MEMORANDUM

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SUMMARY

MEDITERRANEAN: FACING UNPRECEDENTED ENERGY CHALLENGES

The Association of Mediterranean Energy Regulators (MEDREG) presented, on 25 January, a report on the "Evolution of the Mediterranean Energy Sector" highlighting the main results achieved by its members in terms of energy regulation in 2013-2015.
"The reports issued by MEDREG Working Groups have been relevant to support southern shore member regulators in achieving their objectives, testifying to the key role played by the Association in favour of the regulatory harmonisation of the region", MEDREG said on its website.

"While Mediterranean countries face unprecedented challenges in the energy sector, this publication presents detailed information on energy policy and regulation, two necessary key factors needed to tackle the energy efficiency challenges of the region", the Association said.(EC 26-01-2016)

http://www.medreg-regulators.org/Home.aspx

NIGERIA: NEW POWER TARIFFS TAKE EFFECT, MONDAY

The Chairman of the Nigerian Electricity Regulatory Commission, Dr. Anthony Akah, has said that the new tariffs approved for electricity consumers across the country will come into effect next Monday.
He said the new tariffs will enable the power distribution, generation and transmission companies to acquire needed infrastructure.

Speaking in Abuja on Thursday, Akah said there was no going back on the new tariffs and that the lack of cost-reflective tariffs had hindered the electricity companies from acquiring the necessary infrastructure.

He added that with the new tariffs, they would not have any excuse for not delivering on agreements they entered into with the government.

He said the Nigerian power sector reform must provide an appropriate pricing template, which had been lacking, leading to deficiency in revenues from power.

According to him, the new Multi-Year Tariff Order would enable the generating, transmission and distribution companies to provide the needed infrastructure for higher generation and supply of electricity to meet the needs of consumers.

Akah explained that under the new MYTO, all premises must be metered and consumers, who subscribe to specific metering models must be supplied meters within 60 days after which they would not be disconnected or charged on estimation if a meter was not supplied.

He also said that a Power Consumer Assistance Fund had been put in place to cater for the electricity needs of the less-privileged in the country.(APA 29-01-2016)

HUÍLA PROVINCE IN ANGOLA SEEKS CHINESE INVESTMENTS

The governor of the southern Angolan province of Huila, João Marcelino Tyipinge said Thursday in Lubango, he wanted China to invest in agriculture, livestock, mining and tourism in the province.

During a meeting with the Chinese ambassador to Angola, Cui Aimin, Governor Tyipinge noted that the government plans to diversify the economy and China's experience can provide support for new projects.

Tyipinge suggested investment in the production of rice and corn sectors where China has significant know how.

The governor also reminded the diplomat that Huíla province possessed a wide range of sectors in which Chinese businesspeople can invest and contribute to the welfare of the population. (29-01-2016)

KENYA: INVESTORS RAISE CONCERNS OVER MULTI-BILLION KONZA CITY PLAN

Developers eyeing a share of the proposed Konza Techno City are raising queries they want addressed before they can fully commit themselves to the multi-billion shillings project.

The Developers say the government must assure them that the Sh1.4 trillion project will have steady low cost energy as well as sufficient and uninterrupted water supply as stated in the city's plan.

Though construction of a section of the city is set to begin in April this year, investors eyeing the land on which the city will sit have held onto their funds as they wait for a proof that infrastructure will be rolled out as promised on paper.

At a developers' forum last week, eagerness to get a piece of the land was watered down by questions on electricity connection, water reliability, lease agreement format, traffic plan and how to prevent slums from sprouting in the smart city.

"By the time we come in to begin developments, we want to have guarantee of world-class infrastructure. We have big multinationals looking to set foot at Konza, we need proof that we will not be let down," said Kenya Association of Property Developers Chairman Hamish Govani at an interview last week.

Delegation of German Industry and Commerce in Kenya Project Assistant Thilo Gabriel Vogeler, said the initiative is "quite interesting," save for a few issues.

FREQUENT POWER BLACKOUTS

Mr. Vogeler poked holes into the plan by US firm, Tetra Tech which won a Sh2.1 billion contract to oversee planning and construction of the city.

"This (Konza city) is interesting especially for German suppliers of technology of renewable energy, power supply, power storage and efficiency technology, based on the smart city concept," said Mr. Vogeler.

"However, since frequent power blackouts are a common occurrence in Nairobi, I would like to know how they will ensure reliability and constant supply 60km away from Nairobi."

