MEMORANDUM

N° 103/2015 | 10/06/2015

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SUMMARY

AFRICA MOVES TOWARDS COMMON MARKET

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Senior officials of three African economic blocs held talks on a "one trade regime" that would forge a common market spanning the continent, at a meeting in Egypt on Sunday (7 June).

The Tripartite Free Trade Area (TFTA) is to be launched at a summit of heads of state and government on Wednesday (10 June) in the Red Sea resort town of Sharm el-Sheikh, aimed at establishing a common framework for tariff preferences along with other commitments.

The deal between the East African Community (EAC), Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA) would create a 26-country market with a population of 625 million and gross domestic product worth more than $1 trillion (900 billion euros).

On Sunday, senior officials from the three economic blocs held negotiations on the details of the deal in Sharm al-Sheikh.

"We are here for a historic summit... the result of this deal will be a one trade regime," Sindiso Ngwenya, secretary general of COMESA, told reporters after an opening session.

"What we have realised is that having one trade regime is better than the costly multiple trade regimes," said Ngwenya, who is leading the negotiations between the three blocs.

"The launch of the TFTA is a significant milestone for the African continent," the South African government said.

"We believe that this sends a powerful message that Africa is committed to its economic integration agenda and in creating a conducive environment for trade and investment."

Delegates at Sunday's preparatory meeting of officials said the deal would substantially boost trade between the 26 countries.

"The deal essentially will facilitate free movement of goods across the 26 member countries without duties," Peter Kiguta, director general of East African Community, told AFP.

Outstanding issues

Officials say the trade pact was almost finalised apart from some outstanding issues that were being discussed.

"Some officials have concerns about how to manage trade disputes, or how to protect small manufacturers in their own countries," said delegate Nadir El-Rayah from Sudan.

"We are discussing how to protect these manufacturers, of course for a specific period."

Details of the discussions will be presented at a meeting of trade ministers from member countries on Monday.

The move was welcomed by business leaders at the World Economic Summit for Africa in Cape Town last week, with participants highlighting the fact that just 12% of African countries' total trade is with each other -- compared to some 55% in Asia and 70% in Europe.

Africa's share of global trade stands at around three percent.

The 26 members from the three economic blocs range from relatively developed economies such as South Africa and Egypt to countries like Angola, Ethiopia and Mozambique, seen as having huge potential growth.

Analysts say that although the continent's growth outstripped global GDP expansion by nearly three percentage points over the past 15 years, it faced falling commodity prices, power shortages, political instability and corruption.

Officials say the TFTA offers significant opportunities for business and investment within the three blocs and would act as a magnet for attracting direct foreign investment in the region.

The business community, in particular, would benefit from an improved and harmonised trade regime which reduces the cost of doing business as a result of the elimination of overlapping trade regimes, officials say.

"The launching of the TFTA is the first phase of implementing a developmental regional integration strategy that places high priority on infrastructure development, industrialisation and free movement of business persons," organisers said on the website of the June 7-10 conference.

Despite the challenges, Africa's overall economy is expected to expand by 4.5% this year, according to a report by the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the African Development Bank and the UN Development Programme.(AFP+ EurActiv 08-06-2016)

EU HIGH LEVEL SUMMIT WITH THE COMMUNITY OF LATIN AMERICAN AND CARIBBEAN STATES (CELAC)

