list of promises with an old promise – to eradicate pit toilets in schools. Successive ministers have been making this promise over the past three decades. Despite these latrines having caused the death of learners, these toilets persist in mainly rural schools.

Sports, Arts and Culture Minister Gayton McKenzie, from the Patriotic

Alliance party, swept into office saying he will stop paying travel for “superfans” – often supporters of the ANC – to attend sports events and rather use the money for sports teams who can’t afford to cover their travel costs. Last year, taxpayers footed the R1.3m bill for two superfans to travel to the Rugby World Cup final in France.»

Minister McKenzie also said the ministry’s resources have been abused in the past and as such, the ministry will systematically release the names of all beneficiaries who in one way or another received funding from the ministry.

“There are so many allegations and denials regarding non-support to

artists, creative and sports people. I have asked for a full list to be published at 10 am of financial beneficiaries. You cannot clean up without full transparency... You have worthy people being ignored who genuinely need funding but you get some being assisted to purchase a building worth 20 million and still demanding more money. This department rarely gets ROI. The clean-up started and it will be transparent.”

Overall, according to a recent near real-time Happiness Index conducted by the University of Johannesburg led by wellbeing economist Prof. Talita Greyling, “happiness trends have been higher since the Cabinet announcement”.



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June Of Sorrow: Malawi's Energetic Vice President Dies In A Plane Crash

By Joseph Dumbula.

Malawi remains drawn into deep sorrow, at the passing of Vice President Saulos Chilima whose death at the age of 51, has direly changed the political scene with his party the UTM leaving the leading coalition government as the Southern African nation is reeling to a general election next year in which he was 'widely thought' to race for Presidency.

Chilima, a very popular political figure among the youth, died on 10th June along with other eight high reveled officials including former first lady Shanil Dzimbiri, who was married to ex-President Bakili Muluzi, and military crew members who were on board.

The plane crashed in Chikangawa Forest, close to Malawi's main northern region city of Mzuzu.

This was after nearly 27 hours when the plane was in no sight, a situation that sent the nation into grief until when President Lazarus Chakwera made the official announcement around midday of June 11th.

In heartbreaking tears, Chakwera said: "And yet, despite the track



Chilima died at the age of 51 and was widely popular among the youth.

record of the aircraft and the experience of the crew, something terrible went wrong with that aircraft on its flight back to Lilongwe, sending it crashing down. «I can only imagine

how much pain and anguish you all must be having at this point in time. I consider it one of my greatest honor to be deputized by him [Chilima] in the last four years,» he said before

declaring a three week-long national mourning which elapsed on 1st July 2024.

Chilima had been on the role at the initial roping in of ex-President Professor Peter Mutharika since 2014 until 2019 polls when they parted ways with the fallen leader forming his own party UTM-and partnering in an alliance with the Malawi Congress Party and other parties which defeated Mutharika's Democratic Progress Party in a court sanctioned fresh presidential poll in 2020.

In his eulogy, Mutharika, described Chilima who was laid to rest on 17th June as a Vice President with whom he managed to deal with socio-economic woes that haunted the nation from 2014.

He said: "The risk I took that day paid off when, in May, we were sworn into office and wasted no time in hitting the ground running. Over twelve months, our efforts bore fruit: we stabilized the currency, reduced inflation, restored security, and nurtured a thriving business



Chilima with Chakwera in a file image.

environment. We believed in each other, supported each other through challenges, and worked hand in hand to realize our shared vision for Malawi.”

He added: “Chilima had rare courage, wisdom in decision-making, and steadfast dedication to the people of Malawi as some of Chilima’s traits that amazed him during their journey in the political arena.

Now, President Chakwera has appointed Michael Usi who was Chilima’s running mate in 2019 as Vice President. Usi is a popular manager and comedian and his most recent roles included serving as Minister of Natural Resources and Tourism.

But now, a major development has taken its order as the UTM party has left the Tonse Coalition government stating that that is the direction the late Chilima would have wanted by all means.

The party’s spokesperson Felix Njawala said: “we have undoubtedly taken a path that our late leader would have taken.”

But the situation has weakened UTM’s voice and presence in the country’s political landscape, as argued by an eminent political commentator Wonderful Mkhutche.

In recent months, Chakwera said he would contest for the Presidency. He has since submitted nomination papers ahead of the MCP convention next month, where he reportedly faces no opposition.



Chilima and Mutharika in a file image.

He tells the Pan African Visions from Blantyre that the tragedy largely means the MCP can easily edge over UTM as it is now embroiled in a leadership crisis.

“The decision has been done with haste. It is evident that the party has yet to move on following Chilima’s death. It is also quite clear that the party members have not wanted Usi to be the leader. I hope Usi will move on himself,” he said.

He adds: “But the party needs to improve on one thing; build party structures that will spread the party’s agenda across the country to make sure the party no longer falls into the trap of being identified by only its leader”.

Before his death, Chilima has for at

least two years been in courts facing corruption charges which were later withdrawn on the basis the matter had a ‘national security bearing’.

He faced allegations of accepting a reward of 280,000 United States dollars from Zuneth Sattar to assist his [Sattar] company, Xaviar Limited, in securing a Food Ration Packs Contract worth \$7.8 million from the Malawi government for the Malawi Police.

He had initially been answering six charges; three are to do with corrupt practices by a public officer, two are for using influence to receive advantage and another for failing to report to police or ACB over an advantage received corruptly.

The withdraw saw Chakwera

pulling off a restraint on the delegated power he gave to Chilima, who had then been tasked to attend high-level events in Tanzania and South Korea.

This drew debate on whether the office of the Vice President should not be a delegated role again, a basis Mkhutche argues can likely breed chaos.

“We do not need two strong but separate individuals at the top running the apparatus of state and government. However, we must make sure the President is not victimizing the Vice President as we have seen in the past. To an extent, President Chakwera and Vice President Chilima’s working relationship was a complete departure from this difficult experience. Besides the squabbles over next year’s Tonse Alliance candidate, the two seemed to have a good professional and respectful relationship. This is what we need,” he said.

In the meantime, the nation anticipates the outcome of a probe underway by experts from Germany who are now in Malawi to probe circumstances that lead to the crash.

Their probe responds to an order that President Chakwera made following the deaths that drew the nation into disbelief. It is due to be released next month according to the German Federal Bureau of Aircraft Accident Investigation (BFU).

Government had initially said the Germans will work independently and assured them that there will be no hindrance to their work.

Since the crash, there have been mounting calls from a diverse section of Malawi’s society for an independent investigation “whose findings would satisfy people’s curiosity for truth.”

“As the government, we would like these experts to help us establish the actual cause of this plane crash that claimed the lives of our sons and daughters, who included the country’s sitting vice president. We will provide these experts with support so that the truth can come out,” said Moses Kunkuyu, Minister of Information.



Usi (Middle) is now the Vice President.

Kagame's Bold Stand: Rwanda Ready for Conflict Amidst DR Congo Tensions

By Adonis Byemelwa

In a recent riveting and exclusive interview with FRANCE 24, Rwandan President Paul Kagame boldly confronted the mounting tensions between Rwanda and its neighbor, the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC).

Kagame's resolute declaration leaves no room for ambiguity: Rwanda stands poised for conflict, ready to defend its interests amidst escalating regional turmoil.

His words echo the urgency of a leader navigating perilous diplomatic waters, where each statement holds the potential to reshape the fragile geopolitical landscape of Central Africa.

The interview follows recent accusations by Congolese President Felix Tshisekedi, who accused Rwanda of orchestrating «a genocide» in eastern DR Congo.

Kagame responded forcefully to Tshisekedi's allegations, accusing him instead of fostering a «genocide ideology» aimed at Congolese Tutsis in the region. He criticized Tshisekedi for what he described as a selective memory regarding the complex dynamics and historical context of the situation in eastern Congo.

«What is taking place in eastern Congo should be understood even by the person who leads that country. He does seem to have a selective memory of what to call what is happening there,» Kagame asserted in the interview. «To ignore that and to want to call it something else, somewhere else by somebody, I think you have to be missing something in your mind.»

Despite mounting accusations from Western countries regarding the presence of Rwandan soldiers on Congolese soil, Kagame adamantly refused to confirm their deployment.

Instead, he urged a focus on addressing the root cause of the ongoing conflict, pointing specifically to the resurgence of M23 rebels in eastern DR Congo.

«Why don't we look at the root cause of this problem?» Kagame queried, alluding to the complexity of



President Kagame emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the region, rather than oversimplifying the narrative. Photo courtesy.

the situation. He emphasized the need for a comprehensive understanding of the challenges facing the region, rather than oversimplifying the narrative.

The interview has brought significant attention to Rwanda's stance on regional security and internal political dynamics ahead of the upcoming presidential election.

Kagame's declaration of readiness to potentially engage in conflict with the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) underlines the escalating tensions between the two nations, particularly in the volatile eastern DRC where numerous armed groups operate amidst a humanitarian crisis.

The ongoing humanitarian crisis in eastern Congo, characterized by widespread displacement, human rights abuses, and the exploitation of mineral resources, amplifies the urgency of addressing the root causes of conflict and promoting sustainable peace and development in the region.

Kagame's interview thus becomes newsworthy not only for its revelations on Rwanda's foreign and domestic policies but also for its implications on regional stability and international relations in Central Africa.

The accusations traded between

Rwandan President Paul Kagame and Congolese President Félix Tshisekedi have ignited a fiery discourse that reverberates across the diplomatic and security landscapes of the Great Lakes region.

Amidst allegations of genocide orchestrated by Rwanda in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), Kagame's firm rebuttal alleging Tshisekedi's promotion of genocidal ideologies against Congolese Tutsis has escalated tensions to new heights.

This exchange not only highlights historical grievances and deep-seated suspicions between the two nations but also threatens to destabilize an already fragile region grappling with decades of conflict and humanitarian crises.

In parallel, Kagame's unequivocal denial of election rigging and his staunch dismissal of accusations regarding political repression and assassinations within Rwanda underscore his government's commitment to democratic principles and human rights.

As Rwanda approaches a pivotal presidential election, these assertions stand in stark contrast to external critiques and internal scrutiny,

highlighting the complexities and challenges inherent in Rwanda's geopolitical positioning and its aspirations for regional leadership.

The broader context of regional instability, exacerbated by over a hundred armed groups vying for control of valuable mineral resources in eastern Congo, further complicates Rwanda's strategic calculations.

The humanitarian toll, with millions displaced and widespread human rights abuses documented, underscores the urgent need for sustainable peacebuilding efforts that address the root causes of conflict and foster inclusive development.

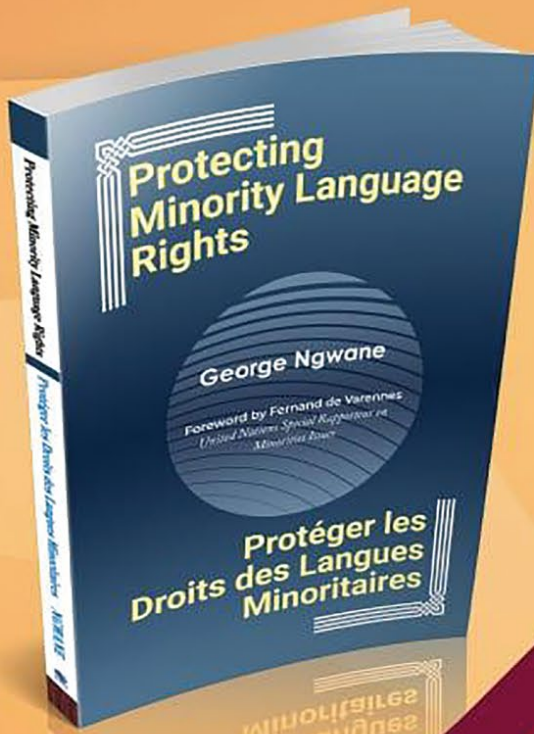
As President Kagame navigates both internal electoral dynamics and external pressures, his statements and actions will continue to shape not only Rwanda's trajectory but also the broader geopolitics of Central Africa.

The outcome of these tensions and accusations will undoubtedly influence regional alliances, international interventions, and efforts toward lasting peace and stability in the Great Lakes region, making it a focal point of global concern and strategic interest.



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Confederation of Sahel States - The Newest Pact in Africa Formed by Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso

By Prince Kurupati

July 5 just became one of the many special days in the political history of Africa as it is the day that the continent welcomed yet another regional pact in the form of the Confederation of Sahel States. The Confederation of Sahel States is a pact of three countries namely Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso. Three countries which are all currently under military rule.

The first Summit of the Confederation of Sahel States which will use the acronym AES took place in Niamey, Niger. It officially marked the divorce between the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and the trio of the junta-led countries – Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso.

Addressing all those who had gathered to witness the momentous occasion in the Nigerien capital, Niamey, Niger's ruling General Abdourahamane Tiani said the formation of the AES is a testament to how "Our people have irrevocably turned their backs on ECOWAS".

In a statement released at the end of the Summit, the AES will be headquartered in Mali in its first year and its chairmanship will be rotational. The statement added saying the formation of the AES is a step which fosters "greater integration" among the three countries.

In an 'X' post, Burkina Faso leader Capt. Ibrahim Traore said, "This summit marks a decisive step for the future of our common space. Together, we will consolidate the foundations of our true independence, a guarantee of true peace and sustainable development through the creation of the 'Alliance of Sahel States' Confederation... The AES is full of enormous natural potential which, if properly exploited, will guarantee a better future for the people of Niger, Mali and Burkina Faso."

As the three countries in recent times have criticized ECOWAS for



Our people have irrevocably turned their backs on ECOWAS, the leaders of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso insist.

being a stooge of the French hence their ultimate decision to pull out, the AES stated that from now on, it "is the only effective sub-regional grouping in the fight against terrorism." He said ECOWAS' reluctant stance in fighting the ever-rising jihadist problem is rather "conspicuous" and added, "We are going to create an AES of the peoples, instead of an ECOWAS whose directives and instructions are dictated to it by powers that are foreign to Africa."

Demonstrating how the three countries want nothing to do with their former colonial power, General Tiani said the AES is a "community far removed from the stranglehold of foreign powers." Since cutting ties with France, in the process, expelling anti-jihadi French troops, the trio have instead turned towards "sincere partners," namely Russia, Turkey and Iran.

The formation of the AES came on the eve of the ECOWAS heads of state meeting in the Nigerian capital, Abuja, where its emergence was the main agenda. In the lead-up to the meeting, there was already discord as to how the grouping should respond to the AES. Well, the discord remains as no solid position was taken nor a resolution passed on how to deal with the three junta-led countries. Some

countries like Nigeria are critical of the junta governments while others like the newly elected Senegalese President Bassirou Diomaye and the re-elected Mauritanian President Mohamed Ould Cheikh El Ghazouani are calling for unity in the fight against the expansion of jihadism.