Mr. Vogeler also pointed out the lack of clear transport infrastructure in the project: "There is a mention of a transport concept in the published Konza marketing material but it is not clear how transport from Nairobi to the Techno City will be addressed especially to evade traffic."

The complaints come even as Konza Technopolis Development Authority (KoTDA) renews the call for investors to take up space in the first phase of the mega project. The expression of interest expires on Thursday this week.

Developers are to raise between Sh250 million and Sh2.6 billion for various projects in phase one, on about 400 acres of the 5,000 acres set aside for the development of Konza city.

Already, government has laid infrastructure for the first phase of the project and is expecting developers to move in and begin constructions.

The city is designed to be Africa's Silicon Savannah, contributing Sh100 billion (approximately 2 per cent) to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) once phase one is operational.

The land will be leased out to investors for the development of low and higher density buildings that accommodate both schools, commercial and residential premises.

However, developers are uncertain on the lease agreement. While developers want long-term leases because of the billions of shillings they plan to invest in Konza, government wants to sign a short-term renewable lease.

According to former ICT Permanent Secretary Bitange Ndemo, the biggest problem is to identify the serious developers to take up land at Konza.

“There are some who just want land and they will not develop it,” he said.

“It is important that government adopts the short-term lease format where developers are given only six months to begin construction from the time of obtaining the land, failure to adhere means the loss of land to a more serious tenant.”

ICT Cabinet Secretary Joe Mucheru is optimistic that this year there will be a lot of activity as developers begin putting up their structures in April.

The project, to be set up through a public-private partnership, will see the government provide land and build key infrastructure such as road, railway, water, telecoms and sewerage systems.

“We have a firm foundation at Konza. We expect to see some activity, some ground-breaking, the roads have been done, the first Sh1.2 billion building which hosts the KoTDA offices and is a mixed use facility is expected March this year,” said Mr. Mucheru at an interview last week.

“Before the buildings take off, we are constantly engaging investors and the private sector to ensure that there is business continuity and clarity on several issues.”

KoTDA chief executive John Tanui said developers want to know the position on a number of issues.

“We want to bring up Konza to be right, so we are working on various aspects of water, power, transport to ensure constant reliability without any setbacks.”

HARD TO MAKE DECISIONS

He added that the ministry and all stakeholders are providing the necessary support to ensure that the bottlenecks are sealed.

KoTDA is also pushing for speedy enactment of its legal framework, The Konza Bill, to enable it sign leases with investors. The development of the city is at the moment guided by a parliamentary legal notice, making it hard for key decisions — such as project funding — to be executed.

Konza was last year allocated Sh0.8 billion from the exchequer. The amount however is insufficient for the laying of infrastructure at the site. It is among reasons to blame for the slow pace of the project.

However, Mr Tanui told Smart Company that the Konza Bill which was submitted to the Cabinet in May 2014, ones enacted will allow for the authority to seek funds from donors and hasten the project’s implementation.

Last week, KoTDA allayed fears of water shortage in future as the tech city becomes fully operational in 2018.

Mr. Tanui said the authority signed an agreement with Tanathi Water Services Board Nol-Turesh Loitoktok Water and Sanitation Company limited (NOLWASCO) to supply the techno city with 2000 cubic metres daily.

At the moment, Konza is served by 1,200 cubic metres daily from the seven boreholes which have already been dug in the City. For implementation of phase 1, the city requires 1000 cubic metres.

“The Nol-Turesh water will complement the boreholes that have been drilled on site with a combined yield of 1200 m3/day that will provide water especially for construction of Phase 1A and potentially for the early years of Phase 1,” Mr Tanui said.

Konza Techno City is a national flagship Vision 2030 project with the objective of attracting investors, and more than 230,000 people living and working at the technopolis when it’s complete.

“We are working with other government agencies to finalise on the key infrastructure such as power, broadband, access roads, rail services, water and sewerage that will be concluded in time to match investors timelines. In addition, we will have a dedicated police post to ensure security for all participating in the initial developments at Konza City,” Eng Tanui said.(Daily Nation 26-01-2016)

CAMEROON RECEIVES US$1M GRANT FROM IFAD TO PROMOTE AQUACULTURE

Cameroon and the United Nations International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD) on Friday signed an agreement to finance the Aquaculture Entrepreneurship Promotion Project (PPEA) that will help to establish over 300 small enterprises in the fish-farming sector.