The EU will hold a high level Summit with the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) in Brussels on 10 and 11 June around the theme *“Shaping our common future: working for prosperous, cohesive and sustainable societies for our citizens”.* The Summit, which brings together European, Latin American and Caribbean leaders, is the main forum for dialogue and cooperation between the two regions. This is the eighth Summit since the strategic bi-regional partnership was launched with the countries of the region in 1999 and the second one since the creation of CELAC in 2011. The Summit will seek to re-invigorate the EU-CELAC relationship around three main axes: strengthened political dialogue, completing and modernising economic ties and a new type and focus of cooperation. Bilateral and regional support programmes to the Latin American and Caribbean region are expected to be announced as well as an international cooperation facility aimed at fostering triangular cooperation, progress in the negotiation of trade agreements with the region and the EU's contribution to help finance a new submarine broadband optical cable between Europe (Lisbon, Portugal) and South America (Fortaleza, Brazil). At the closure of the summit, a final declaration will be published. The EU will be represented by the President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude **Juncker**, the President of the European Council, Donald **Tusk** and High Representative and Vice President, Federica **Mogherini**. The Summit is co-chaired by the European Council and Ecuador, which holds the rotating Presidency of the CELAC group until January 2016. 61 delegations from CELAC and EU Member States are expected to attend, 42 of which are Heads of State. President **Juncker** will hold bilateral discussions with the Heads of State or Government of Bolivia, Columbia, Haiti and Honduras. Alongside the main summit of Heads of State and Government, a Business Summit will be hosted on 10 June by European Commissioner for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, Elżbieta **Bieńkowska** and

European Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, Neven **Mimica**. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia **Malmström** has also invited the Ministers of Mercosur to a meeting in Brussels on 11 June, in the margins of the EU-CELAC Summit. This is the first Ministerial meeting since January 2013 after the EU-Mercosur Free Trade Agreement negotiations were resumed in 2010. Both sides will take stock of the current negotiations and will discuss the way forward. A press conference held by President **Juncker**, President **Tusk** and President **Correa** will conclude the Summit on 11 June at 13:00. The CELAC Summit will be followed by two mini summits on 11 June in the afternoon with the Forum of the Caribbean Group of African, Caribbean and Pacific states (CARIFORUM) and the Central American Integration System (SICA). Press material will be published on the days of the Summit and a brochure on EU-CELAC relations is available here.

G7 SENDS POWERFUL MESSAGE ON CLIMATE CHANGE

In their declaration following the G7 summit this weekend, leaders stressed their determination to adopt a legal instrument to ensure global warming is limited to 2 degrees Celsius - *"The agreement should enhance transparency and accountability including through binding rules at its core to track progress towards achieving targets, which should promote increased ambition over time. This should enable all countries to follow a low-carbon and resilient development pathway in line with the global goal to hold the increase in global average temperature below 2 °C"*. This agreement sets the G7 members on a solid path to Paris. On the occasion, European Commission President Jean-Claude **Juncker** said: *"We do not want commitments made in Elmau to end up mere lip service but to deliver in Paris. We had a common understanding (at G7) that we will need binding climate targets. The road between Elmau and Paris is not long. The words at Elmau must now materialise into concrete actions in Paris."* The EU has already made a strong commitment and is leading by example with its goal of cutting emissions by 40% compared with 1990. The EU wants to see a legally binding deal in Paris to ensure that it has teeth. Europe has a track record of putting in place the laws and policies that deliver for the climate and it has shown that action speaks louder than words; thanks to EU collective action, EU emissions declined by 19% while GDP grew by 45% between 1990 and 2013.

CELAC REPRESENTS THE FIFTH MOST IMPORTANT TRADING PARTNER OF THE EU

The 28 Member States of the European Union (EU) and the 33 Latin American and Caribbean countries of the CELAC are home to more than one billion people. CELAC countries also represent a major trading partner for the EU. After a significant decrease in 2009 following the financial crisis, the value of EU imports of goods from CELAC recovered to a new peak of €112.3 billion in 2012 and then fell to stand at €98.6 billion in 2014. Exports, which also declined in 2009, then recovered more strongly to reach a peak of €117.5 billion in 2013, before decreasing to €110.6 billion in 2014. As a result, the EU trade balance with CELAC, which moved into surplus in 2012, stood at +€12.0 billion in 2014. Over the last ten years, the share of CELAC in extra-EU imports remained almost stable at 5.9%, while its share in exports grew from 5.4% in 2004 to 6.5% in 2014. Together, CELAC countries would have been in 2014 the EU's fifth most important trading partner, behind the United States, China, Russia and Switzerland.

GAMBIAN PRESS FOCUSES ON MARINE RESOURCES, LIVESTOCK

The Gambian leader\'s promise to enhance local exploitation of marine resources and the call for unity among livestock dealers by the Managing Director of the Abuko Central Abattoir, Kebba Tounmanding

Sanneh, are the leading stories in the Gambian newspapers on Wednesday.