The fight against the expansion of jihadism in the Sahel is something of extreme importance as according to a report by Mark A. Green, president of the Wilson Center, a Washington D.C.-based think tank, the Sahel accounts for 43 per cent of the world's terrorism deaths, more than South Asia and the Middle East and North Africa region combined.

The organization which has taken a solid stance in response to the formation of the AES is the African Union (AU). During the public deliberations of the 65th Ordinary Session of the Conference of Heads of State and Government of ECOWAS, the AU Commissioner for Political Affairs, Peace and Security declared that "the withdrawal by three countries is unacceptable to the African Union and we believe in a one ECOWAS".

In response, a joint statement by the foreign affairs ministers of the AES, condemned in the strongest terms the interfering attitude of a "statutory civil servant, whose duties

and responsibilities do not confer upon him any right to interfere in the internal affairs of the Member States of the African Union". The response went on to state that "the approval of a third party is not part of the responsible dynamic of the AES, whose priority is and remains the preservation of the territorial integrity of its member states and the defence of the vital interests of its population".

By forming the Confederation of Sahel States grouping, the trio of Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso have also adopted an allied stance as the founding agreement states that, "any

attack on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of one or more contracted parties will be considered an aggression against the other parties."

Commenting on the formation of the AES, Gilles Yabi, the founder of the West African think tank Wathi said the AES needs to be taken seriously as its formation demonstrates the commitment that Mali, Niger and Burkina Faso strongmen have.

However, some especially general citizens commenting on various social media platforms were critical of the new grouping saying is symptomatic of the dying democratic fabric on the continent. In an 'X' post, a user by the name of Khalafalla Bushara said, "Democracy is the answer. Military rule is not freedom, it's a gift to foreign powers as they have to deal with one dictator whose aim is to survive at all costs."

Apart from talking about the political and security topics, the junta leaders during the AES Summit agreed to mutualize their approach to strategic sectors such as agriculture, water, energy and transport. Calls were also made for indigenous languages to be prioritized in local media. The burning question of whether a common currency to replace the CFA franc is in the offing wasn't discussed.

Focus On The African Energy Bank With Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim

By Ajong Mbapndah L



Dr. Omar Farouk Ibrahim
Secretary General Of APPO

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim says the AEB is Africa's response to the looming financing challenge that the global paradigm shift poses to the oil and gas industry in Africa.

With over 125 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves and over 600 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, and more findings being made; it does not make sense for Africa to abandon these energies when it has the largest proportion of world's population living without access to modern energy, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, Secretary General of the African Petroleum Producers' Organization -APPO. In a sign that Africa maybe going past the era of all talk and no action, the APPO and Afreximbank signed the Africa Energy Bank (AEB) Establishment Agreement and the Charter of the Bank, declaring it open for signature and ratification by the 18 APPO Member States.

Fielding questions in an exclusive interview with PAV, Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim says the AEB is Africa's response to the looming financing

challenge that the global paradigm shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy poses to the oil and gas industry in the continent.

While the AEB's main focus shall be funding oil and gas projects, it shall not close its doors to renewable energy projects and shall strive to harness all forms of energy to ensure that Africa's energy poverty is eradicated, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim.

"With the signing of the Establishment Documents by the two founding institutions, APPO and Afreximbank, and the ratification by one Member Country, the decision on the location of the Headquarters of the Bank, all that remains is to have just one more Member Country sign and ratify the Establishment Documents for the Bank to be ready for takeoff," says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim in the interview which also addressed other perspectives at APPO and the African Energy sector.

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim, thanks for agreeing to answer our questions, could we start with situating the importance of APPO in the present-day development dynamics of Africa?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: I who would like to begin by thanking you warmly for the interest shown by your prestigious magazine in the African Petroleum Producers' Organization (APPO). As you might be aware, APPO was established as the African Petroleum Producers' Association, APPA, in 1987 as an African intergovernmental energy organization by eight African oil and gas producing countries, namely Algeria, Angola, Benin, Cameroon, Congo, Gabon, Libya and Nigeria. Between 2015 and 2019, the Association underwent a major reform culminating in a change of mission and vision as well

as the organizational structure and decision-making processes. The name APPA was also changed to APPO, to reflect the commitment of Member Countries to greater collaboration and cooperation, not just to associate. Today, APPO has grown to 18 full Member Countries and one Honorary Member Country.

One of the major assignments undertaken by the Secretariat after the reform was to conduct a study on the Future of the Oil and Gas Industry in Africa in the Light of the Energy Transition.

The findings of the study were that the African oil and gas industry faces three imminent challenges, which if not seriously and urgently addressed could lead to the total collapse of the industry in Africa. These challenges were the challenge of funding oil and gas projects, the challenge of acquisition and mastery of oil and gas technology and expertise and the

last one is the challenge of oil and gas markets and infrastructure. The study noted that the countries that Africa has been relying on for several decades for funds to do oil and gas projects have committed to stop funding oil and gas projects, especially in Africa. The second challenge, technology and expertise, like finance, has also been characterized by huge dependence on companies outside Africa. The study noted that almost all the research and technology on the industry are done outside Africa. It was noted, for example, that some of the world's famous institutions for oil and gas studies and research are closing down their faculties of petroleum. The danger is that if Africa does not quickly master oil and gas technology it risks losing the capacity to exploit the resources in its soil and seas. The third challenge is that of markets. The study established that the African oil and gas industry was created from the very beginning to serve interests outside Africa. That is why all the pipelines in the continent ran from oil and gas fields to the seaports. Seventy five percent of Africa's oil and 45% of gas is exported outside Africa. Now that this market is being threatened are we going to stop oil and gas production because the markets are drying up? These are the challenges



While the AEB's main focus shall be funding oil and gas projects, it shall not close its doors to renewable energy projects, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim.

that the Global Energy Transition pose to African oil and gas producing and revenue dependent countries in APPO. In the last two years, since the study was completed, our focus in the Secretariat, guided by the Executive Board and the direction of the Ministerial Council has been on how best to address these three

imminent challenges. The efforts to establish the Africa Energy Bank, the efforts to create regional centers of excellence in the various sectors of the industry and the efforts to get the Central Africa pipeline system started have been our preoccupation.

On June 03, 2024, APPO

and Afreximbank signed Establishment Agreement of the Africa Energy Bank, can you shed some light on this for us?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: It was a historic ceremony that was presided over by H.E. Eng. Tarek El Molla, Minister of Petroleum and Mineral Resources of the Arab Republic of Egypt. The APPO and Afreximbank, on this occasion, signed the AEB Establishment Agreement and the Charter of the Bank, declaring it open for signature and ratification by the 18 APPO Member States. The signing ceremony concluded two years of negotiations and preparations by the two parties having signed a Memorandum of Understanding in May 2022 for the establishment of the AEB. The AEB is Africa's response to the looming financing challenge that the global paradigm shift from fossil fuels to renewable energy – euphemistically referred to as the Energy Transition – poses to the oil and gas industry in Africa. Indeed, for too long, the African oil and gas industry has been dependent on non-African financing. We came to take foreign financing of our oil and gas projects for granted, until



The AEB Establishment Agreement and the Charter concluded two years of negotiations and preparations by the two parties, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim.

the advent of the Energy Transition made us realize that those on whom we have depended for many decades have decided to abandon us. Africa cannot afford to abandon oil and gas in a hurry when most of its population lives without access to energy. I would like to take this opportunity to congratulate the APPO Council of Ministers for their visionary leadership, particularly HE Dr. Diamantino Pedro Azevedo, the Minister of Mineral Resources, Oil and Gas of Angola and 2022 President of APPO who gave anticipatory approval for us to begin talks with Afreximbank in the first place and Professor Benedict Okey Oramah, President and Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Afreximbank, for his exemplary leadership and commitment to the cause of the African continent.



We are pleased with the responses of our Member Countries to the fundraising for the AEB, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim seen in discussions with Congolese Minister of Hydrocarbons Jean Bruno Itoua who doubles as Alternate President of APPO

How important is the Africa Energy Bank, and with the agreement with Afreximbank, how close are you to its operational phase?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: The AEB's primary objective is to fill the imminent gap of funding that the withdrawal of funding for oil and gas projects in Africa by the traditional financiers could cause to the industry. With over 125 billion barrels of proven crude oil reserves and over 600 trillion cubic feet of proven gas reserves, and more findings being made; it does not make sense for Africa to abandon these energies when it has the largest proportion of world's population living without access to modern energy. While the AEB's main focus shall be funding oil and gas projects, it shall not close its doors to renewable energy projects. AEB shall strive to harness all forms of energy to ensure that Africa's energy poverty is eradicated. Although started by Africa, shareholding is open to all investors who share the mission and vision of the Bank. The AEB has been structured as an independent and supranational pan-African energy development bank with an initial USD 5 Billion capital. With the signing of the Establishment

Documents by the two founding institutions, APPO and Afreximbank, and the ratification by one Member Country, the decision on the location of the Headquarters of the Bank, all that remains is to have just one more Member Country sign and ratify the Establishment Documents for the Bank to be ready for takeoff.

The Bank's initial capital is \$5 billion, should a continent with the size and potential of Africa have challenges raising this capital, how strong is the political will from African governments to see the AEB vision actualized?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: We are pleased with the responses of our Member Countries to the fundraising for the Africa energy Bank. A number of Member Countries made deposits even before the Establishment Agreement and Charter were signed. That should tell you about how keen they are to see that AEB takes off. With the signing of the establishment documents, the decision on the headquarters and ratification by a member country, and the mandate to have the Bank take-off this year, we

are seeing a lot of interest from our Member Countries.

We in APPO do not believe in the false narrative that Africa is too poor to establish a strong and successful multi-billion-dollar Bank, without near-total dependence on outside Africa. It is a matter of prioritizing our expenditure. And since the oil and gas endowed countries know that for some time to come they will continue to depend on oil and gas revenue to meet their obligations and they will also need energy to get their populations out of poverty, they are committed to making the required investment.

This is one of the key items to be tabled before the Summit of the APPO Heads of State which HE Denis Sassou N'Guesso, President of the Republic of Congo, the Headquarters of APPO, is hosting soon.

Nigeria was recently selected as host country for the Africa Energy Bank in a process that had Algeria, Benin, Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and South Africa as candidate countries, may we know some of the factors or considerations that

weighed for Nigeria?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: The final decision on the choice of the Headquarters was made on Thursday 4th July 2024 by the 45th Extraordinary Session of the Ministerial Council. The meeting, which was held virtually, was chaired by H.E. Bruno Jean Richard Itoua, Minister of Hydrocarbons of the Republic of Congo, and Alternate President of the Council of Ministers of APPO. The Session considered the report and recommendations of the Ministerial Committee for the Selection of the Headquarters of the Africa Energy Bank (AEB), chaired by the then Libyan Minister of Oil and Gas, His Excellency Mohamed Oun. Other members of the Committee were the Ministers of Angola, Senegal, Venezuela and the President of Afreximbank.

A number of criteria were used in evaluating the bids of countries, including accessibility of the city in terms of frequency of international flights, level of socio-economic and health services, cost of living, security index, experience in hosting international/intergovernmental organizations, and the proposed

headquarters building.

You and others in the continent have been harping on Africa's special needs and realities of Africa when it comes to issues of fossils, do you think the rest of the world is getting the message that Africa is willing to stand its ground on how to meet its energy needs?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: It depends on what you define as the world. For too long, we have been made to believe that what the powerful nations define as their interest is also the interest of all of us in the world. This is a false narrative. We should be able to determine what is in our best interest and stand by it at all times. If it coincides with that of the powerful nations, all fine and good. But we must not be made to accept the interests of others as our interests, without critically looking into how they arrived at those interests being in our interest. To us in APPO energy is an existential challenge. Hundreds of thousands, if not millions of people die from respiratory diseases due to inhalation of bio-waste fumes.

We are pleased with the positive visibility that APPO has been receiving in recent years. Our message is getting out clearly across the industry. Our position on the energy transition is becoming more and more popular, especially in Africa and with other developing countries.

How much growth in Membership has taken place at APPO since you became Secretary General and what are some other seminal developments that have taken place under your stewardship?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim : We grew from the initial eight founding members in 1987 to 15 at the beginning of the reform in 2015. After the reform and seeing how serious APPO has become, we added three new Members in just one year.

The major work we have done in the last four years I would say are the conduct of a major study on the future of the Oil and Gas Industry in Africa



We see the African Energy Chamber and its CEO, NJ Ayuk as key promoters of the continent's position on the global energy transition, says Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim on their MoU.

in the light of the energy transition. And following from the findings of the study, working to address the identified challenges. In that respect we have reached advanced stage in the establishment of the Africa Energy Bank, AEB. Another important focus has been on the establishment of regional centers of excellence in oil and gas technology and training. This is being spearheaded by APPO in collaboration with the Forum of CEOs of APPO NOCs and the Forum of Directors of Research, Development and Innovation as well as the Forum of Directors of Training Institutions in APPO Member Countries. Furthermore, to address the market challenge we are working on the realization of a major project called the Central Africa Pipeline System, CAPS, that aims to link 11 Central African states by a comprehensive pipeline for crude oil, gas and products.

APPO signed an MoU with the

African Energy Chamber in Brazzaville early in the year, how important is the Chamber in complimenting or working together on the vision APPO?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: We have had MoUs with the Africa Energy Chamber in the past. So, what we did early this year was just to renew the MoU. We have been partners with AEC from Day One on the Africa Energy Week. We see the Africa Energy Chamber and its CEO, NJ Ayuk as key promoters of the continent's position on the global energy transition. We share common views about energy and the way forward for our continent.

What will the agenda at APPO look like for the rest of 2024?

Dr Omar Farouk Ibrahim: For the rest of the year, our focus is to ensure quick and effective take-off of the Africa Energy Bank. In this context, we plan to be in Abuja soon to finalize and sign the Headquarters

Country Agreement and also to ensure that all the facilities required for the effective take-off of the Bank are in place. Furthermore, we shall begin an aggressive fundraising drive, beginning with our Member Countries and later outside our Member Countries. Of course, we will also work to have our Member Countries sign and ratify the Establishment Agreement and the Charter. It will interest you to know Ghana has already ratified the Establishment Agreement and Charter of the AEB. We will also be pursuing our objectives on the setting up of regional centers of oil and gas excellence as well as our program on energy infrastructure development.

We created a Forum of CEOs of APPO Member Countries, and we have found this forum most useful in charting the right course for the Africa oil and gas industry. The Forum is scheduled to have its next meeting in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea, next September.

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Trailblazer Ambassador Liberata Mulamula: Navigating Global Politics and Breaking Barriers

By Adonis Byemelwa

In an exclusive interview with Pan African Visions Ambassador Liberata Mulamula reflects on her influential career in diplomacy spanning three decades. From pivotal roles in peace negotiations across the Great Lakes Region to breaking barriers as a woman in international affairs, Mulamula's journey underscores her dedication to global peace and Tanzania's interests. This feature explores her insights on navigating global politics, and managing personal and professional challenges, and offers invaluable advice to aspiring female leaders in diplomacy.