A statement issued by IFAD says 30 per cent of these enterprises will be managed by women and 50 per cent by young people. In total, the new project is expected to create 1,500 new jobs.

The total cost of the new project is US$3.3 million. The funding includes a $1 million IFAD grant as well as a $2.3 million contribution from the government. The agreement was signed in Rome by Cameroonés Minister of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries, Dr.Taiga and the Associate Vice President of IFAD in charge of Programmes Management Department, Périn Saint Ange.

Currently in Cameroon, fish production does not meet domestic demand estimated at 400,000 tonnes due to lack of fishing equipment and qualified fishermen. As a consequence, the country imports more than 200,000 tonnes of fish products per year for national consumption.

PPEA will pilot, at a small scale, the implementation of the Sustainable Aquaculture Development Plan for Cameroon. It aims to promote profitable aquaculture enterprises that create jobs in the South, Littoral and Centre regions of the country.

Aquaculture can help to increase the incomes of rural populations, improve their livelihood and reduce poverty in rural areas, said Bernard Mwinyel Hien, IFAD Representative and Country Programme Manager for Cameroon. One of the innovations in this new project is that it applies a business incubator approach that nurtures entrepreneurialism and supports the development of new enterprises.

The project will help to develop partnerships among those involved in the fish farming sector, including the private sector which plays a role in the production, processing and marketing of fish.

Implemented by the Ministry of Livestock, Fisheries and Animal Industries, the project will also help fishermen access adequate training and advisory support services.

Since 1981, IFAD has invested a total of $142.1 million in 10 programmes and projects in Cameroon. This has generated a total investment of $371.0 million, benefiting 578,400 households.(APA 29-01-2016)

NATIONAL BANK OF ANGOLA “RATIONALISES” FOREIGN EXCHANGE AVAILABLE TO COMMERCIAL BANKS

The governor of the National Bank of Angola (BNA) said Thursday in Luanda that the BNA is promoting the “rationalisation” of foreign exchange to commercial banks, but gave assurances that the resources available for 2016 “are enough”, according to Angolan news agency Angop.

“For 2016, we have enough resources to generate the growth rates we have pointed to or that will be established within the framework of the Government’s investment programme” said José Pedro de Morais Júnior.

The governor of the BNA said that in Angola´s new economic climate there is reduced availability of foreign currency that commercial banks buy through BNA auctions.

The lack of foreign currency in Angola has led commercial banks to apply restrictions – or simply to suspend – customers taking out dollars from the bank, the currency needed for trips abroad, to ensure education or health spending abroad. There are also delays of several months in bank transfers abroad.

According to the governor of the BNA, Angola’s net international reserves in December totalled US$24.1 billion, a decrease of 11.53 percent compared to 2014, but still sufficient to cover six months of imports.

José Pedro de Morais was speaking after the approval by the Council of Ministers, of the national strategy to deal with the continuous decrease of Angolan oil revenues, which includes giving priority access to foreign currency to national productive sectors. (29-01-2016)

UGANDAN INSURER FITS LIBERTY'S PLAN

JSE-listed insurer Liberty Holdings has entered Uganda's short-term insurance market by acquiring a majority stake in a general insurance group in the country.

The acquisition is part of Liberty's aggressive acquisition plans in the rest of Africa and expands its short-term insurance offering to three African countries.

Sandile Hlophe, the CE of the Group Arrangements business at Liberty, said the company was also looking to buy consulting businesses in the employee benefits space in SA.

"We have bought majority control in a Ugandan short-term insurer," Mr. Hlophe said. The name would be publicly announced in the next couple of days.

Through its Heritage Insurance subsidiary, Liberty has a short-term insurance presence in Kenya and Tanzania.

Mr. Hlophe was recruited last year from EY, where he was transaction advisory services leader for Africa.

The Group Arrangements business includes the Liberty Corporate, Liberty Health and Africa Insurance units.

Mr. Hlophe said Liberty also planned to grow its insurance business in Africa through affinity partnerships.

With the affinity model, Liberty is able to team up with a company that wants to sell insurance to its clients. These companies include retailers and telecommunication companies that need an insurance underwriter to sell insurance.

Liberty said it was also tying up with community groups such as churches and burial schemes in such arrangements.

The company is also leveraging off its parent Standard Bank in the rest of Africa by underwriting or selling insurance through Stanbic.