The Daily Observer reported that Gambian leader Yaya Jammeh has pledges to render more support to local communities in the country in the bid to exploit the rich marine resources of the country.

It added that Jammeh made the pledge on Monday at Foni Bintang fish landing site in the Foni Bintang Karanai District, West Coast Region, as part of his ongoing nationwide tour.

The Point said the top echelon of Abuko Cenral Abattoir has called for unity and dialogue among all livestock dealers in the country. Kebba Tounmanding Sanneh, who is the new Managing Director of the Gambia\'s main livestock selling and buying centre, noted that unity and understanding are needed for the smooth running of the livestock trade.

“I am happy to receive members of the Gambia Livestock Dealers Association as they have joined us, and all I am looking for is peace and unity among dealers for the smooth operation of their businesses,” Sanneh was quoted as saying by the Point.(APA 03-06-2015)

SIEMENS SIGNS $9BN POWER-PLANT DEAL WITH EGYPT

Siemens AG received an order on Wednesday to build gas and wind power plants in Egypt valued at $9bn, which the German company described as the largest single order in its history.

Siemens signed contracts for the order, which will boost Egypt’s power production, with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah al-Sisi on Wednesday at Germany’s federal ministry for economic affairs and energy.

Siemens will deliver three ready-to-use gas-steam power plants with a capacity of 4.8GW each.

The plants, which will go into operation in stages starting in the summer of 2017, will have a total capacity of 14.4GW, Siemens said.

Loans for the order are "largely secured through export credit insurers in Germany and Denmark," Siemens said without elaborating.

In addition, Siemens is building up to 12 wind parks and about 600 wind turbines with a total capacity of 2GW at the Suez channel and in the Western Nile region. The German industrial company said that it will create up to 1,000 jobs in the North African country, since the rotor blades for the wind plants will be produced locally.

The contracts, based on declarations of intent signed last March at the Egypt Economic Development Conference, are aimed at increasing Egypt’s power production capacity by 16.4GW, a plus of 50% compared with current capacity.

Egypt’s order for gas-steam power plants is of particular importance for Siemens, which hasn’t sold a single fossil-fuel-fired turbine in Germany since the country’s exit from nuclear and fossil-fuel energy.(WSJ 04-06-2015)

PARTS OF BOTSWANA IN GRINDING POVERTY

Some parts of Botswana remain in extreme poverty despite the country having recorded a 10% reduction in the levels of social impoverishment.

According to the Mapping Poverty in Botswana Report by Statistics Botswana, despite government's increased efforts against abject poverty, Kweneng District in the west of the country has the highest number of people living in abject poverty at 45,000.

Serowe/Palapye area in central Botswana comes second with 43,000 people.
Tutume and Bobonong also in Central Botswana have 28,000 and 25,000 people respectively.

The report states that the populations of the four districts account for 40 percent of the total number of people living in Botswana.(APA 04-06-2015)

GE CHASES $10BN AFRICAN TARGET

General Electric (GE) is seeking to more than double revenue from Africa to as much as $10bn over the next five years as it targets power, health and locomotive opportunities in countries including Nigeria and Ethiopia.

"We're bullish on Nigeria," GE's president for transportation for Africa and CEO of its South African business, Thomas Konditi, said on Wednesday. "We met with a couple of the incoming leadership and they've put rail right behind power. They don't have mines as much, so you're going to look for more general freight."

Nigeria, Africa's biggest economy, transports only 0.1% of its freight by rail and could boost the number of locomotives to as many as 500 engines from 25 now, Mr. Konditi said at the World Economic Forum in Cape Town.

The company plans to resume talks with the new government in Nigeria on an agreement with the previous administration for 200 locomotives, he said. Nigerian President Muhammadu Buhari took office on Friday after defeating Goodluck Jonathan in March elections.

While nine of the world's 15 fastest-growing economies are in Africa, some countries are contending with a downturn in commodity prices, power cuts and political instability. Power shortages and a lack of infrastructure including rail, are limiting growth, and offer opportunities for investment.