From President's Senior Assistant to Ambassador: How did your diplomatic journey shape your approach to international relations?

My journey from being a President's Senior Assistant to becoming an ambassador has profoundly shaped my approach to international relations. It taught me the importance of patience, empathy, and strategic thinking. Navigating the complexities of diplomacy, especially in volatile regions, reinforced the value of building bridges and fostering dialogue. Each role I held deepened my understanding of the delicate balance between national interests and global cooperation. This experience has made me appreciate the nuances of diplomacy and the need for genuine, respectful engagement with diverse cultures and perspectives.

You've been pivotal in peace talks across Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC. What were the most challenging and rewarding moments in these negotiations?

The peace talks in Rwanda, Burundi, and the DRC were some of the most challenging yet rewarding experiences of my career. One of the



Ambassador Liberata Mulamula is an embodiment of courage, service and leadership .Photo courtesy.

most difficult moments was dealing with the deep-seated mistrust among the warring parties. Imagine sitting at a table where each side sees the other as the enemy, and you're trying to convince them to see common ground. It required immense patience and a keen understanding of their historical grievances and fears. On the rewarding side, there were moments when we saw real breakthroughs, like when former President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Benjamin Mkapa got involved in mediation. These were pivotal in shifting the dynamics toward more constructive dialogue. I'll never forget the sense of accomplishment when we managed to get all parties to sign a truce, even though maintaining that peace was another challenge altogether. Working with various stakeholders, including youth, women, media, and religious leaders, also brought a broader perspective and grassroots support to the peace process, making the negotiations more inclusive and sustainable. Another

rewarding aspect was seeing the tangible impact of our efforts. For instance, traveling across the DRC and witnessing firsthand the relief and hope in communities affected by conflict was incredibly fulfilling. These experiences reinforced my belief in the power of diplomacy and the importance of perseverance and empathy in resolving conflicts.

The recent Cabinet shuffle sparked much speculation. What's your perspective on the photo incident at the UN General Assembly and its aftermath?

The recent Cabinet shuffle and the photo incident at the UN General Assembly indeed sparked a lot of speculation. From my perspective, the photo with President Joe Biden and First Lady Jill Biden was purely a diplomatic gesture. I was there in my capacity as Foreign Affairs Minister, supporting Vice President Philip Mpango's delegation. The image was meant to symbolize our

strong bilateral relations, nothing more. Unfortunately, some people misconstrued it as an overstep on my part, which was never the case. The timing of my removal shortly after the UN meeting added fuel to the fire, leading to rumors and assumptions that the photo played a role in the decision. However, it's important to remember that Cabinet reshuffles are at the President's discretion, and numerous factors could have influenced her decision. I believe in respecting the President's authority and focusing on the positive contributions I've made during my tenure. The whole incident highlights the complexities and sometimes unpredictable nature of political life, but I remain committed to serving my country in whatever capacity I can.

Balancing a stellar career with family life, how did you manage the personal and professional demands of your roles?

Balancing a stellar career with family life has certainly been a

juggling act. It wasn't always easy, especially with the demands of high-profile diplomatic roles. There were times when my children's school events had to be attended by my mother-in-law, which raised a few eyebrows. They would often ask why their grandparents were there instead of me, and that was tough. But I was incredibly fortunate to have a supportive family. My husband, with his diverse life experiences from living abroad, is a rock. He understands the pressures of my job and is always ready to step in when needed. We make it work through a lot of communication and understanding. It is about prioritising and sometimes making difficult choices, but always maintaining a close-knit family. Family has always been my anchor, and their unwavering support has been invaluable, especially during the most challenging times in my career.

Ambassador Liberata Mulamula of the United Republic of Tanzania in the United States, pictured with President Barack Obama at the White House after presenting her credentials. Photo: State House

With extensive experience in both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy, what key lessons have you learned about navigating global politics?



Ambassador Mulamula had a strong stint as Tanzania's Chief Envoy to Washington.

Navigating global politics through both bilateral and multilateral diplomacy has underscored the importance of patience, empathy, and strategic adaptability. In bilateral diplomacy, I've learned that understanding and respecting the unique histories and concerns of individual nations is crucial. It requires building trust through consistent and open communication, which often means listening more than speaking. Whether negotiating

peace in the Great Lakes Region or managing Tanzania's embassies abroad, these principles have been foundational. Strategic thinking is also essential; the ability to foresee and adapt to changes in the political landscape can mean the difference between success and failure in diplomatic endeavors. In multilateral diplomacy, the power of collective action stands out. Addressing global challenges requires cooperation among countries, bringing diverse

perspectives and resources together. Engaging stakeholders like youth, women, religious leaders, and media enriches dialogue for inclusive, sustainable solutions. My ICGLR and international experiences show collaborative efforts lead to effective outcomes, highlighting integrity and competence for credibility in global leadership.»

You were the first Executive Secretary of the ICGLR. How did you approach the complexities of peace, stability, and development in the Great Lakes region?

As the first Executive Secretary of the International Conference of the Great Lakes Region (ICGLR), I approached the complexities of peace, stability, and development with a multi-faceted strategy that emphasized inclusivity, trust-building, and strategic partnerships. Understanding the region's volatile history and the deep-seated mistrust among different groups was my starting point. I prioritized listening to all stakeholders, including governments, civil society, and local communities, to grasp the root causes of conflict and instability. This involved extensive travel and face-to-face meetings, often in challenging environments, to ensure that every voice was heard and considered in the



I remain committed to serving my country in whatever capacity I can, says Ambassador Mulamula.

peace-building process.

Building trust was central to my approach. I worked tirelessly to foster open communication channels between conflicting parties, encouraging dialogue over confrontation. This included leveraging the influence of respected leaders like former President Olusegun Obasanjo and President Benjamin Mkapa to mediate discussions. By involving neutral figures, we could facilitate more objective and constructive negotiations. I also recognized the importance of addressing the proliferation of small arms and the presence of armed groups, which were major sources of insecurity.

Collaborating with regional mechanisms like the Regional Centre on Small Arms and Light Weapons (RECSA) was crucial in tackling these issues collectively.

To ensure sustainable development, I focused on integrating a broad spectrum of stakeholders into the peace process. This meant engaging not only political leaders but also youth, women, religious leaders, and the media. Their involvement brought diverse perspectives and solutions, making the peace initiatives more comprehensive and resilient. Additionally, I pushed for regional initiatives to manage common-border security effectively, acknowledging that the long and porous borders were

a significant challenge. By promoting a collective management approach, we aimed to enhance security and stability across the region. Overall, my tenure at the ICGLR was about building a collaborative framework that could address the immediate needs of peace and stability while laying the groundwork for long-term development.

As a woman who's broken numerous barriers in diplomacy, what advice do you have for young women aspiring to lead in international affairs?

For young women aspiring to lead in international affairs, my advice is to stay true to your values and work

hard. Education is your strongest tool, so never stop learning and seek opportunities for continuous growth. Build your confidence and trust in your abilities, and don't let anyone undermine your self-worth. Embrace patience and empathy, as understanding different perspectives is key in diplomacy. Network and seek mentors who can guide you through challenges and celebrate your successes. Lastly, balance your professional and personal life, ensuring you have a strong support system. Remember, integrity and competence will always be your best assets in navigating the complexities of global politics.

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Akume, Tinubu And The Fight Against Corruption

By Godwin Onyeacholem

Cynics – or critics if you like – would argue that if there was any doubt, there is none now: Unrestrained by ethics as well as domestic and international legal obligations, the Tinubu administration, speaking through George Akume, secretary to the government of the federation, is not committed to fighting corruption despite everything.

At a workshop organized in Abuja by the Bureau for Public Service Reforms in collaboration with the SGF's office, this government once again showed up strongly in readiness to kill the truth. Akume, who was represented by Nnamdi Mbaeri, permanent secretary in the office of the SGF, warned workers in government offices that they would go to jail if they leaked public documents without authorisation. A refreshing yet despicable low in the contagion of lows that have afflicted governance over the past year.

If any government should be fighting corruption head-on and prioritising accountability at this time in Nigeria, it should be an All Progressives Congress (APC) government that has not only zealously labelled itself as 'progressive' from the very first day, but also fervently appropriated 'change' and 'renewed hope' as successive definitive themes of its contract with the country in its back-to-back electoral triumphs.

But that seems obviously not the case. Each of the successive APC governments since 2015 has ironically brazenly launched severe attacks on the voices of truth, be they journalists or whistleblowers, and systematically constricted the civic space in a way that flatters preceding ruling governments since the beginning of democratic governance in 1999.

No doubt, Akume's latest outing, his resolve to criminalise workers' exposure of corrupt practices in the public sector is another turn of the screw. It's a close parallel to what would be found in the opening pages of a despotic regime's playbook. There is need to let him know that his decision is wrong as it is aimed at stopping workers from doing the right thing.



George Akume, Secretary to the government of the Federation in handshake with President Tinubu.

Sanctions for uncovering wrongful acts will deter workers from blowing the whistle on illegalities in their offices, and this in turn will definitely be seen as a failure of accountability on the part of the Tinubu government.

But more importantly, Akume's option has thrown cold water on two indispensable anti-corruption instruments. It gutted the power of the whistleblowing policy which the Buhari government introduced in 2016 as a strategy to curtail growing public sector corruption, and the Freedom of Information Act enacted in 2011 by the Goodluck Jonathan government to open up the government to the public and promote transparency and accountability in government.

These two instruments, the former still just a policy to the utter dismay of good governance advocates, are being deployed more than any other tools by journalists, whistleblowers, public interest lawyers and civil society organisations to foster the culture of responsible corporate governance, compliance with rules and regulations and accountability in public/private institutions utilising government funds.

In the absence of a protection law, whistleblowers in public institutions have continued to face all kinds of reprisals ranging from outright dismissal to death threats for fulfilling the civic and constitutional duty of disclosing fraudulent acts or exercising the right of refusal to participate in

corrupt practices and other illegalities in their workplace. So are journalists and civil society organisations relying on the FOI law to expose corruption and wrongdoing in government offices mostly frustrated by officials who invent all sorts of ridiculous schemes to deny them information.

From Akume's tone through his surrogate at the workshop, it is obvious that government is not uncomfortable with the use of FOI law to expose illegalities in government offices. And as a remedy, he suggested the "need to regulate activities of the civil society organisations who use the Freedom of Information Act to harass, intimidate and siphon resources from public officers through the dissemination of unfounded and fake information...." This is an unfortunate comment that civil society organisations shouldn't handle with kid gloves.

At this point, it is apt to state that access to information is a fundamental right by virtue of Section 38 of the 1999 Constitution which says that "every citizen shall have the right to freedom of expression, including the right to obtain information and impart ideas." That right is equally protected by Article 9 (2) of the African Charter on Human and Peoples Rights which provides that "Every individual shall have the right to receive information." And since Nigeria's FOI Act essentially supports the implementation of open and accountable governance, the law recognises the right of every citizen to

access information from any record in government or public institutions.

It doesn't seem like Akume has read the FOI law. He should pick it up and read. Then he will know that his plan to jail workers for releasing public information to the public without approval is not feasible. Sections 29 and 30 of the law provide immunity from civil or criminal prosecution for any worker who discloses information on wrongdoing without authorisation.

The FOI law, just like the whistleblowing policy, also has provision for protection of whistleblowers. But protection is not real. It only exists in the documents. Maybe Akume does not know this. Instead of threatening to jail workers who unmask corruption and seeking to devalue whistleblowing and FOI, he should rather be organising forums to train public officials on the public's right to access information of public records and the importance of complying with the law.

Better still, he should sit down with President Tinubu and Lateef Fagbemi, attorney general and minister of justice, and come with concrete plans on how to uphold Section 15 (5) of the Constitution which says, "The State shall abolish all corrupt practices and abuse of power." Or does Akume not know that his government, like the ones before it, is in violation of this provision of the constitution?

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South Africa: Rand Strengthen As the ANC and DA Start Their Marriage of Convenience

By Prince Kurupati

South Africa's beacon of democracy status was consolidated during the May 29 general election as citizens from all walks of life cast their votes to choose the nation's next set of leaders. Despite the country being one of the most populous and the general atmosphere before Election Day being politically tense, tranquillity prevailed as South Africans cast their votes. In an unprecedented and historic move, no one political party managed to get the mandate to lead the nation as all parties garnered less than 50% of the votes individually. The results meant that for the first time, a coalition or a government of national unity was beckoning.

The African National Congress (ANC) which has led the country since the end of the Apartheid era took the onus of soliciting for parties to partner with in forming an inclusive government. Having garnered 42% of the votes, the ANC just needed a smaller percentage to enter into government and hence had the upper in seeking political parties to partner with.

In a rather surprising but welcome move, the ANC within a week from the announcement of the official results said that it had decided on the best way forward for the country. In a televised address, the leader of the ANC Cyril Ramaphosa announced that the top organ of his party had agreed to form a Government of National Unity (GNU) with willing parties. For the following week, news outlets and social media outlets witnessed some remarkable moves and U-turns as different parties forwarded their terms which needed to be met to join the government of national unity. Ultimately, it was the two longtime foes, the ANC and



The marriage of convenience is showing early benefits for the rand but it remains to be seen for how long it will last.

the Democratic Alliance (DA) which announced that they were ready and geared to collaborate for the betterment of the country.

On June 14, the day that the DA announced that it had struck a deal with the ANC and the Inkhatha Freedom Party (IFP) to form a government of national unity, the Rand gained on the world market. Responding to the Rands' gain, the co-head of Africa at ETM Analytics Danny Greeff said, "The rand is loving it (GNU)!" As reported by Reuters, the Rand closed the day (June 14) trading at 18.40 against the dollar, around 0.2% stronger than its previous close. On the Johannesburg Stock Exchange, the blue-chip Top 40 Index closed around 0.7% stronger. South Africa's benchmark 2030 government bond was flat at 10.125%.

Political and economic analysts said the strengthening of the Rand following the announcement of the ANC and DA's marriage of convenience is down to the fact that the radical parties have all stayed away

from the GNU. The two most picked radical parties are the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) led by Julius Malema and the uMkhonto we Sizwe (MK) led by former president Jacob Zuma.

Markus Korhonen, a senior associate in strategic intelligence at S-RM said, the "news of this coalition will temper concerns that South Africa would embark on a policy approach challenging the mainstream economic consensus." Danny Greeff weighed in saying, "While the sustainability of an ANC-DA-IFP coalition is, of course, questionable, investors will cheer the fact that radical parties have been excluded."

Jason Tuvey, a Capital Economics economist said the mere inclusion of the DA as part of the GNU is enough to drive investors to South Africa as the DA is an investor-friendly party. Tuvey said, "President Ramaphosa's broad policy agenda, centred on fiscal tightening and addressing infrastructure problems, is likely to remain intact."

In their immediate future forecasts, market analysts said the nervousness in the markets was dissipated by the smooth sailing processes of the swearing-in of Members of Parliament as well as the relative clarity on coalition deals. Market analyst Patrick Mathidi said the strengthening of the Rand is a sign of confidence that the markets are accepting the political outcomes and subsequent processes thereafter following the May, 29 general elections.