Mr. Hlophe said Liberty had core insurance operations in nine of the 16 African countries in which it operated. These were largely life insurance partnerships and the plan was to roll out short-term insurance through the affinity model.

"We want to enter short-term insurance in markets where we have life affinity partnerships," Mr Hlophe said.

He said the plan was to roll out insurance in all 16 countries by 2020.

As far as growing in the employee benefits market was concerned, Mr. Hlophe said Liberty was highly focused on expanding its consulting capability.

The consulting businesses would be in areas such as retirement and health.

"We will be acquiring consulting businesses. We are going to be making a lot of noise. We have a pipeline of potential acquisitions in the employment benefits space," Mr. Hlophe said.

He said Liberty had acquired a minority shareholding in asset-consulting business MenteNova last year, with a view to increasing this over time.

The appetite for deals in the employment benefits space comes after Liberty failed to acquire Alexander Forbes when private equity owners sold the business.

Alexander Forbes, a specialist in employee benefits, was acquired by Mercer, a subsidiary of Marsh & McLennan.

Another insurer looking to grow its corporate staff offerings is Sanlam.

The Cape-based insurer recently created a new business, Sanlam Corporate, and hired respected insurance professional Junior Ngulube, who previously headed Munich Re in sub-Saharan Africa.

Through Sanlam Corporate, Sanlam wants to offer "companies a holistic corporate solution for them and their employees", it said earlier in the year.

Sanlam said the solution included life insurance, general insurance, investments, health insurance, retirement, financial planning and advice for staff.

In Africa, Liberty will face competition from Sanlam, Old Mutual and MMI, which have budgeted to grow their insurance footprints in the rest of the continent.(BD 28-01-2016)

ETHIOPIA: AU BOSS APPOINTS OUTGOING AFDB PRESIDENT TO HEAD PEACE FUND

The Chairperson of the Commission of the African Union (AU), Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, has appointed Dr. Donald Kaberuka, as the AU High Representative for the Peace Fund, the AU said in a statement on Thursday.

The new High Representative for the Peace Fund will assume various responsibilities including mobilizing additional resources for AU peace and security-related activities.

“The Chairperson of the Commission, through the appointment of Dr. Kaberuka, is sending a strong signal to the international community on the AU’s commitment to work towards finding sustained, predictable and flexible funding mechanisms to support AU-led peace operations, as expressed in the common African position on the report of the UN High-Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations (HIPPO) and subsequent report of the UN Secretary General entitled the Future of UN Peace Operations: Implementation of the Recommendations of the High Level Independent Panel on Peace Operations,” the statement said.

Donald Kaberuka, a Rwandan economist and former Minister of Finance, is also the outgoing President of the African Development Bank Group, and Chairman of the Board of Directors. He is currently serving on the Board of Trustees of the World Economic Forum, the Mandela Institute (Minds) and the Mo Ibrahim Foundation.

Kaberuka has also joined the Center for Public Leadership Community as a Hauser Leader-in-Residence. “He is expected to bring to the AU his globally appreciated knowledge on development financing, as well as his well-known dedication to Africa,” the statement concludes.(APA 28-01-2016)

INDONESIAN INVESTMENT IN MOZAMBIQUE REACHES US$180 MILLION

Indonesia investment in oil and gas in Mozambique until the end of 2015 totalled around US$180 million, focusing on natural gas, said the Indonesian Ambassador, Harbangan Napitupulu, at a meeting with Mozambican President Filipe Nyusi.

The diplomat, presenting farewell greetings to the President of Mozambique, noted that Besmindo Pemba Semesta, established in Pemba, in the northern province of Cabo Delgado, and Buzi Hydrocarbons Pte Ltd. (BHPL), in Sofala province, had invested US$175 million.
BHPL plans to drill for natural gas in the Buzi block, located along the Mozambique sedimentary basin to ascertain the potential for hydrocarbons.
If prospecting and further exploration are successful, BHPL, which holds 75 percent of the rights to the Block, expects commercial production can begin in 2018.
The outgoing ambassador also reiterated Indonesia’s wish to strengthen economic relations with Mozambique. (28-01-2016)

MOZAMBICAN CURRENCY TURNAROUND ‘WILL NOT LAST’

The Mozambican metical’s turnaround from being one of Africa’s biggest losers last year to the best performer globally so far in 2016 probably will not last.