The CEO of GE, Jeff Immelt, has identified Africa as one of the company's most important growth areas, with plans to invest $2bn in the region by 2018 as well as doubling its workforce on the continent.

The Africa spending by GE would go into developing facilities, improving supply chains and for training workers, he said last year.

GE's African revenues wouldbe more than $4bn this year, led by Nigeria, Angola and SA, compared with about $1bn in 2010, according to Mr. Konditi. The company could open a manufacturing facility in Nigeria if there is demand for more locomotives, he said.

"Five years from now, I don't know why we shouldn't be up to the $8bn -$10bn range," Mr. Konditi said, referring to revenue from Africa in dollars.

GE's sales from the Middle East and Africa of $15.6bn last year were about 10.6% of the company's total revenue.

Ethiopia, the continent's second-most populous country after Nigeria, also offered investment opportunities, particularly in the health-care industry, he said. "We're probably going to open a health-care assembly facility in Ethiopia," as the government built new hospitals, Mr. Konditi said. (Bloomberg 05-06-2015)

ETHIOPIA ANNOUNCES OVER $1.1BN NATIONAL BUDGET

Ethiopia has allocated over $1.1 billion as its national budget for the next fiscal year that runs from July 2015 to June 2016.

According to a statement the country's council of ministers circulated on Thursday, 22.6 percent of the national budget will be spent for regular expenditure as 37.4 of the budget will be used for capital expenses.

The statement further noted that 34.7 percent of the budget would go to subsidize regional states while the remaining 5.4 percent will be spent to finalize sustainable development programs.

The statement further noted the budget will be used economically and fund raising systems will be put in a place to speed up ongoing development projects including the Ethiopian renaissance dam project over

Blue Nile. After thorough discussion, the council has referred the draft budget to the parliament for approval.(APA 04-06-2015)

MOBILE PHONE ACCESS IN AFRICA SET TO DOUBLE IN NEXT FIVE YEARS

Eighty percent of sub-Saharan Africa’s 800-million people should have access to mobile telephones by the end of the decade, double the current rate, although government help is needed to reach far-flung areas, industry body group GSMA said Wednesday.

The growth of mobile data — an even more powerful economic tool than simple voice services — also hinges on authorities allocating sufficient spectrum, said Mortimer Hope, the Africa director of GSMA.

"We expect data to keep growing dramatically, and to facilitate that you need more spectrum to handle that data growth," he told Reuters on the sidelines of the World Economic Forum Africa in Cape Town.

To unleash the full potential of mobile Internet services, he said, governments should also consider cutting taxes on web-enabled handsets to make them more affordable to consumers on the poorest continent.

At the moment about 15% of Africans have access to the Internet via their mobile phones.

"It’s very early days for data but we would like it be everywhere you have voice. The extra physical infrastructure deployment is not as big as you would think."

Mobile phones have been one of the factors behind Africa’s recent growth spurt, by freeing people from the shackles of the continent’s awful landline infrastructure and allowing them to communicate and transact at minimal personal and financial cost.

The simple SMS — and more recently mobile social media — have also become powerful political tools, used by grassroots political movements to mobilize support against oppressive states, such as happened in the north African ‘Arab Spring’.

Governments across the continent are aware of the economic potential of mobile telephony but are sometimes slow to implement the legal frameworks needed to allow phone companies to expand, Mr. Mortimer said.

"Many governments across Africa have developed broadband plans. The issue is that those plans very often just sit on a shelf, not being implemented," he said.

Africa’s biggest mobile phone company is MTN. Other major operators are Vodacom and France’s Orange. *(*Reuters 03-06-2015)

ILLEGAL TIMBER TRADE FLOURISHES IN CONGO, REPORT SAYS

European and US companies are participating in the multimillion-dollar trade of illegally logged timber from the Democratic Republic of Congo, breaking not just Congolese but also European Union (EU) and US laws, an advocacy group report said on Wednesday.

The report by Global Witness adds timber to diamonds, gold and other natural resources that are abundant in the Congo and, according to international human rights organisations — including Global Witness, Human Rights Watch, and Amnesty International, among others — are often illegally extracted and exported from the large central African nation.