"We still have a lot of detail in the form of what is actually the government of national unity and the terms and conditions. The first is that we have a national speaker (Thoko Didiza). The swearing-in has gone very well and that has taken off the risk. Certainly, this is the beginning, even the agreement that has been announced of the parties that are in the agreement have given each other six weeks to come back with finer details," Mathidi said.

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Q & A With Invest Global CEO Pumela Salela

By Ajong Mbatndah L

Africa offers a young, dynamic, and rapidly growing market with vast natural resources a burgeoning middle class, and the continent is at the forefront of innovation in sectors like fintech, renewable energy, and agribusiness, says Pumela Salela CEO of Invest Global. With experience in Investment Promotion globally, including a hugely successful stint as UK Country Head of Brand South Africa, Pumela Salela says Invest Global is primed to help investors and businesses navigate the promising yet complex African landscape.

In a Q & A with PAV, Pumela Salela says Global Invest offers unparalleled insights, strategic partnerships, and comprehensive support to ensure your investment is successful and sustainable.

“By investing in Africa, you are not only tapping into high-growth markets but also contributing to the socio-economic development of the continent. We will hand-hold you in the process of entering the African market. Together, we can create lasting impact and drive progress,” says Pumela Salela in a sales pitch to investors on the services of Invest Global and the incredible opportunities spread across Africa.

Could we start with the most recent chapter of your super rich professional path-serving as CEO of Invest Global, may we get insights on the company and how the vision was conceived?

As the CEO of Invest Global, I am honoured to lead a dynamic organization dedicated to fostering investment opportunities across the globe, with a particular focus on Africa. Invest Global was conceived with the vision of bridging the gap between international investors and the untapped potential within African markets. Our mission is to provide comprehensive support to investors, from market entry strategies to on-the-ground implementation. The vision was born out of a recognition



Invest Global offers unparalleled insights, strategic partnerships, and comprehensive support to ensure your investments are successful and sustainable, says Pumela Salela.

that while Africa boasts incredible resources, innovation, and entrepreneurial spirit, it often lacks the connectivity to global capital and expertise. We aim to close that gap by creating a platform where opportunities can be identified, nurtured, and realized, ensuring mutual benefits for both investors and local communities. The vision also draws from my 20 years’ experience in Investment Promotion globally.

What is your reading of the investment landscape in your home country of South Africa and the rest of the continent at large, how do opportunities stark up in comparison to the risks?

The investment landscape in South Africa and across the continent is characterized by a unique blend of immense potential and notable challenges. In South Africa, sectors such as renewable energy,

technology, and infrastructure offer significant opportunities for investors. However, challenges such as economic disparities need to be navigated carefully. On a broader scale, Africa presents a diverse investment landscape with varying levels of risk and reward. Countries like Kenya, Nigeria, and Ghana are emerging as investment hotspots due to their growing economies and favourable business environments. The key is to conduct thorough due diligence, understand the local market dynamics, and engage with reliable partners who can provide valuable insights and support.

For Invest Global, what kind of partners, or business sectors are you interested in and for potential investors, what are some of the reasons that should make them consider the services offered by your company?

At Invest Global, we are particularly interested in partners and business sectors that align with our mission of sustainable development and economic growth. We focus on sectors such as renewable energy, technology, healthcare, agriculture, and infrastructure. These sectors not only offer substantial investment opportunities but also contribute significantly to the socio-economic development of the regions in which we operate. Potential investors should consider our services because we provide a holistic approach to investment. From market research and feasibility studies to stakeholder engagement and project management, we offer end-to-end support to ensure successful outcomes. Our extensive network, local expertise, and commitment to sustainability make us an ideal partner for investors looking to make a meaningful impact.

Prior to Invest Global, you served as UK Country Head of Brand South Africa for some eight years, can you sum up your experiences and legacy

you left behind in that role?

Serving as the UK Country Head of Brand South Africa was a profoundly enriching experience. During my tenure, I focused on enhancing the country's image, promoting investment opportunities, and fostering cultural and economic ties between South Africa and the UK. One of the key legacies I am proud of is the successful establishment of strategic partnerships with various UK-based organizations and businesses. These partnerships have led to increased trade, investment, and tourism between the two countries. Additionally, I played a significant role in various initiatives aimed at showcasing South Africa's innovation, diversity, and potential on the global stage. My efforts contributed to a more nuanced and positive perception of South Africa, highlighting its resilience, creativity, and opportunities for growth.

I also used my tenure to position the entire African Continent, highlighting the opportunities and being transparent about the challenges. I also used my term of office to rally the African Diaspora to plough back into Africa's development. I became an



As UK Country Head of Brand South Africa Pumela Salela played a significant role in various initiatives aimed at showcasing South Africa's innovation, diversity, and potential on the global stage

authentic voice for Africa.

You have been known to describe yourself as a global South African who is

passionate about Africa and its development, what are some of the challenges and stereotypes you often grapple with in marketing South Africa and Africa to the world?

Marketing South Africa and Africa to the world comes with its set of challenges and stereotypes. One of the most persistent stereotypes is the perception of Africa as a homogenous entity plagued by poverty, conflict, and instability. This narrative overlooks the diversity, progress, and potential of the continent. Another challenge is the skepticism towards African markets due to historical economic and political instability. Overcoming these stereotypes requires a concerted effort to highlight success stories, innovative solutions, and the dynamic nature of African economies. It also involves educating potential investors about the real risks and rewards, showcasing the continent's young, vibrant, and entrepreneurial population, and emphasizing the strategic importance of Africa in the global economy.

How much does your sense of fashion and style impact your mission or the kind of message you seek to convey to the world about Africa?

My sense of fashion and style plays a significant role in conveying a positive and contemporary image



By investing in Africa, you are not only tapping into high-growth markets but also contributing to the socio-economic development of the continent, says Pumela Salela.

of Africa. Fashion is a powerful form of self-expression and a means to challenge and reshape perceptions. By embracing and promoting African fashion, I aim to showcase the continent's creativity, cultural richness, and modernity. Fashion is not just about aesthetics; it is a statement of identity and pride. Through my style, I seek to highlight Africa's dynamic and evolving nature, its innovation, and its ability to blend tradition with modernity. This helps in breaking down stereotypes and presenting a more accurate, vibrant, and aspirational image of Africa to the world.

For young girls across Africa who see a model in you and will want to emulate your success, what advice do you have for them?

To young girls across Africa, I want to say that your dreams are valid, and your potential is limitless. Embrace your identity, be proud of your heritage, and never be afraid to dream big. Education is your most powerful tool, so invest in it wholeheartedly. Seek out mentors and role models who inspire you, and do not hesitate to ask for guidance and support. Resilience and perseverance are key; there will be challenges, but they are opportunities for growth and learning. Surround yourself with positive influences, believe in your abilities, and remember that your unique perspective and talents are valuable. You have the power to make a difference, not just for yourself but for your community, your continent Africa and the world as a whole.

Let me borrow from what Nelson Mandela once said:

“Education is the great engine of personal development. It is through education that the daughter of a peasant can become a doctor, that the son of a mine worker can become the head of the mine, that a child of farm workers can become the president of a great nation. It is what we make out of what we have, not what we are given, that separates one person from another.”



Pumela Salela says Invest Global is primed to help investors and businesses navigate the promising yet complex African landscape.

Looking at the future of Africa, what makes you optimistic and what are your worries?

I am incredibly optimistic about the future of Africa due to the continent's youthful population, innovative spirit, and untapped potential. The rise of technology and digitalization is transforming economies and creating new opportunities. Additionally, there is a growing focus on sustainable development and renewable energy, which bodes well for the continent's future. However, my concerns lie in the persistent issues of inadequate infrastructure.

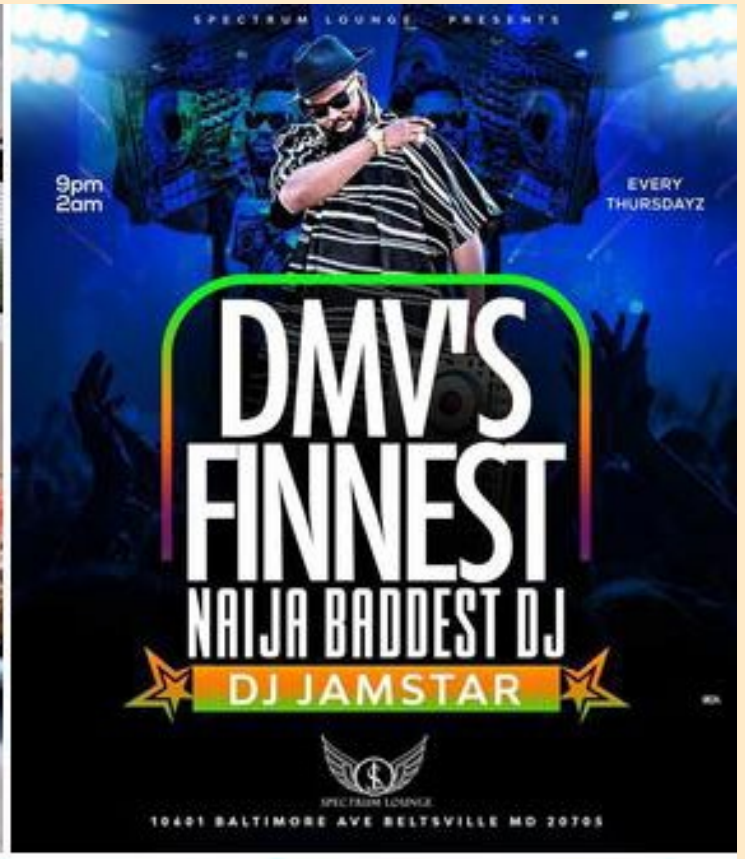
Addressing these challenges requires strong governance, transparent policies, and collaborative efforts from both the public and private sectors. Despite

these concerns, I firmly believe that Africa's strengths and opportunities far outweigh its challenges, and with the right leadership and investment, the continent is poised for a bright and prosperous future.

We end with a last pitch from you to potential investors out there, why should they take a closer look at Africa, what makes the continent a suitable investment destination, and what is Invest Global willing to do for them?

To potential investors, I urge you to take a closer look at Africa, a continent brimming with opportunities and potential. Africa offers a young, dynamic, and rapidly

growing market with vast natural resources and a burgeoning middle class. The continent is at the forefront of innovation in sectors like fintech, renewable energy, and agribusiness. Invest Global is committed to helping you navigate this promising yet complex landscape. We offer unparalleled insights, strategic partnerships, and comprehensive support to ensure your investment is successful and sustainable. By investing in Africa, you are not only tapping into high-growth markets but also contributing to the socio-economic development of the continent. We will hand-hold you in the process of entering the African market. Together, we can create lasting impact and drive progress. —



First Gas Delivery To Local Industry From The Bipaga Gas Processing Centre

First Gas Delivery To Local Industry From The Bipaga Gas Processing Centre



Perenco Cameroon is proud to announce the launch of the Perenco Group's first gas-to-industry supply project in Central Africa with delivery of gas from the Bipaga Gas Processing Centre, operated by Perenco Cameroon, to the ceramic manufacturing plant of Keda Ceramics.

The gas is being transported via the 6 km pipeline built and operated by the Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures (SNH) and is being used to power the factory's electrical generators, as well as the kilns necessary for the manufacturing of ceramic tiles by Keda.

Following the commissioning phase, the factory will consume up to 6 mmscfd and will ensure the production of approximately 20 million m² of tiles of different sizes intended for the local Cameroonian market, which equates to approximately two thirds of the domestic requirement. The start of production of this important factory, the largest in operation in Central Africa, will help to create approximately 2,000 direct and indirect jobs in the Kribi region.

The supply of gas from the Bipaga Processing Centre, framed by a

gas sales contract (GSA) signed in September 2022 between Perenco Cameroon and its partner SNH, ensures the supply of gas for 20 years. This new energy supply is key to regional industrial development and enables Keda to achieve the required technical specifications for the most economical production of ceramics, while utilising clean, low-cost energy.

Keda Ceramics is now a new industrial client for the Sanaga Sud Association and its partners Perenco Cameroon and SNH. This project represents a significant growth opportunity which secures the industrial future of the Bipaga-Sanaga site and enables Perenco Cameroon to pursue its gas strategy initiated 15 years ago.

The conclusion of this project was marked by an inauguration ceremony for the new facilities, attended by SNH and local Cameroonian authorities.

Yves Postec, MD of Perenco in Cameroon, commented:

"Perenco Cameroon's first gas-to-industry project marks an important milestone and strengthens the fruitful and historic partnership between Perenco Cameroon and SNH. The delivery of gas to Keda

Ceramics builds upon our successful track record of project delivery in collaboration with SNH in Cameroon, such as the 20 year production sharing agreement for Rio del Rey signed last year and our joint contract for Golar LNG's Hilli FLNG unit.

Our goal in delivering these projects is centred on exploiting and developing Cameroon's gas resources to support the social, industrial and economic development of Cameroon. Perenco Cameroon's efforts to achieve this goal are only made possible through our continued cooperation with our partners at SNH who share our vision for transforming Cameroon."

About Perenco in Cameroon

Perenco is an independent hydrocarbon producer that is involved in the entire life cycle of projects, from exploration to decommissioning. Perenco entered Cameroon in 1993 with the acquisition of the Moudi concession, in association with Société Nationale des Hydrocarbures. This historic partnership has been strengthened through various acquisitions and innovative oil and gas projects. From 2013, Perenco in Cameroon

embarked on the development of the Sanaga gas field, in order to supply the KPDC power plant, which provides 30% of the country's electricity. In 2018, the Company initiated a vast Liquefied Natural Gas development project with the FLNG Hilli Episeyo, the first floating liquefaction plant in the world. These gas developments have also provided Cameroon with a source of LPG, allowing the country to reduce its imports by nearly 30% while supporting its strategy of energy independence and reduction of carbon emissions.

Today, Perenco in Cameroon is the leading national oil operator with a production of 90,000 boepd (60% oil and 40% gas). Perenco in Cameroon also leads numerous sustainable development projects in areas as varied as education, health and environmental protection. Its strength lies in its multidisciplinary team of 900 employees who demonstrate their know-how and ability to conduct their activities safely on a daily basis, making Perenco in Cameroon a partner of choice for the State. Perenco in Cameroon is part of the Perenco Group, which operates in 14 partner countries and is based in the United Kingdom.

Tanzania Mining Forum Postmortem review: Ministry Steps in to Restore Order and Transparency

By Adonis Byemelwa

In Tanzania, the mining sector's contribution to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) has been increasing yearly to become the economy's leading foreign exchange earner. The opportunity for Tanzania to harness and accelerate its position as East Africa's mining hub to the world by supplying vital products to global markets from its mining and exploration activities in the support of the green transition is timely.