The currency has gained 7% against the dollar this year, reversing a 32% decline in 2015 that was its biggest drop in two decades. Still, it is poised to weaken this year because of slowing Chinese growth and the stronger US dollar, Hanns Spangenberg, senior economist at NKC African Economics, said.

"The largest pressure on the metical will likely stem from Mozambique's current account deficit," he said.

Mozambique's current account gap, the broadest measure of trade in goods and services, is forecast at 45.3% of gross domestic product this year, the highest in the world after Libya and Tuvalu, according to International Monetary Fund data. (Bloomberg 27-01-2016*)*

IMF DEPUTY DIRECTOR VISITS BOTSWANA, GHANA

International Monetary Fund (IMF) Deputy managing director Min Zhu is visiting Botswana and Ghana from January 26 to February 2 to participate in regional conferences and engage with policy makers and other stakeholders, APA learnt here Wednesday.
The visits will also provide an opportunity to strengthen the Fund's engagement with both countries.

Zhu arrived in Botswana on January 26 and is expected to leave on January 31. He will meet with President Ian Khama, senior government officials, and representatives of civil society and the private sector.

Zhu will deliver a keynote speech in Gaborone at a regional conference on Small and Middle-Income Countries (SMICs).

Participants will include central bank governors, ministers and other senior officials from a number of countries.

"The conference will speak to the main challenges that SMICs in sub-Saharan Africa are faced with, and the policies required to confront the challenges effectively in order to facilitate their transition to high-income status," Zhu said.

From January 31 to February 2, Zhu will be in Accra where he will meet with President John Mahama and other senior leaders, along with business leaders, economists, and representatives of civil society.

He also will deliver a keynote speech at a conference on the value of Enhanced Data for Better Macro-Policies in Africa. (APA 27-01-2016)

GUINEA-BISSAU RECEIVES PALACE OF JUSTICE BUILT BY CHINA

The president of Guinea-Bissau said Tuesday in Bissau during the ceremony to take delivery of the Palace of Justice gifted to the country by the Chinese authorities, that the existing partnership with the People's Republic of China was a strategic choice for the Guinea-Bissau.

"Guinea-Bissau gives the partnership with China special attention within its social development strategy," said President José Maria Vaz who recalled Chinese involvement in the construction of the People's Palace and Government Palace, housing for Guinean armed forces veterans, and refurbishment of the Palace of the Republic.

The Chinese ambassador in Guinea-Bissau, Wang Hua, said while handing over the Palace of Justice to president Mário Vaz that China expects even greater future cooperation between the two countries.

The Palace of Justice of Guinea-Bissau financed by China and built by Chinese company Jiangsu Jiangdu Construction Group Co" represented an investment of US$20 million.

The new court is made up of four buildings, each with four floors, and houses the Supreme Court, the Accounts and Administrative Courts and the Attorney General’s Office.
(27-01-2016)

‘AFRICA WRITHING’ IN THE HARSH REALITY OF CHINESE SLOWDOWN

Years of rapid economic growth across sub-Saharan Africa fuelled hopes of a prosperous new era. To many, the continent was emerging with economies that were no longer dependent on the fickle global demand for its raw resources.

But as China’s economy slows and its once seemingly insatiable hunger for commodities wanes, many African economies are tumbling — quickly. Since the start of this year, the outlook across the continent has grown grimmer, especially in its two biggest economies, Nigeria and SA. Their currencies fell to record lows this month as China, Africa’s biggest trading partner, announced that imports from Africa plummeted nearly 40% last year.

"We can see what drove the growth in Africa when demand goes away," says Greg Mills, director of economic research group the Brenthurst Foundation. "Well, demand has gone away, and it’s not pretty."

The International Monetary Fund has in recent months sharply cut its projections for the continent. Credit rating agencies have downgraded or lowered their outlook on commodity exporters such as Ghana, Angola, Mozambique and Zambia, which were the darlings of gl investors just more than a year ago.

Nigeria, Africa’s biggest oil producer, is reeling from the crash in crude prices, at the same time as President Muhammadu Buhari tries to deal with Islamic extremist group Boko Haram.

With oil accounting for 80% of state revenue, the government may also lack the resources to quell potential unrest in the Niger Delta, the source of the country’s oil.

Its currency, the naira, collapsed this month after the central bank placed restrictions on the sale of US dollars to protect its shrinking foreign reserves. The currency fell to about 300 naira to the dollar in Nigeria’s black market, down from about 240 naira early last month.

Weakening currencies will make it harder for Nigeria — and many other African governments — to repay China for loans used to build large infrastructure projects.