The advocacy group said its researchers visited 28 of the 57 industrial-scale timber operations in the country over the last four years and found that all 28 were breaking several laws, including underpayment or nonpayment of taxes, lack of necessary licences, logging outside the licensed area, logging protected timber species and not adhering to agreements to protect the local population from the impact of their operations.

"This shows that all industrially logged timber being harvested in DRC (Congo) and traded internationally should currently be regarded as at a very high risk of being illegal," the report said.

The trade, valued at about $95m a year at the moment, is derived from logging about 10% of Congo’s forests. The country is home to two-thirds of the world’s second-largest rain forest after the Amazon.

The top importer of Congolese timber is China, controlling about 65%, the report found. The EU is second, with about 22% of the trade. France is the biggest EU importer.

According to the Global Witness report and the United Nations, the woods harvested include Afrormosia, a valuable species of hard timber protected under the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species. Big-leaf mahogany and cedro are also rare species logged in Congo.

Among the violations alleged to have been committed, Global Witness said its researchers found timber firms operating in Congo to be evading taxes, breaking environmental rules and not keeping commitments to local communities, which are part of the legal duties timber firms have in Congo.

The Ministry of Sustainable Development, Forest Economy and Environment, which is in charge of forests, didn't respond to calls seeking comment.

Sodefor, one of Congo's two biggest timber firms, which between them control about half the country's timber industry, dismissed the accusations. The second firm didn't respond to calls seeking comment.

Filomena Amaral, a spokeswoman for Sodefor in Kinshasa, said the company is "aware that any process can be improved and that being more than 2,000 employees in our company, it is inevitable for us to make mistakes."

But she rejected claims that Sodefor's activities were leaving its trade partners vulnerable.

"We are complying with national laws and international norms and regulations around our activities and we are fulfilling our legal, fiscal, social and environmental responsibilities. We can't see why importing timber from our company would represent any risk of breaking the law for any firm anywhere in the world," Ms Amaral said. (BD 03-06-2015)

MOZ TO INTRODUCE NEW ACADEMIC CERTIFICATES TO FIGHT FORGERY

Mozambique's ministry of Education and Human Development says it will introduce new academic certificates that will be much more difficult to forge than the present models, APA observes here on Saturday.

State-controlled Mozambique Television, TVM says the Ministry is thus reacting to complaints from employers who find that they have hired people with forged qualifications.

The Maputo-based broadcaster quotes the Minister Jorge Ferrao as saying the new certificates will cover the first and second cycles of secondary education namely the 10th and 12th grades, and mid level technical and professional education, the levels which have suffered most from forgeries as people without the necessary qualifications attempt to apply for jobs.

These are the steps we have to take to make our system credible and the new certificates will be distributed to the schools this year. We want regulations which guarantee that pupils advance from one level to the next within a framework of norms of quality. Ferrao said adding that new measure is intended to restore credibility to academic certificates, both within the country and internationally.

According to the Ministry, the new certificates would have stamps, watermarks and other confidential security measures, and would be uniform throughout the country.

Primary education certificates would be issued by the district education services, secondary education certificates by the provincial education directorates, and certificates for technical and professional education by the national directorate.

The education system in Mozambique has slowly been rebuilt after the civil war, which destroyed at least 50 percent of primary schools.

In 1990, private schooling was reintroduced. Education is compulsory for seven years, but in practice, most students do not study for the full compulsory period.(APA 06-06-2015)

US SUPPORTS 50,000 FARMERS IN MOZAMBIQUE

The United States will support around 50,000 farmers in Mozambique over the next three years, under four partnerships representing a financial outlay of US$30 million, USAID said in a statement.

The US federal government agency said that through its partners it intended to “increase the agricultural incomes of small farmers in the provinces of Nampula, Zambezia, Manica, and Tete.”

The partnership “will provide about 50,000 small farmers and their families with access to the market for seeds, fertiliser, storage, tractors, SMS messages via mobile phones, loans, and savings accounts,” the statement added.

These services will be provided by private organisations “through partnerships with USAID and international and local non-governmental organisations (NGOs),” it said.