The Tanzania Mining & Investment Forum (TMIF) international exhibition is estimated to attract over 2,000 attendees from across Tanzania, Africa and around the world to create an unparalleled government to business (G2B) and business-to-business (B2B) opportunity for the extensive mine-to-market value chain to tap into this vital market. The last TMIF event in 2023 recorded a great success in terms of unlocking Tanzania's future mining potentials. Despite the achievement attained, the postmortem review done after the event reveals the existence of pertinent concerns from various stakeholders.

We understand from our sources that the Ministry of Minerals has taken decisive action to quell mounting discord by engaging the main organizers Ocean Business Partners (OBP) being a local partner, and DMG Events, the distinguished UK



VP Dr. Philip Mpango was the guest of honor at the Mining Conference opening and visited mineral exhibition booths and mining equipment. Photo courtesy.

orchestrator behind the prestigious Tanzania Mining & Investment Forum (TMIF).

The ministry's intervention comes amidst a series of grievances raised by various stakeholders regarding participation of local suppliers, financial transparency, operational inclusiveness and decision-making processes surrounding the 2023 TMIF event.

The OBP main officer was not ready

to make any comment on regarding the matter since the matter is at the Ministry's level and the fact that the terms of their memorandum of understanding limits their participation in such interviews.

However, all other local sources and service providers in Tanzania voiced their dissatisfaction and concerns encompassed in several critical issues stemming from their collaboration with DMG Events. Most of the local suppliers OBP highlighted significant delays in payments owed both to themselves and various service providers involved in the TMIF, raising serious concerns about the financial management and accountability of DMG Events, a key international player in event organization.

«These financial discrepancies have had a profound impact on our operations and our ability to maintain trust with our local partners,» expressed Calvin Kulaya, Director of 123 Productions Limited, a service provider engaged for content delivery during the TMIF. «Despite fulfilling our obligations promptly, we are

still awaiting payments that are long overdue.»

«These issues go beyond mere procedural disagreements. They strike at the heart of our ability to effectively engage and showcase Tanzania's mining potential,» remarked a spokesperson from the Ministry. To curb the concerns of the local players, it is expected that the Ministry will impose specific measures aimed at rectifying outstanding financial issues from the 2023 TMIF and ensuring more transparent and inclusive planning processes for future events.

«We seek a structured approach that guarantees fairness and adherence to agreed terms, which are crucial for fostering a conducive environment for international collaborations,» emphasized a local supplier who participated in the 2023 event.

The Ministry of Minerals' decision to intervene underscores the significance of the TMIF as a pivotal platform for showcasing Tanzania's mining potential and attracting crucial international investment. Their involvement is seen as pivotal



The Mining Commission has received instructions to accelerate the nationwide resolution of mining disputes. Photo courtesy.

in resolving the current impasse and setting a precedent for future collaborations within the dynamic mining sector.

«The TMIF plays a crucial role in positioning Tanzania as a competitive player in the global mining landscape. We must address these issues promptly to maintain investor confidence and uphold our reputation,» commented a senior official of the Ministry of Minerals.

The implications of this dispute extend beyond immediate financial concerns to broader questions of transparency, fairness, and the sustainability of international partnerships in Tanzania's economic landscape.

The successful resolution of these issues will not only restore confidence in the TMIF but also serve as a benchmark for improving industry practices and fostering more equitable relationships between local stakeholders and international organisers.

While efforts by this reporter to reach DMG via phone and email for a response or their side of the story have not been successful, the dispute serves as a stark reminder of the importance of maintaining harmonious relations with local partners and upholding rigorous financial management standards. It is critical that DMG event attain this, considering similar draconian experiences in other African countries including but not limited to Mozambique and Nigeria.

As the Ministry of Minerals assumes a central role in reassessing and addressing major concerns raised pertaining to 2023 TMIF event, stakeholders remain cautiously optimistic about the prospects of a constructive resolution that safeguards the integrity of future TMIF events.

«The resolution of this dispute will set a precedent for how international collaborations are managed in Tanzania's mining sector. It is a critical moment for demonstrating our commitment to fairness and accountability,» remarked a representative from a local industry association.

The outcome will likely have far-reaching implications for the planning



GODMWANGA JEMS LIMITED's Kinywe Mining and Processing Project in Kwamsisi, Handeni District, Tanga Region ranks among the world's top ten in mining and processing these minerals. Photo courtesy

and execution of the upcoming 2024 TMIF, emphasizing the critical need for enhanced cooperation, transparency, and adherence to agreed-upon terms in international collaborations.

«The success of the TMIF depends on our ability to resolve these issues swiftly and transparently. It is essential for maintaining our competitive edge and attracting investment,» noted a Tanzanian economist specializing in mining sector investments.

Ultimately, the resolution of concerns or disputes from the past event will lay a solid groundwork for a more resilient and mutually beneficial relationship between Tanzania and the global business community.

«The way we handle these challenges will shape perceptions of Tanzania's commitment to ethical business practices and investor confidence,» highlighted a governance expert specializing in East African economies.

For local stakeholders and entities, the stakes are particularly high. Their insistence on accountability from international partners like DMG Events reflects a broader push for equitable treatment and sustainable economic growth.

«The Ministry's intervention is a testament to the government's proactive stance in safeguarding local interests and ensuring that major concerns are resolved swiftly and justly,» stated a representative from a Tanzanian business council.

In the coming weeks, all eyes will be on how these deliberations unfold. The successful resolution of financial discrepancies and

operational grievances will pave the way for a renewed sense of trust and collaboration between local and international stakeholders in organizing events regardless of the sector in Tanzania.

A Policy advisor from a leading Tanzania think tank made a remark that «It is imperative that we establish clear guidelines and mechanisms to bring a balance which will avoid possible concerns in the future. This will be essential for maintaining stability and fostering growth in our mining sector. It sets the stage for more robust and equitable partnerships that benefit both our country and our international counterparts,»

As the mining sector continues to evolve, the lessons learned from this episode will resonate beyond the TMIF, influencing future investment decisions and shaping industry norms. Tanzania's ability to navigate and resolve such challenges transparently will be crucial in maintaining its competitive edge and attracting sustained investment in the years ahead.

In a bold move towards enhancing fairness and prosperity in Tanzania's mining sector, Minister of Minerals Hon. Anthony Mavunde announced sweeping new regulations during his visit to Mandu Village in Shinyanga Region.

Set to commence this July, these regulations aim to resolve conflicts between license holders and miners, aligning with President Dr. Samia Suluhu Hassan's directive to support small-scale miners. The Finance

Act, 2024 which is now operational has incorporated and captured such pertinent amendments which are expected to result to a positive change in a sector.

«We are ushering in a new era of fairness and accountability,» declared Hon. Mavunde. «These regulations will safeguard rights, ensure fair agreements, and promote advanced technology among small-scale miners.»

Under the new directives, group licenses will require approval from the Mining Commission before investor involvement, addressing concerns of unauthorized sales.

Also, measures against mineral smuggling in Kahama and reviews of burdensome charges on miners demonstrate Tanzania's commitment to a transparent and supportive mining environment.

MP Hon. Idd Kassim hailed the government's proactive stance, while Engineer Joseph Kumburu and Regional Commissioner Hon. Anamringi Macha affirmed their commitment to bolstering the region's mining performance and local participation in the sector.

Tanzania charts this ambitious course; these reforms promise not only to elevate industry standards but also to foster sustainable development and prosperity for all stakeholders. The initiative underscores Tanzania's role as a leader in responsible mining practices and sets a benchmark for equitable resource management across the continent.



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Malawi at 60: A Sober Reflection on Challenges and Opportunities

By James Woods*

As Malawi commemorates 60 years of independence, the nation finds itself at a reflective crossroads, examining the complex tapestry woven since its liberation from British colonial rule on July 6, 1964. This milestone invites a critical assessment of what independence has truly meant for Malawi, from the autocratic beginnings under Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda to the challenges and promises of the democratic era.

The Autocratic Foundations and Transition to Democracy

When Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda led Malawi to independence, he was hailed as a liberator. Yet, his 30-year rule quickly turned autocratic, characterised by political repression, censorship, and human rights abuses. Political opposition was not tolerated, with many opponents facing imprisonment, exile, or worse. The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was the sole political entity, and the nation functioned effectively as a one-party state. While Banda's government did lay down some infrastructure and educational foundations, the oppressive political environment stifled free expression and bred fear among the populace.

The early 1990s brought a wave of democratisation across Africa, and Malawi was swept up in this tide. Internal pressures and international advocacy led to a 1993 referendum in which Malawians overwhelmingly voted to adopt a multi-party political system. The subsequent 1994 elections ended Banda's rule, bringing Bakili Muluzi of the United Democratic Front (UDF) to power. This transition was a significant shift, marking the beginning of Malawi's democratic era. However, the path to a stable democracy has been fraught with obstacles, including pervasive corruption and political instability.

Governance Challenges: Corruption and Economic



Dependency

Despite the hopeful beginnings of democracy, Malawi has continued to struggle with significant governance issues. Corruption remains a formidable barrier to development. The 2013 «Cashgate» scandal under Joyce Banda leadership in which billions of Kwacha were embezzled from government funds, is one of the most notable instances of corruption. This scandal not only undermined public trust but also highlighted the systemic nature of corruption within Malawian governance. It led to international donors freezing aid, which further strained the country's fragile economy.

Economically, Malawi remains heavily reliant on agriculture, with tobacco being the primary export. This reliance makes the economy vulnerable to fluctuations in global markets and adverse weather conditions. Over 80% of the population engages in subsistence farming, and the sector accounts for nearly a third of the GDP. Efforts to diversify the economy have been slow and hampered by poor leadership, inadequate infrastructure, limited industrialisation, and insufficient investment in other sectors. The nation's dependency on foreign

aid also underscores its economic fragility, with aid constituting a significant portion of the national budget.

Human Rights and Social Development

The promise of improved human rights post-1994 has been only partially fulfilled. While the legal framework for human rights has improved, implementation remains inconsistent. Political repression, police brutality, and limitations on freedom of speech have surfaced under various administrations. The mysterious death of Vice President Saulos Chilima on 10th June 2024, just before the 60th independence celebrations has intensified concerns about political stability and transparency in the government. Investigations are on-going on the causation to the fatal day.

In terms of social development, Malawi has made strides in healthcare and education, yet the progress is uneven. The introduction of free primary education in 1994 was a significant step, increasing literacy rates and school enrolment. However, the quality of education remains a concern, with overcrowded classrooms, inadequate teaching

materials, and underqualified teachers. In healthcare, initiatives to combat HIV/AIDS, malaria, and other diseases have seen success, but the system remains underfunded and overstretched, especially in rural areas.

Personal Reflections: A Nation's Heartbeat

As someone who has lived through these transitions, I recall as very young and curious boy the cautious optimism that accompanied the 1994 elections. There was a palpable sense of hope, a belief that democracy would bring about a new era of accountability and prosperity. Yet, the years since have shown that the path to genuine democratic governance is fraught with complexities.

I remember the «Cashgate» scandal vividly—it felt like a betrayal, a stark reminder that the struggle against corruption is far from over. Conversations with friends and family often turn to the persistent challenges we face: the struggle to make ends meet, the frustration with public services, and the hope that our children will see a better future.

Malawi's beauty lies in its people—their ubuntu, resilience, warmth, and unyielding spirit. Despite the

challenges, there is a profound sense of community and solidarity. I have seen grassroots movements work tirelessly to improve local schools and healthcare facilities, embodying the true spirit of independence.

Economic Realities: Dependency vs. Development

Malawi's economy, heavily reliant on agriculture—particularly tobacco—faces significant vulnerabilities. Market dependency and climate change pose continual risks to economic stability. Despite these challenges, strides have been made in healthcare and education, although the road to comprehensive social services remains fraught with difficulties.

As Malawi reflects on its 60-year journey, the future lies in fortifying its democratic institutions, combating corruption robustly, and ensuring economic diversification. Equally, the promotion of human rights and the expansion of social services must be prioritised to foster a just society. The mysterious and troubling circumstances surrounding the recent death of Vice President Saulos Chilima cast a long shadow over the political landscape, reminding us of the continuous need for transparency and accountability in governance.

Reclaiming the Promise of Independence

As Malawi celebrates six decades of independence, the nation stands at a critical juncture. The celebrations should not merely mark the passage of time but should serve as a profound reflection on the achievements and shortcomings of the past. Malawi's journey from colonial rule to a fragile democracy is a testament to the resilience and aspirations of its people. However, the promise of independence—a promise of genuine freedom, prosperity, and justice—remains elusive for many Malawians.

Moving forward, the nation must recommit to the principles



James Woods is a former diplomat with a commendable record of service for Malawi in various European nations and an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow.

of good governance, transparency, and inclusivity. Strengthening democratic institutions is crucial, as is the fight against corruption, which continues to erode public trust and hinder development. Economic diversification is imperative to reduce dependency on agriculture and foreign aid, fostering a self-sustaining economy that can withstand global shocks and climate change impacts.

Social services, particularly in education and healthcare, require significant investment and reform to ensure equitable access and quality. Addressing these challenges will not be easy, but it is necessary for Malawi to fulfil the true promise of independence. The path ahead is daunting, but with collective will and visionary leadership, Malawi

can transform its challenges into opportunities for a brighter, more inclusive future.

Malawi's 60th independence anniversary is not just a celebration of past achievements but a call to action for the future. The nation's leaders and citizens alike must seize this moment to reflect deeply, act decisively, and chart a course towards a more just, prosperous, and democratic Malawi. This is the time to honour the sacrifices of those who fought for independence by ensuring that all Malawians can enjoy the fruits of freedom and self-determination. The journey ahead is long, but with team-work and determination, Malawi can aspire to be a nation where the ideals of independence are truly realised in the lives of its people.

Let us put party politics aside, support President Lazarus Chakwera and Vice President Michael Usi in steering the nation in the right direction.

*James Woods is a former diplomat with a commendable record of service for Malawi in various European nations, including Belgium, Andorra, France, the Principality of Monaco, the Netherlands, Italy, Luxembourg, and the European Union. Complementing his practical experience, James is an MBA candidate at the University of Oxford, associated with Kellogg College, where he is deepening his knowledge in business leadership and management. He is also an Archbishop Desmond Tutu Fellow.

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Investigative Journalist Erick Kabendera Takes on Vodacom Tanzania in Landmark Privacy Battle

By Adonis Byemelwa

Investigative journalist Erick Kabendera has filed a lawsuit against Vodacom Tanzania, seeking over 28 billion Tanzanian shillings (approximately USD 12.1 million) in damages. The case, docket number 12799/2024, was mentioned in court today before Senior Judge Salma Maghimbi.

Kabendera, a well-known figure in Tanzanian journalism, gained international attention after his controversial detention in 2019. He was held under circumstances widely criticized as politically motivated, sparking concerns about press freedom and human rights in the country. His release on August 19, 2019, marked a significant moment in his ongoing battle for justice.