The tumbling naira and China’s downturn are also reverberating across private businesses, large and small.

Happiness Awonegbe, a businessman in Lagos whose companies import paper, tyres and other goods from China, says the restrictions on the dollar make it difficult for him to place orders, and it takes longer for Chinese suppliers to fill them, apparently because of reductions in their workforces. "What happens in China affects Nigeria," Mr. Awonegbe says.

As the slumping economies have underscored the continent’s growing vulnerability to changes in China, they have quieted much of the heady talk of "Africa rising".

Growing consumer demand and an emerging middle class, while real in many African nations, are insufficient to offset a fall in the continent’s main driver of growth, which remains commodities.

But experts also see bright spots on the map. While previously high-flying commodity exporters, such as Angola, have been hardest hit, other countries are showing resilience.

"The ‘Africa rising’ narrative wasn’t true, but neither is the diametrically opposed argument that Africa is no longer rising," says Simon Freemantle, a senior political economist at Standard Bank. "The truth is obviously in between."

He expects to see more fragmentation and divergence across the continent in future. "And what’s going to determine that divergence is how prudent countries have been during the good times. Have they embedded macro reforms? Have they saved?"

Mr. Freemantle says East African countries, including Kenya and Ethiopia, which have been forced to diversify their economies in part because of their dearth of commodities, will probably continue to enjoy robust growth.

Still, experts say, most nations failed to take advantage of the boom years to carry out long-term changes to their economies. They failed to deal with some of the biggest obstacles to sustained growth — such as the severe lack of electricity — and spur industries that would create jobs.

Zambia, whose economy depends on copper exports, has suffered from waning demand from China and a drop in copper prices. Mines have closed, and thousands of jobs have been lost in recent months.

Critics say Zambia could have taken advantage of the boom by negotiating better terms with Chinese companies, including securing technology transfers or employment for infrastructure projects.

Zambia used revenue from copper to increase the salaries of civil servants but did not invest in potential growth industries, notably tourism and agriculture.

Edith Nawakwi, a former finance minister in Zambia and now leader of an opposition party, says leaders could have asked the Chinese to build infrastructure that would have furthered regional integration, business and trade.

"What we need is a change in the way we approach China," Ms Nawakwi says. "You get from China what you ask for."

"The Chinese are not romantic anymore about their relations with Africa — far from it," Ibbo Mandaza, a political analyst and businessman in Zimbabwe. "For them, it’s purely economic." (NYT 27-01-2016)

ETHIOPIA: AU LAUNCHES AFRICAN UNION LEADERSHIP ACADEMY PROJECT

The Administration and Human Resources Management Directorate (AHRMD) of the African Union Commission (AUC) on Thursday launched the African Union Leadership Academy project at the AU headquarters in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia under the theme “Driving the Africa We Want.”

Officially launching the project, the Chairperson of the Commission, Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, said the academy would be providing a systematic way of training towards the implementation of Agenda 2063.

“This project lies at the heart of the priorities and flagship projects of Agenda 2063: The Africa we want” said Dr. Dlamini Zuma.

The Chairperson emphasized the need for capacity building mechanisms such as the leadership academy, since Africa's greatest resource is its human resources. She then went on to add that the academy will become a strategic node, and means to facilitate service delivery and result-oriented program implementation on the continent, as well as provide knowledge-based responses to any challenges.

The new project will facilitate the development of professional skills of AU staff members for effective policy design and work place efficiency that will create a high level pan-African learning and development agency, driving capacity building solutions to challenges of managing the process of realization of Agenda 2063 for the continent's people, Dr. Dlamini Zuma noted. (APA 27-01-2016)

MACAU WANTS TO PROMOTE PRODUCTS FROM PORTUGUESE-SPEAKING COUNTRIES ACROSS CHINA

The Macau Trade and Investment Promotion Institute (IPIM) wants all of China to be aware of products from Portuguese-speaking countries, said Glória Batalha Ung.

The executive member of IPIM told local Portuguese-language newspaper Tribuna de Macau that contacts are ongoing with China exhibition centres to sign protocols with a view to promoting food products from Portuguese-speaking countries in various Chinese provinces.

IPIM currently has offices in Guangdong, Fujian, Sichuan, Liaoning and Zhejiang and is preparing to open a facility in Hubei Province and strengthening its presence in Guangzhou, the provincial capital of Guangdong.