According to USAID, these private activities, which have already begun and will last until mid-2017, will continue “while small farmers need the services and the businesses are able to turn a profit by providing them.”

These activities are part of “Feed the Future,” a global initiative of the US government against hunger and food insecurity, which has been in Mozambique for four years in the value chains of crops such as peanuts, beans, cashews, and mango. (08-06-2015)

ANGOLA’S DOS SANTOS IN CHINA SEEKING CASH FOR AILING ECONOMY

Angolan President Jose Eduardo dos Santos met Chinese counterpart Xi Jinping on Tuesday on a state visit to seek financing for projects, including a $4.5bn hydropower scheme, intended to revive an economy hit by low crude prices.

Construction firm China Gezhouba said it had won the contract to build the dam in the southern African nation, a project that would take six years to complete and be financed by Chinese bank loans.

"China and Angola are good brothers and long-term strategic partners," Mr. Xi told Mr. dos Santos, adding that Beijing would encourage more Chinese companies to invest in Africa’s second-biggest oil producer, according to Chinese state television.

China has built strong ties with Angola since the end of a long civil war in 2002. Luanda now sells about half of its 1.7-million barrels a day oil output to China.

Angolan Foreign Minister Georges Chikoti said Mr. dos Santos was seeking financial backing for "priority projects".

"These are projects in the financial industry, high education, energy, training and agriculture," he was quoted as saying in state media. There were no more details.

With oil hitting a six-year low of $45 a barrel in January and the global output glut unlikely to abate with Organisation of the Petroleum Exporting Countries maintaining supply levels, Angola’s oil-dependent economy is in trouble.

The central bank devalued the kwanza by 6% last week and the government is predicting a budget deficit of 7% of gross domestic product (GDP) for this year even after cuts to state spending.

Oil accounts for about half of Angola’s GDP, 80% of tax revenues and 90% of export earnings.

"I don’t think dos Santos is going there to beg but there will be some negotiations around increased funding from China," said Cobus de Hart, Angola analyst with NKC African Economics in Cape Town.

Beijing has issued oil-backed loans to Angola since 2003, a year after it emerged from a 27-year civil war. Including the latest hydropower loan, those debts now amount to more than $20bn.

"Dos Santos is one of the few leaders in Africa who can actually single-handedly raise billions," said Anthony Lopes Pinto, MD of Imara Securities Angola.

"Angola is the largest recipient of Chinese foreign direct investment (FDI) in Africa and increased FDI is one of the ways to avoid recession." (Reuters 09-06-2015)

SOUTH AFRICA'S INWARD, OUTWARD INVESTMENT FALLS

SA has retained its position as both the largest recipient of foreign direct investment (FDI) into Africa and the biggest African investor into the rest of the continent, but has seen declines in both inward and outward investment over the past year.

This parallels a fall of more than 8% in the volume of FDI projects that Africa received overall, even though the value of the projects soared 136% to a record high, boosted by a handful of large investments, particularly in North Africa, according to EY's latest Africa attractiveness survey. The survey also found there had been a marginal slip in investors' perceptions of Africa, which reached the lowest level since 2011, mainly because of political risk factors such as instability and corruption.

"Africa is at an inflexion point," said EY, which urged African leaders to make deliberate and urgent choices to ensure that the continent could continue to attract FDI at the rates seen over the past five years.

"We are starting to see a recovery in the rest of the world, and Africa will find it is having to compete for that capital," said EY SA's Chief Ajen Sita. The survey found a fall in the number of FDI projects announced into SA last year, with the country netting only 121 new projects, down 17.7% on the 2013 figure, as the largest investors, such as Germany and Spain, announced fewer projects.

But SA still gets the largest FDI of any country on the African continent, at double the next closest competitor for capital. The survey measures only investment in capital projects that create new capacity and jobs, not cross-border mergers and acquisition activity. Southern Africa as a whole attracts about one-third of all the FDI projects in Africa.

SA's companies ranked as the continent's second-biggest investor group overall, launching 53 projects last year, down from 65 in 2013. Western Europe as a region still accounts for most of the FDI into Africa but the US is the single largest investor.