In his lawsuit, Kabendera accuses Vodacom Tanzania of serious breaches of privacy and unlawful conduct. According to court documents, he alleges that the telecommunications giant illegally intercepted and disclosed his private communications and personal data. These actions, Kabendera argues, not only violated his fundamental rights but also had a profound impact on his professional reputation and personal life.

Speaking to reporters outside the courthouse, Kabendera expressed his determination to hold Vodacom accountable for what he described as egregious violations. «This is not just about monetary compensation,» he emphasized. «It's about defending the principles of press freedom and individual privacy, which are crucial for a democratic society.»

The lawsuit has drawn widespread attention from the media and human rights advocates, who view it as a critical test case for privacy rights and corporate accountability in Tanzania. Supporters of Kabendera, including fellow journalists and civil society organizations, have rallied behind him, citing the broader implications of the case for press freedom in the region.



Analytical journalist Erick Kabendera was released from custody on August 19, 2019. Photo courtesy.

Vodacom Tanzania, one of the largest telecommunications providers in the country, has not publicly commented on the specifics of the lawsuit. Legal experts anticipate a lengthy legal battle given the complexity of privacy laws and the substantial damages sought by Kabendera.

The courtroom atmosphere was tense as Kabendera's legal team presented their arguments before Judge Maghimbi. They highlighted the extensive evidence of privacy breaches and the profound impact on Kabendera's professional and personal life. The defense countered with arguments focusing on legal technicalities and the absence of clear evidence linking Vodacom to the alleged privacy violations.

Outside the courthouse, supporters of Kabendera held placards calling for justice and accountability. Many expressed concerns about the growing influence of corporate entities on individual privacy rights and the need for stronger regulatory oversight in the telecommunications sector.

Human rights lawyer Fatma Hassan, a member of Kabendera's

legal team, emphasized the broader significance of the case. «This lawsuit raises important questions about the responsibilities of corporations in safeguarding individual privacy rights,» she stated. «The outcome will set a precedent for future cases involving privacy violations and corporate accountability in Tanzania.»

The legal battle is expected to unfold over the coming months, with both parties preparing to present additional evidence and expert testimony. Judge Maghimbi has scheduled further hearings to review the arguments and determine the next steps in the proceedings.

Meanwhile, Kabendera remains steadfast in his pursuit of justice, buoyed by the support of his colleagues and supporters. His case has become a focal point for discussions on press freedom, privacy rights, and legal accountability in Tanzania, underscoring the delicate balance between journalistic integrity and corporate interests in the digital age.

As the courtroom drama continues to unfold, observers both within

Tanzania and abroad will closely monitor the proceedings, recognizing the case's potential to shape future legal standards and protections for journalists and individuals alike.

Erick Kabendera, revered for his fearless investigative journalism, has long been a voice for accountability and transparency in Tanzania. His career spans decades of uncovering corruption and injustice, often at great personal risk. His unwavering commitment to truth has earned him both admiration and controversy, making him a symbol of resilience in the face of adversity.

Born and raised in Tanzania, Kabendera's passion for journalism was ignited during his formative years. He pursued stories that exposed societal ills and challenged the status quo, earning him accolades and criticism in equal measure.

His investigative reports have delved into sensitive topics ranging from political corruption to human rights abuses, earning him a reputation as a tenacious advocate for social change.

Throughout his career, Kabendera has faced numerous challenges,

including threats, harassment, and even imprisonment. Yet, he has remained steadfast in his dedication to ethical journalism, refusing to be silenced by intimidation or censorship. His resilience in the face of adversity has inspired a new generation of journalists and activists across Africa and beyond.

Beyond his professional achievements, Kabendera is known for his humility and integrity. Colleagues describe him as a mentor and role model, always willing to

share his knowledge and experience with younger journalists. His dedication to journalistic ethics and the pursuit of truth has set a standard for integrity in African journalism.

As Kabendera navigates the complexities of his legal battle with Vodacom Tanzania, his case has become a rallying cry for press freedom and individual rights.

Supporters see him as a champion for justice, fighting not only for his rights but for the broader principles of accountability and transparency.

His courage in confronting powerful interests has resonated with people around the world, drawing attention to the challenges faced by journalists in the pursuit of truth.

In the corridors of justice and beyond, Kabendera's fight against Vodacom symbolizes a larger struggle for privacy rights and corporate accountability in the digital age. His determination to seek justice serves as a reminder of the importance of safeguarding fundamental freedoms in an increasingly interconnected

world. As the legal battle unfolds, Kabendera's case stands poised to leave a lasting impact on the future of journalism and human rights protections in Tanzania and beyond.

Observers and supporters alike will continue to watch closely as Erick Kabendera's legal saga unfolds, hopeful that his pursuit of justice will not only bring him redress but also pave the way for a more just and transparent society.

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Mauritius: South Africa's Rising Star for Offshore Property Investment

By Gareth Land *

More and more South Africans are realising the growing value of offshore property investment. Whether it's purchasing their forever-home as they emigrate, finding a future residential villa, securing a safe investment opportunity, or simply to use as part of their newest business venture, property investment is an important way to build an offshore wealth portfolio – and to purchase an asset that can last for generations.

In 2023, researchers at Stats SA released their Migration Report Profile for South Africa, showing that many of their countrymen are making their way across the world to seek new opportunities. The data shows that around 413 000 South Africans have emigrated since the dawn of the millennium, with many opting to move to the United Kingdom (the top destination), followed by Australia, the United States, New Zealand, and Canada.

However, when it comes to offshore property – which often goes hand-in-hand with emigration – reports of a new investment destination have been emerging over the past few years, especially from within the real estate sector. Many property companies and analysts, including 2Futures, had already noticed that an increasing number of South Africans are purchasing properties (residential and commercial) across Mauritius.

The Bank of Mauritius' most recent investment Gross Direct Investment (GDI) report revealed that South Africans were second only to France in terms of overall GDI into the country. Similarly, it was reported South Africa was the second largest source of real estate of foreign direct investment in 2023, accounting for MUR 3.84 billion in funds.

So why Mauritius? We believe our buyer profiles provide us with some of the answers.

The South Africans Investing in Mauritius

Naturally, we have many types of



clients looking for different property types, and they have varying reasons for investing in Mauritius. However, one common trend has been that many of them are already advanced in their careers, usually above the age of 40, and have the capability to perform hybrid-work, whether they are self-employed or working for a larger entity.

The personal reasons for moving to Mauritius are obvious: the social and political stability, island environment, and overall high standard of living. However, this is something offered by numerous locations around the world. While buying international property in other popular investment destinations like Spain, Cyprus, or Malta offers similar security, Mauritius is a short plane ride away from South Africa, meaning these new residents can easily return to their home country for work or to visit family and friends.

However, for many of our entrepreneurial-minded clients, the investment in Mauritius' real estate sector is often due to the financial benefits. With no council tax, property tax, inheritance tax, or capital gains tax - and an estimated 5 - 7% return on rental investments - both property ownership and the high-return rental market remain highly attractive.

Securing residency permits has also become even simpler in recent

years. According to the Economic Development Board of Mauritius (EDB): "A non-citizen investing in a luxurious residential property in a project under the regulated schemes, for a price of not less than USD 375,000 is eligible to get a residence permit for self and dependents. The residence permit exempts the main applicant from a work permit/ occupation permit to work or engage in gainful activities in Mauritius."

The Future Residents and Entrepreneurs of Mauritius

Meanwhile, it has widely been reported that Mauritius is aiming to become a regional tech, fintech, and healthcare hub. In January this year, the World Bank's Global Innovation Index revealed Mauritius as Africa's most innovative country – all while having the most favourable business climate on the continent. From an economic perspective, the country has already forged a strong reputation as an International Financial Centre, likely due to its role in facilitating cross-border investments in emerging economies. It is likely this push to diversify Mauritius' multi-sectoral capabilities that is attracting these higher income investors – including those opting to purchase luxury accommodation and secure their

residency.

However, our own experience in the local property market has shown that offshore real estate investment is not limited to the highest income brackets. We have seen an increasing demand for studio, 1-bedroom apartments over the last two years. Investors focusing on rental returns prefer smaller units and purchase multiples if their budget allows. For example, the Black River and Grand Baie regions are attracting both commercial and residential investors at every phase of development. This includes properties connected directly to nearby hotels, which then receive their respective hotel services and access to their facilities.

Regardless of the type of property being purchased, it's clear as to why many investors – including the growing number from South Africa – are looking to Mauritius for growth. It's a location intrinsically attached to Africa, the headquarters of the some of the region's fastest growing business sectors, and of course, filled with natural wonders.

*Opinion-Editorial by Gareth Land of 2Futures, the leading property developer in Mauritius – in partnership with the Economic Development Board of Mauritius.

AFRICA'S BUSINESS HEROES

Who We Are

Africa's Business Heroes (ABH) is the Jack Ma Foundation's flagship philanthropic program in Africa to support entrepreneurs. Launched in 2019, ABH aims to enable 100 African business Heroes to inspire millions more through our Competition, Show and Community.

What We Do

The Competition

- Every year, we call on entrepreneurs from every sector and across Africa to apply to Africa's largest and most-inclusive pitch competition.
- We award \$1.5 million in grant funding every year to ten finalists who also gain access to mentorship, training and the ABH community.

The Community

- We provide training, mentorship, networking and investment opportunities
- We support our finalists collaborate, engage in peer-to-peer learning and provide mutual support through offline gatherings, the ABH Summit and our local lead initiative

The Show

- We produce the **annual Africa's Business Heroes TV show**. The ABH show is an entertaining and educational video series detailing the inspiring background stories of the ABH finalists and their journey to the grand finale.
- The show is broadcasted on CNBC Africa, StarTimes, DSTV, numerous country TV stations and online. The ABH Documentary has **won over 9 international awards**.

Our Values



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Entrepreneurs of all ages and genders are encouraged to apply



SECTOR-AGNOSTIC

Entrepreneurs from all industries are eligible to apply



GRASSROOTS-ORIENTED

We are looking for entrepreneurs from all levels of society

Key Figures

70K



Applicants Since 2019

54



Representing Every Country

~30%



Female Participation

~15%



Francophone Participation

300mil



PR Reach

50mil



Google Search Results

~2,000



Impacted By ABH Training

\$80mil



Debt And Equity Raised

100K



Community Members

ICT University: Spearheading Technological Advancement in Cameroon

By Boris Esono Nwenfor

In the heart of Cameroon's bustling political capital lies a beacon of technological innovation and academic excellence – ICT University. Established with a vision to make ICT University the premier destination for research, innovation and training of scholars relevant to the context of developing economies, ICT University has emerged as a pivotal institution shaping Cameroon's technological landscape.

Founded by Professor Victor Mbarika to train scholars from developing economies to participate as knowledge producers and not just knowledge consumers in today's information age, ICT University has carved a niche by offering specialized programs in ICT disciplines. From computer science to cybersecurity, telecommunications to telemedicine and iconography, the university equips students with the skills and knowledge needed to thrive in the rapidly evolving digital age.

"We pride ourselves on being an American-tailored curriculum. It means that the philosophy of operation is that of the American system, the dream. We have no restrictions on what you can become. Our doors are open to students who aspire to become what they want to be," said Professor Alain Isoh, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academics and Administration at the ICT University.

In an interview with Professor Alain Isoh, he sheds light on what ICT University is all about and gives an insight into the mega-conference that the institution is expected to run in July called the ICT for Africa Conference.

Can you shed light on the ICT University and the programs offered?

Prof Alain Isoh: The ICT University principally operates two main faculties; the faculty of ICT itself, which is the mother faculty, and the faculty of Business Management and Sustainability.



Professor Alain Isoh, Deputy Vice Chancellor of Academics and Administration at the ICT University.

In the faculty of ICT, we have five different programs, ranging from software engineering, computer science, information technology, cyber security, and of course, the master's program will have cyber security, software engineering, and information security. These are the core ICT programs that we offer at both the bachelor's and the master's levels. In the business faculty, we have, as well, bachelor's programs and master's programs.

We currently run programs ranging from business management, banking and finance, accounting and development planning. We are launching a master's in finance and accounting this semester coming in the fall. So, these are the two different programs.

Overall, we have three levels of awards. We have the bachelor's level awards, the master's, and the PhD level awards for all our academic programs. Now, most importantly, we have the School of Applied ICT,

which is innovative for us because, in Cameroon, most schools are treated towards business or ICT, but we look at the element of applied ICT, which becomes part of the transformation of technology, in education, and as well, in public health.

For students who await the results of their various examinations, what are the criteria to become part of the ICT University family?

Prof Alain Isoh: We pride ourselves on being an American-tailored curriculum. It means that the philosophy of operation is that of the American system, the dream. We have no restrictions on what you can become. Our doors are open to students who have aspirations to become what they want to be. We don't operate in a boundary-based approach where you must have this and that.

There are requirements, of course. You must be able to have passed your

A-levels or the French equivalents. And now, the faculty levels, have what we call minimum entry requirements, like English language and some proficiency in the use of ICT, because in our university, you cannot avoid the use of ICT. All supply chains involving academics, have to use ICT.

So therefore, the faculty provides a benchmark, which is not a requirement of entry, but it is a part of our assessment. It will help us to know whether we should provide you with prerequisite entry courses that will help you boost your chances of performance. But entry requirements are very basic, A-levels, pass; the same with French equivalents and other commercial examinations.

In previous graduations of the institution, government officials are always spotted. What is the relationship between ICT University and the government?

Prof Alain Isoh: If there is any

word more than excellent, I will use the word more than excellent. We are very, very happy and proud of the government. We are very proud and thankful to the President, Head of State, President Paul Biya. We are very thankful to the Prime Minister.

We are very thankful to the Minister of State, Minister of Higher Education, the Chancellor of Academic Order, Professor Jacques Fame Ndongo. We are very thankful for this government because they have given us so much support. The last but one graduation, we received the former Head of State of the Federal Republic of Nigeria, President Obasanjo.

He was right there on this campus to endorse this building and he was well-received under strict presidential protocol. We thank the government for that. Equally, we have had a lot of ministers coming here, the Minister of Post and Telecommunications, the Prime Minister himself, the Minister of Communication, the Minister of Mines and Industry, the Minister of Professional Training, and all of these people have been coming here.

They believe in the vision. They believe that what we are doing, we are helping the government to solve the problems. And for us, it's a pride that we are sharing in the vision of the Head of State and in one way, also supporting our community to emerge by 2035.

With the various programs offered, what relevance do you think they have in the economic context of Cameroon?

Prof Alain Isoh: There is something called digital transformation. It is shaping the whole way of things. We are looking at the time of emerging from the 4G to the 5G generations of technology. And if you don't have this competence of technological transformation, you have no relevance in any part of our society.

We stand at the forefront of this digital transformation. It is quite radical in our approach because we want to be aggressive in how we take this technology. And our curriculum is designed in a way that we embrace all these innovations. As I mentioned,



ICT University founder Professor Victor Mbarika flanked by top government officials in Cameroon

we are called ICT University. It means that every student who passes through this school must have some key skills in ICT.