Glória Ung also said IPIM had plans to open offices in Lisbon, Portugal and São Paulo, Brazil, and the plans for the Portuguese capital are at a more advanced stage and will take place this year.

In terms of strengthening relations between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries Ung said IPIM was about to set up a specific department dedicated to the Portuguese-speaking with the mission of managing the product and services website of the Portuguese-speaking countries .

This month IPIM promoted and showcased food products from Portuguese-speaking countries in Fuzhou, the capital of Fujian Province and in Guangzhou, the capital of Guangdong. (29-01-2016)

SUDAN TO OPEN BORDER WITH SOUTH SUDAN FOR THE FIRST TIME

Sudan's President Omar Hassan al-Bashir ordered the opening of his country's border with South Sudan for the first time since the south's secession in 2011, paving the way for better economic links between the two nations.

The border was closed in 2011 when relations deteriorated after the south seceded following a long civil war, taking with it three quarters of the country's oil, estimated at 5-billion barrels of proven reserves by the US Energy Information Administration.

"President Omar al-Bashir issued a decree today ordering the opening of borders with the state of South Sudan and ordered the relevant authorities to take all measures required to implement this decision on the ground," Sudan's state news agency SUNA reported on Wednesday.

Michael Makuei Lueth, South Sudan's government spokesman, said the reopening of the border would boost economic ties.

"This is a positive move in a right direction because this is what will lead to the normalization of our relations with Sudan," he said.

South Sudanese President Salva Kiir had unexpectedly and unilaterally announced a normalisation of relations on Tuesday in response to Mr. Bashir agreeing to cut the transit fees for South Sudanese oil crossing Sudan's territory via pipelines to the Red Sea last week.

Relations have been tense between the two countries since 2011 as they failed to agree on borders and the status of several regions over which both sides claim sovereignty.

Both countries accuse the other of backing armed rebellions against each other's governments.

Khartoum accuses Juba, the capital of South Sudan, of backing a rebellion in its Darfur region and a separate but linked insurgency in Blue Nile and South Kordofan. South Sudan denies the allegations.

(Reuters 28-01-2016)

AFRICA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH REMARKABLE DESPITE SETBACKS - ECA CHIEF

UN Under-Secretary General and Executive Secretary of the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Carlos Lopez has commended Africa for registering the highest economic growth in the current global slump.

Speaking at the 28th Executive Session of AU Executive Council Meeting on Wednesday in Addis Ababa, Lopez pointed out that despite conflicts, drop in demand and commodity prices, high currency volatility as well as devastating El Nino, Africa is going still at high speed pace of registering economic growth.

Lopez added that Africa mega projects including the new Suez Canal and the Grand Ethiopian Renaissance Dam have not been affected by the seasonal troubles.

We are hopeful that the fundamentals of our prospects are there and intact. We have internationally low debt levels, public deficit still under control and the steady increase in investment from countries like India and China have given us huge opportunity to trust our future he added

Lopez however lamented that there is high incidence of conflicts among African countries with low capital income, low life expectancy and meager economic opportunity.

He further revealed the economic performance of the conflict areas is on average 10 percent below that of conflict free areas in most GDP performance categories.

He said the extreme economic inequalities can in turn trigger violence and therefore called on governments to exert their maximum efforts to narrow the gap between poor and rich.

He finally expressed his optimism that both the African Renaissance and Agenda 2063 will be realized by utilizing natural resources, modernizing service, enhancing democracy good governance and sustaining peace and security in the continent.(APA 28-01-2016)

CABO VERDE CREATES TOURISM AND INVESTMENT AGENCY

The government of Cabo Verde (Cape Verde) announced the creation of the Cabo Verde Tourism and Investment Agency designed to provide better conditions to attract more foreign investment, promote domestic investment, and diversify and qualify the tourism sector, which contributes 20 percent to Gross Domestic Product (GDP).

Júlio Morais, former Cabo Verde Ambassador to China, who will chair the Tourism Agency said it would focus efforts and resources on the mobilisation of “adapted and innovative funding mechanisms” for small and medium-sized Cape Verdean companies.

The official promised to “continue to invest in improving the business climate, transforming it into a competitive factor and to create innovative tools and techniques to promote tourism.”

The new Cabo Verde Tourism and Investment Agency will coordinate three regional centres. One in the north, which will be located on S. Vicente island, one on the central island of Sal and another in the southern island of Santiago. (28-01-2016)

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