The decline in the number of FDI projects that Africa attracted last year correlated with changing perceptions of Africa's outlook.

Mr. Sita said it was the first year since EY began its survey five years ago that investors said the outlook had deteriorated.

More than 50% still feel positive about Africa's prospects but the trend is starting to reverse, and there is a sharp contrast between investors who are already in Africa, who rate it as the number one investment destination in the world, and those who are not on the continent, who see it as the second-worst destination globally (after the CIS countries, which are former Soviet republics).

The main barriers to FDI are perceptions of political instability, corruption and weak security. But poor infrastructure, skills and transparency in regulation were also concerns for investors, EY said.(BD 04-06-2015)

MAURITANIA POVERTY RATE DROPS SIGNIFICANTLY

Mauritanian minister of economic affairs and development Sidi Ould Tah said on Friday that the level of poverty in the country declined by 11 points between 2008 and 2014.

Poverty fell by 1.8 points per year on average during this period, Ould Tah said at the publication of households' living conditions survey results conducted in 2014.

He added that poverty rate in Mauritania fell from 42 percent in 2008 to 31 percent in 2014, thanks to institutional reforms implemented in recent years.

Such reforms enabled to achieve significant economic growth rate which had a concrete positive impact on the poorest segments of the society, the minister explained.

The survey was conducted on a cross section of 9,700 families across all regions of the country.

Speaking at the same occasion, Singway Viera, director of operations for Mauritania at the World Bank, highlighted the economic progress achieved in Mauritania during the past period.

She welcomed the growth rate recorded by Mauritanian economy and which reached 7 percent. (APA 06-06-2015)

ISLAMIC DEVELOPMENT BANK FINANCES PROJECTS IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Islamic Development Bank Group has funded projects in Mozambique with an overall value of over US$300 million since the country joined the bank in 1995, said the Mozambican Minister for the Economy and Finance.

Minister Adriano Maleiane, cited by Mozambican news agency AIM also said there were 22 projects funded by the bank underway in Mozambique, valued at over US$160 million.

On Wednesday Maleiane announced the 40th annual meeting of the Islamic Development Bank Group in Maputo, which started Sunday and is due to end Thursday, 11 June.

The IDB President Ahmad Mohamed Ali, also said the IDB would continue continue to provide funding for priority sectors in Mozambique.

The IDB is an international financial institution based in Saudi Arabia, founded in December 1973 with the aim of accelerating economic development and social progress of Member States.

The organisation currently has 56 member countries, including 23 in Africa, and Mozambique is the only member from the southern African region. (08-06-2015)

EL HIWAR PROJECT – BUILDING A PARTNERSHIP BETWEEN THE EU AND THE LEAGUE OF ARAB STATES

The College of Europe, together with the British Council, is managing the **EU funded project 'Training and Information Course on Euro-Arab Diplomacy**'. The project has been initiated by the European Commission - League of Arab States Liaison Office. It started in June 2013 and will last until June 2015. It aims at improving the flow of information and promoting dialogue among officials working in European Union institutions and in the League of Arab States (LAS) Secretariat. For this reason, it has been named *El Hiwar,* the Arabic word for dialogue.

In the framework of the project, a training course on the **functioning of the European Union and EU-Arab relations** took place in Brussels from 7 to 10 April 2014 for 24 officials from the LAS. It included visits to EU institutions and meetings with its representatives.

More recently, two groups of officials from LAS member states attended an intensive English course specialized in **EU terminology** in order **to improve their communication and EU terminology skills**. In total **29 officials** came to Canterbury, UK, from 10 to 21 November 2014 (group 1) and from 24 November to 5 December 2014 (group 2). As a part of the programme, the participants had the opportunity to visit London and the Canterbury Lodge where they met the Lord Major of Canterbury. Participants also attended training sessions on the following topics: Focus on the EU and the institutions, Critical thinking skills: "reading between the lines", Key facts & figures about Europe, Legal systems in the EU, presentation skills via practical exercises.

More activities will be organized in the context of the project in order to promote the development of the Euro-Arab partnership. (CoE 08-06-2015)

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