Number one, you must know how to use ICT and technology itself. Number two, all our students are required to do entrepreneurship. I am so happy and grateful to be part of this system. We have trained a lot of students who have to own their businesses. I am so proud of the achievement, nationally and internationally, because we provide them the kind of training to create jobs. We don't believe that the government can employ everybody.

We believe that our students should create jobs. For example, in our ICT programs, we have a lot of software engineers who have developed a lot of applications. Like, for example, we have the TORCAM. The TORCAM app was developed by our student, Brian. And this TORCAM was sponsored by the government when Cameroon hosted the Africa Cup of Nations, AFCON.

We have another key project, which is called the Intelliberal Project, which has won a lot of awards in Cameroon, right up to Asia, where our students were able to develop a breast cancer detection application, which is winning a lot of trophies. We also have another great project that was done by our students. It won an award

in France. They were able to develop an application that could reduce air pollution caused by planes. That was a great achievement.

Our most recent award was developed by our student ambassador who was also appointed by Amazon as their ambassador in Cameroon, because he was able to develop some applications. He won a UNESCO prize for his application developed to help visually impaired students learn, so he built an AI system that they are using.

So we think that our current curriculum so far is meeting, or has met, I would say, the objective of the Ministry of Higher Education in Cameroon, which is geared not only towards academic development but towards professionalism.

In 2023, ICT University had its first master's defence in the area of inclusive education. How is that unfolding and any success story?

Prof Alain Isoh: We are inclusive, very inclusive in our academic system. As you know already, we are prime, in the use of a digital learning system in Cameroon, where you can physically have your lectures in any part of the world at your comfort in real-time. I must emphasize, that real-time means that you are in class

at a time, and you can ask questions at a time with your professors interact and build connectivity.

Now, we are proud to have graduated the first blind students. I will call him Dr Coco Bertin, who happens to be the president of the Cameroon National Blind. Currently, he is doing his PhD, as I speak, and he is my student as well. He is so hardworking and in all my lectures, he is always there. He asks questions, and you can never tell that he is disabled. All my exams, he takes all my exams.

Our learning system also can support students with disabilities, the AI. So, for example, the application that was developed by our ambassador, once you open your computer, the application tells you how to navigate on your keyboard. The application was able to read the PowerPoint slides, so you don't have the stress of reading.

You can have your lectures in audio format while sleeping and this would help to assist visually impaired students, with the stress of reading because there is an AI system that helps them in doing so. So I think that we are taking a step forward, and we are encouraging the population, the entire community of Africans, that disability is not a limitation for academic success, because Mr Coco

Bertin, who was given an honorary doctorate in the United States, could only achieve this after academic success from the ICT University, and the door is still open for more to come.

How important is the training of teachers to handle persons with special needs? And is it a priority for ICT University?

Prof Alain Isoh: We can never say that we are at the top, because as a developing country, we are faced with the reality. We have got experts from the U.S., and we have got experts from the Center of the Blind, because we have a partnership with them, to help our staff. Myself, I go to training as well.

I have a student in my class who is disabled, so I'm being trained as well by this expert on how to handle them. Their exams are not the same as other people's exams, because of their technical disability, their health disability. Gradually, we are improving our services to such a community.

Can we get an insight on the upcoming conference in July called the ICT for Africa conference?

Prof Alain Isoh: I think this is the third of such mega events that ICT University is organizing under the theme Digital Transformations, Current Trends and Future Insights. This is going to be a major turnaround in the vision to promote technology. Not just technology, but the transformation of technology.

As I earlier mentioned, ICT University is always taking the limelight to innovate in the area of technology. This conference, which will be in July, will be a top one because we will be honoured to have two former heads of state. We have the former president of Nigeria, Professor Obasanjo, and of course the former president of Mauritius.

And we have a host of other top personalities that will be expected to grace the event. So basically, I think that we as a university system, are taking the step to propagate the good news that technology is changing our



The ICT University in March last year was awarded Cameroon's Best Entrepreneurial IT University for 2022

world. In agriculture, the way we live. For example, last semester we received the Minister of Housing and Urban Development.

We talked about smart cities. We talked about having a good traffic control system. All those things can be done here at ICT University. We talk about technology in agriculture. We have launched our drone program. We have launched our satellite program, where we can monitor temperatures in different regions and then advise farmers on how to improve productivity.

Technology is taking over the medical domain. Now we have what we call telemedicine. Like what we do in ICT University is called applied ICT in public health. In education, we have a lot of transformation and digital learning systems. So basically, this conference is more about not only shaping but bringing a new dynamism to the way we would use technology in Africa and Cameroon.

In this fast digital world, what are the current trends in Cameroon and what are the prospects?

Prof Alain Isoh: The Head of State, His Excellency President Paul Biya, has always empowered the youth to take advantage of technology. That is why through the Ministry of Higher Education, he was able to share computers with young Cameroonians,

to give them that tool to work. We are moving towards what we call the five-generation technology systems; artificial intelligence, machine learning, and robotics.

But in our context in Africa and Cameroon, our focus is how we can harness technology to improve agriculture, which is our mainstay, crop production. How can we harness technology in energy supply? Today we have the case of renewable energy. I can tell you that we have a Department here of Renewable Energy. All our graduates, as they leave, have their own business or have a job. They can build, install and manage solar panel systems, and renewable energy systems.

So the future of Cameroon's technology is more focused on the area of innovation in agriculture, healthcare, in urban development. And all this can be achieved through the power of artificial intelligence, machine learning and software engineering.

What does Cameroon need to do to reap the benefits of technological advancement and what is the role of the ICT University in this domain?

Prof Alain Isoh: As I earlier mentioned, first of all, it begins from the policy paper, through the policy instrument of the country, the Parliament. The Parliament should

be able to enforce bills that will promote and encourage professional education. The government should think of the possibility of creating digital hubs. I'm so happy about it. It exists already.

There are so many digital hubs that have been created in all the ten regions of Cameroon by the government to encourage youth to go and train, to learn and have the skills, which is so good already. All these digital centres created in Cameroon are good.

The other key point that I want to talk about is that there should be a strong commitment to cooperation between the professional world and the training centres, where the youth should be able to have the possibility to experience, to have more experience and hands-on to build capacity for which they can develop and build systems.

The last point I want to make is that we cannot keep the parents and the community out of this government agenda. It's a government agenda, but we have to localize it. It means that parents should be able to encourage their children to believe in technology because it has come to stay and the government can achieve all this by itself. That is why the ICT University is part of the stakeholder to achieve the vision of the head of state that we should be well grounded in technology and enhance our development.

Any final words as we wrap up this interview?

Prof Alain Isoh: On behalf of our Board of Trustees, President Victor Mbarika and the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Emmanuel Pondi, we always remain grateful to the government of President Paul Biya. We always remain grateful to the Minister of Higher Education for the opportunity given us to do what we are doing and we remain thankful to all our parents who have fit in us to send us to study here and that we believe in two principles, academics and moral excellence. When a child is well-developed morally, the child will succeed in education and the country will grow.

From London With Optimism For AEW 24

Global energy companies and financial entities including Africa Oil Corp, Standard Bank and the Liberia Petroleum Regulatory Authority (LPRA) addressed Africa's premier energy sector opportunities at the recent Invest in African Energy reception in London organized by the African Energy Chamber. The reception affirmed rising interest in Africa's energy resources, uniting interested investors from the UK, US, Europe and global markets to

access and engage with Africa's energy prospects, as well as unpacking latest project developments across the continent. PAV shares photos from another resounding AEC charm offensive in prelude to the 2024 African Energy Week (AEW): Invest in African Energy conference – Africa's premier event for the energy sector, taking place from November 4-8 in Cape Town, South Africa.







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Africa's ICT Ministers Adopt Continental Artificial Intelligence Strategy

By Jean-Pierre Afadhali



African ICT and Communications Ministers unanimously endorsed landmark Continental Artificial Intelligence (AI) Strategy and African Digital Compact to accelerate Africa's digital transformation by unlocking the potential of the new digital technologies.

More than 130 African ministers and experts have virtually convened from June 11 to 13, 2024 for the 2nd Extraordinary session of the Specialized Technical Committee on Communication and ICT to ignite digital transformation across the continent amidst rapid evolutions in the sector fuelled by artificial intelligence (AI) technology and applications, said African Union Commission in a press release.

The Continental AI Strategy provides guidance to African countries to harness artificial intelligence to meet Africa's development aspirations and the well-being of its people, while promoting ethical

use, minimising potential risks, and leveraging opportunities.

Identifying key priorities and actions to ensure that Africa fully benefits from the huge opportunities AI offers, the strategy calls for Africa-owned, people-centered, development-oriented, and inclusive approach to accelerate African countries' AI capabilities in infrastructure, talent, datasets, innovation, and partnerships while also ensuring adequate safeguards and protection from threats.

At the opening of the ministerial session, African Union Commissioner for Infrastructure and Energy Dr. Amani Abou-Zeid stated that Africa is resolved to harness new technologies for the well-being of Africans and to develop a Continent-wide approach and a harmonised journey for this revolutionary technology to tackle Africa's complex and most pressing challenges while minimizing the risks. «For us Africans, Artificial Intelligence presents tremendous

opportunities. It is a driving force for positive transformational positive change as well as economic growth and social progress,» said Dr. Abou-Zeid.

Commissioner Abou-Zeid commended the endorsement of the strategy as a timely and strategic move while emphasizing "Adapting AI to African realities is critical. AI systems should be able to reflect our diversity, languages, culture, history, and geographical contexts. As we aim to create an inclusive AI ecosystem and a competitive African AI market that is adapted to our realities and meets our ambitions, we believe examining and approving this strategy will provide a common vision and path to accelerate responsible AI innovation and adoption in Africa».

The Strategy sets the roadmap for African countries to harness the potential of AI to achieve developmental aspirations to education and skills, health, agriculture, infrastructure, peace

and security and good governance by developing human capital, strengthening research and innovation ecosystems, and building an AI-ready institutional and regulatory environment to ensure AI works for African people. By investing in African youth, innovators, computer scientists, data experts, and AI researchers, the framework paves the way for Africa's success in the global AI arena.

The Minister of Information, Communications, Science Technology, and Innovation of the Kingdom of Lesotho, and Chair of the Bureau of the technical committee H.E. Ms. Nthati Moorsi emphasised the huge opportunities that stem from the adoption of AI-enabled systems to promote homegrown solutions to stimulate economic growth and sustainable development towards achieving the priorities outlined in the AU Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The ministerial committee

also endorsed the African Digital Compact, which is Africa's common vision and one voice that charts Africa's digital future and harnesses the transformative potential of digital technologies to foster sustainable development, economic growth, and societal well-being throughout Africa.

According to Commissioner Abou-Zeid, the Compact is Africa's strategic commitment to utilizing digital transformation as a catalyst for inclusive progress and sustainable development in Africa. Further lauding the Compact as remarkable initiative that will position Africa at the forefront of the global digital economy, not just as a consumer but also as innovator and producer.

She added that creating strong pool of talents, and enhancing public private partnerships are deemed

critical to promote homegrown digital solutions.

During the discussions, the African ministers highlighted the importance of propelling Africa's role in shaping global digital governance and insisted on the importance of capacity building and knowledge transfer to empower Africa's youth, private sector and institutions to ensure their participation in the digital economy through initiatives focused on enabling ecosystems, digital education, skills development, and job reassignment.

Minister Moorosi further accentuated that unique challenges and contexts of Africa must be taken into consideration in the global discourse around digital technologies. "Our position must advocate for our capability to develop our own

electronic technologies and equitable access to these critical resources. Additionally, we must ensure that when the global community addresses the artificial intelligence alignment problem, the unique needs and contexts of Africa are considered" underscored H.E. Moorosi.


At the closing of the Ministerial meeting the ministers mandated the African

Union to organize a level Continental African Artificial Intelligence Summit to foster collaboration, knowledge exchange, and strategic planning among stakeholders across the continent.


Both initiatives were developed through consultations with a wide array of stakeholders and constitute Africa's contribution to the Global Digital Compact and the United


Nations Summit of the Future in September 2024. They are expected to be submitted to the African Union Executive Council in July 2024, for consideration and adoption.


It's worth mentioning that the Continental AI Strategy and the African Digital Compact are anchored in the African Union's Digital Transformation Strategy (2020-2030) and Agenda 2063 and build on other continental digital policies, strategies, and frameworks such as the data policy, personal data protection cybersecurity, child protection frameworks targeted at fostering digital technologies in all sectors and realizing Africa's long-term development aspirations.





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


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The Potential of Regenerative Agriculture in Africa: Lessons from the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit

Op-ed by-lined by Dr Mel Oluoch, Strategic Partnership Director, Sasakawa Africa Association, and Dr Stella Kabiri, Lead Regenerative Agriculture, Sasakawa Africa Association



Dr Mel Oluoch.

The declining state of soil health in Africa has reached a critical tipping point, with 65% of agricultural land deemed degraded.¹ Sub-Saharan Africa now holds the highest rate of land degradation worldwide, significantly limiting agricultural productivity and threatening food security.

The rapid degradation is driven by population growth, urban demands for food, water and fuel, increased land use intensity, and excessive exploitation of resources, leaving many rural communities without access to necessary water. Shockingly, 40% of the world's population lacking access to clean water resides in sub-Saharan Africa.²

Ecosystem Services and Soil Health

Soil, the greatest terrestrial carbon sink, is essential for plant growth, food security, biodiversity conservation, rainfall retention, and environmental resilience. Degraded soil compromises these ecosystem services, leading to increased poverty,

conflict, and instability. Improving soil health is key to addressing Africa's water shortage and food security challenges.

Convening Regional Priorities

Held in Nairobi in May 2024, the Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit brought together over 4,000 stakeholders, including government officials, regional economic blocs, private organizations, and civil society, to address critical issues concerning Africa's soil health and fertilizer use. The summit reviewed progress since the 2006 Abuja Declaration and developed strategies to improve soil health and agricultural productivity across the continent.

Regenerative agriculture emerged as a major focus of the Summit, emphasizing the necessity of practices that restore and maintain soil health, enhance biodiversity, and improve water management.

Reversing land degradation and regaining soil health offers a high return rate on investment—up to \$5 for every \$1 invested—and offers hope

for Africa. Regenerative agriculture can enhance this trend by boosting soil organic matter, strengthening soil structure, and increasing microbial activity.³

Benefits of Regenerative Agriculture

Regenerative agriculture, a holistic approach of blending sustainable innovation with tradition, focuses on practices that can sequester carbon in the soil, restore soil health, increase biodiversity, and improve soil-water retention. Healthier soils lead to more consistent and higher yields over time, increasing farmers' incomes and resilience against climate change.

Regenerative agriculture has the potential to strengthen rural communities by promoting culturally appropriate and knowledge-intensive practices. It encourages farmer-to-farmer knowledge exchange and revitalizes traditional agricultural practices in a modern context. Supporting smallholder farmers in adopting regenerative agriculture practices requires a multi-faceted

approach addressing their specific needs and challenges.

The summit underscored the importance of a comprehensive approach to soil health that includes the use of both organic and inorganic fertilizers, improved land tenure for farmers, and increased investment in agricultural research and development.

In Malawi and Ethiopia, the effective use of fertilizers has led to notable improvements in agricultural output and the nutritional quality of produce. The need for flexible and targeted subsidies to support smallholder farmers has been emphasized, along with the importance of investing in local research capacity to develop sustainable farming practices.

Notably in Malawi, the Malawi Farmer-to-Farmer Agroecology (MAFFA) program has used participatory education and agroecology to achieve significant results. Over 6,000 rural families have seen dramatic improvements in maternal and child nutrition, food security, crop diversity, land

management practices, and gender equality. Central to the success of this long-term program has been the use of iterative, participatory, transdisciplinary research methods, which employed multiple measures to assess and improve farming and social change among participating farmers.⁵

Key Outcomes and the Way Forward

The summit concluded with the Nairobi Declaration, a 10-year plan to triple domestic fertilizer production by 2034, promote local raw materials, and strengthen sustainable agriculture policies. Key strategies include innovation in fertilizer technology, increased research investment, policies supporting regenerative agriculture, and improved education and training.⁴

Crucial steps identified were enhancing market access, financial services, information systems, and tailored financial products for farmers. Climate-smart agriculture and supporting women and youth through education and financial services were also prioritized. Developing frameworks to track progress and inform policy adjustments is essential.

The Africa Fertilizer and Soil Health Summit has set the stage for agricultural transformation in Africa. Embracing regenerative agriculture can improve soil health, food security, climate resilience, and economic opportunities. Success requires concerted efforts from all stakeholders and a commitment to nurturing Africa's soil. With the right support,



Dr Stella Kabiri.

Africa can achieve a sustainable and prosperous agricultural future.

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Soaring Above Africa: Serengeti Balloon Safaris Redefine Adventure Tourism

By Adonis Byemelwa



Each balloon safari is meticulously planned to coincide with the rhythms of nature. Photo courtesy.

Serengeti Balloon Safaris has unveiled its latest venture in Tanzania's Tarangire National Park, adding a new dimension to the northern tourism circuit of East Africa's nature-rich country.

This expansion marks a significant milestone for the company, known for pioneering hot-air balloon adventures in the region's breathtaking skies.

The inaugural flight, which took off with 22 guests in two balloons, departed from the northwestern Silale Swamp and glided over the park's picturesque landscapes before gently landing in the lush Tarangire Valley.

Passengers enjoyed the unique perspective offered by the balloons, ascending to 800 feet just after sunrise, providing them with

sweeping views of expansive woodlands and potential landing spots.

The aerial journey offered an unmatched glimpse of Tarangire's diverse wildlife. Guests were treated to sightings of majestic elephants, formidable buffalo, elusive porcupines, graceful waterbucks, bushbucks, striking white-headed vultures, colorful hornbills, African green parrots, and elegant reedbucks.

The flight concluded near the scenic Tarangire River, where guests were welcomed with a lavish «Out of Africa» breakfast under the shade of an acacia tree, enhancing the overall magical experience.

Tarangire National Park, known for its vibrant ecosystem and rich avian life, presents a distinctive alternative

to the traditional Serengeti flights. This successful launch underscores Serengeti Balloon Safaris' commitment to enhancing customer experiences across Tanzania.

With the addition of Tarangire, the company now offers balloon safaris in four premier national parks: Serengeti, Ngorongoro Conservation Area Authority (NCAA), Ruaha, and now Tarangire.

John Corse, the Managing Director of Serengeti Balloon Safaris, expressed his enthusiasm for the new venture, saying, «Tarangire is such a stunning landscape to enjoy from the air, and we are thrilled to now be welcoming guests from June to March.

With a huge variety of wildlife, biodiversity, and geology to enjoy, it

is one of my favorite places to fly, and we look forward to sharing it with our guests.»

The introduction of balloon safaris in Tarangire is poised to attract more safari enthusiasts, ensuring that the enchantment of ballooning is accessible almost year-round.

From June to March, adventurers have yet another reason to explore Tanzania's incredible wilderness from the skies, immersing themselves in the unparalleled beauty and biodiversity that Tarangire has to offer.

Serengeti Balloon Safaris stands at the forefront of adventure tourism in Tanzania, renowned for its pioneering spirit and commitment to delivering unparalleled experiences amidst the natural wonders of East Africa.

The company's signature hot air balloon safaris offer a unique perspective on Tanzania's diverse landscapes and wildlife, making it a favorite among travelers seeking a blend of thrill and tranquility.

Among its premier destinations, Serengeti National Park holds a special place. Renowned for the iconic Great Migration of wildebeest and zebras, this UNESCO World Heritage Site offers a spectacle unlike any other.

The vast plains of the Serengeti stretch as far as the eye can see, punctuated by rocky outcrops and acacia trees. From the gentle ascent in a hot air balloon at dawn to the panoramic views of roaming herds below, guests are treated to a once-in-a-lifetime experience that captures the essence of Africa's raw beauty.

Each balloon safari is meticulously planned to coincide with the rhythms of nature. As the sun rises over the Serengeti, the landscape comes alive with golden hues, casting a magical glow over the savannah.

From the air, guests can witness not only the mass movements of wildlife but also the interplay of predators and prey in their natural habitat. The experience is as much about adventure as it is about education and conservation, fostering a deep appreciation for Tanzania's rich biodiversity and the efforts to preserve it.

Serengeti Balloon Safaris' commitment to excellence extends



The introduction of balloon safaris in Tarangire is poised to attract more safari enthusiasts. Photo courtesy.

beyond providing thrilling aerial adventures.

It encompasses a dedication to sustainable tourism practices and community engagement, ensuring that the benefits of tourism reach local communities while safeguarding the environment for future generations.

Each flight is led by experienced pilots and guides who share their

expertise and passion for the region, enhancing guests' understanding of the Serengeti's ecological significance.

For travelers seeking a sublime blend of luxury and adventure, Serengeti Balloon Safaris offers a gateway to explore Tanzania's natural wonders from a perspective that few have the privilege to experience.

Whether it's gliding silently over

the Serengeti plains or enjoying a sumptuous bush breakfast amidst the wilderness, every moment with Serengeti Balloon Safaris promises to be unforgettable, leaving a lasting impression of Africa's untamed beauty and the magic of a balloon safari.

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The Nigerian Festival UK-A Tempting Third Attempt

By Kole Odutola

Is it true that proverbs are packed with wisdom which sweetens a discourse? By implication it means discourse can be sour. Well, among Yoruba elders it is not uncommon to hear expressions like a three stone-stove confers stability on to a boiling pot of stew. At some point during the festival which took place on Saturday, 15th June, I had my doubts about something been third time lucky. At first it felt jerky then like akamu (pap) it went down smoothly. So, come along with us on this narrative ride.

If one lives without learning valuable lessons daily, then that one is as good as a living dead mind. In my case, I learned a big lesson that the memory of a past can stand in the way of new knowledge. What happened? I kept going round and round in the hope that the festival was happening where last year's festival took place! I neglected all suggestions from those who ply the road day and night. I kept insisting that the place they were suggesting could not be the correct one. How dumb I turned out to be? The answer is now in my bleeding account. If you say I paid big time for my ignorance, you may not be far from the forest of truth...

The festival had a theme this year is "our language our heritage." In a bid to present Nigeria's diverse cultures the organizers planned to have a Nigeria History corner where people of knowledge were supposed



to talk about, Nigeria's, historic regions, British explorers, Trade and anti-slavery, British colonial rule, Independence, and secession. In the area of visual history, the Nigerian film industry was to take center stage. In addition, the plan was to have a Nollywood corner where fans and screen celebrities could mix and mingle.

A fantastic innovation this year was a proposed celebration of fallen African heroes who fought for the British empire during the two World Wars. The idea was to highlight the heroic achievements of these forgotten heroes by laying wreaths at the Royal artillery Barracks,

Woolwich. The organizers were to work with St George's Garrison church Woolwich, to achieve this laudable objective.

This festival was very rich in ideas but unfortunately, some of the plans did not quite make it into existence. Take the wonderful concept of a language workshop where attendees could learn simple words to use in daily life and for conversation.

At this time in the life of Nigeria, it is impossible not to have business talks and deals. The business exhibition stands were a perfect platform for both local and international businesses to showcase their products and services at the festival.

If the other plans did not come to fruition the Arts & crafts exhibition was a modest marketplace where arts and crafts products such as fabrics, leather and souvenirs from Nigeria and other African countries had their place in the Sun. Let us return to another Yoruba saying that observes that hunger and reason are not bed fellows (ebi ki I wonu ki oro miran wo o). In line with that injunction the taste of African food showcase and tasting was the crowd puller. The food stands did not only parade on the spot hot meals, but each of the stands also appeared in colorful eye catching. If there was any center of attraction the medallion would go to elder Osat Eribo (the father of Irene Eribo-Ani, one of the organizers).

When the Nigerian festival, UK was concluding, the Eyo masquerade took the center stage and diverse dancing feet tried steps they have been hiding. Who will hear King Ayinde Marshall's serenade of Eyo and would not jump from a sitting or crouching position to the nearest dance floor. Yes, jump we did and took heed that this third attempt may not have been as tempting but it ticked most of the boxes of a cultural festival.

As you may know the festival has become a dancing masquerade





that must be followed around. The location keeps changing at different locations too. The rain maker that stood in the gap during the first two shows appeared to have gone on vacation. The rain poured buckets, then went into the pins and needle mode intermittently. There were even times, the Sun and the rain acted as strange bed fellows. In any way come rain or shine Nigerians are never last in music, cuisine, fashion or making quick business deals.

You will agree that life is filled with twists and turns, so is this narration. However, before the curtain is drawn, the former Mayor of the hosting Borough, Councillor Alison Moore of East Finchley Ward, deserves praises for weathering the drizzling rains and the shy sunshine. In a quick chat with her she told me she has been in partisan politics for the past twenty-six years. I asked her

“What has changed in the last twenty six years”

“A lot has changed but the door-to-door campaign has pretty much remained the same”, she said with a smile on her face. I would have let her go but as a first-time visitor to the Borough, I wanted to know what the political issues are. Her answer came out like a prepared text, “high cost of living is a major issue during this election cycle.” As she was compelled to move to other attendees my mind would not stop raising questions about the lives of politicians. Do they really have solutions to some of the problems of their constituents? I did not ask and I received no response but the festival provided a sort of response.

It has been a very long time since

I heard that a politician made a promise and kept his words without fail. Councillor Ernest Ambe Esq was said to have made a promise to the organizers of the recently concluded Nigerian Festival, UK, and he kept his word! Wow!! In effect, all hope is not lost since there are people like this politician still around us.

A bit about him just in case you need to point to a man who keeps his word

He has lived in and around the borough for over 15 years.

He started his journey to becoming a Councillor when he saw the impact that his then MP, Labour’s Rudi Vis, had on his situation. Rudi and his team supported him at a very important time, and he in turn wanted to do the same for others.

As he began to campaign for Labour, he saw the impact that an effective Councillor could have on a local community. As a lawyer and active trade unionist, he sees every day, whether it’s through his professional life, union work or his Councillor role, how representatives can make a difference to people’s



lives.

West Hendon is a very diverse ward with lovely people. Above the railway line, in NW4, feels very much part of the rest of Hendon. Below the railway line in NW9 around the A5 West Hendon Broadway, there is a lot of regeneration and development going on, and he is working tirelessly with council officers to help ensure that it is joined up. Good job brother!!

Conclusion: When you attend a festival such as this and you run into a Moji Bamtefa (a veteran Thespian of the stage and the screen) in an animated discussion with a Bunmi Lawson (the microfinance and banking guru). Just before the chance meeting concludes a Peter Olorunisomo (the man of many parts) strolls in with bags hanging on his shoulders, then you know that home is not that far off.

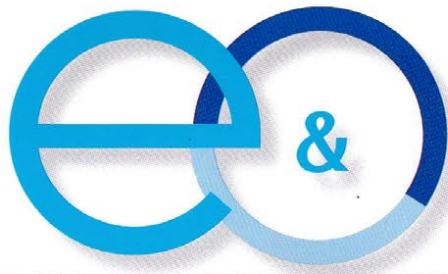
This festival ground is fast becoming the place to meet old and new faces. For instance, the name Fola Ogunba may not ring a bell but to ICAN members, the name of late Vincent Obajimi Ogunba, cannot be forgotten in a hurry. As you eat

Supa Cornflakes let the memory of this business giant come back into memory. The Son, a chip of the old block, as the cliché goes, has carried in his heart a burning torch that will burn down walls that separate those in the Carribean Islands with those on the continent. He came to the festival grounds to network and increase his cultural net worth. If not this year, I hope he comes back with his 14-year-old daughter.

Performers of worth and emerging artists graced the stage as well. The duo Osaze & Marcus dished out their Gen Z rap music under the watchful eyes of their parents. Same for Titilola, the Nigerian Irish performer who goes by the stage name DA Sweetnezz. She arrived late but not without cogent reasons. She had gone to audition for a part in @theebaddestshowcase . Please if anyone of you have made it to this point in this narration, please send good vibes to Titilola so she can get a part in the show.

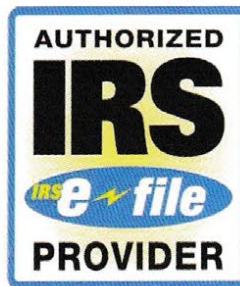
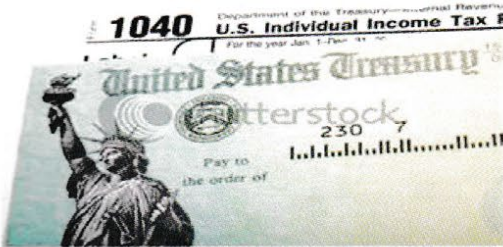
I can bet my last dime that if anyone forgets the highs and the lows of this festival, Yemi Soile’s mother who turned 65 on Saturday would not forget it for a long time. The organizers recognized her with a cake and music that drew dance steps from all who attended.

Let it be told that though the rains came pouring, the Sun too shy to shine, this third edition of the Nigeria Festival, UK woke the people of the London Borough of Barnet to the smoke and smell from roast meat (Suya). The presence of Nigerians, their music, meals and colorful apparels would go down as peg on the cultural landscape of an ethnic diversified Borough.



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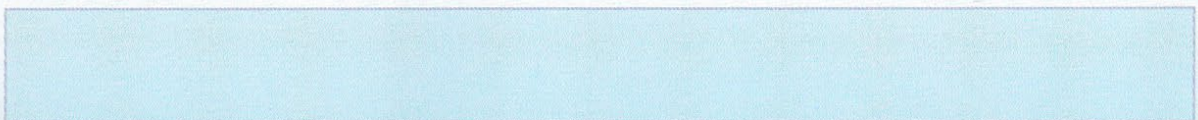
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