MEMORANDUM

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SUMMARY

EGYPT: EU TO SUPPORT ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT AND TRADE IN EGYPT

EU provides support to fostering enterprise development and trade in Egypt
H.E. Mr. Tarek Kabil, Minister of Trade and Industry, and Ambassador James Moran, Head of the European Union Delegation to Egypt, inaugurated the Trade and Domestic Market Enhancement Programme in presence of senior officials of the Egyptian Government, business leaders and civil society organisations.
This EU funded programme supports the Ministry of Trade and Industry and its affiliates in their efforts to facilitate competitiveness and job creation in the Egyptian economy in line with the targets set in the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030. The programme works in close coordination with the private sector to ensure that the maximum benefits offered by the Egypt/EU partnership can be harvested by the private sector in a manner that generates inclusive growth and jobs in the Egyptian economy.
"This programme provides a re-enforcement to the already strong trade and economic relationship between Egypt and the EU. As the largest trading partner to Egypt and the leading foreign investor in the country, the EU is committed to support further economic development in Egypt. This new programme is very timely, coinciding with the economic reform programme announced within the Sustainable Development Strategy of Egypt. The EU is proud to be part of translating this nation-wide strategy into actions in the trade and industry sectors. Through our support we will support the building of a prosperous Egypt for benefit of all Egyptians", Ambassador Moran said during the kick-off event.
Engineer Tareq Kabil, Minister of Trade and Industry, said that launching this programme embodies EgyptEU strategic partnership relations. With the EU being Egypt's biggest economic partner, there is a big opportunity to boost and develop such collaboration - whether under the bilateral Association Agreement or through the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM). He further referred to the EU implemented technical support programmes as means to spread the best work methods and to exchange expertise.
The Minister emphasised that the TDMEP supports the Ministry's efforts in uplifting the industry and trade sectors in a way that contributes to enhancing the competitiveness capacity of the Egyptian industrial sectors and in promoting their quality levels to compete domestically and abroad, while providing youths more job opportunities.
In line with the Sustainable Development Strategy 2030 and the Ministry work plan, the Programme targets the following goals: 1- Boosting Egypt's role in international trade through benefiting from transparent policies and international trade agreements. 2- Boosting industrial development through improving quality infrastructure necessary for liberalising trade, especially towards the EU. 3- Minimising the economic differences and creating more job opportunities through focusing on developing SMEs.

Background:

The Trade and Domestic Market Enhancement Programme, funded by the European Union, to the magnitude of EUR 20 million, are implemented by the Ministry of Trade and Industry. The Programme runs till the end of 2017. The general objective of the programme is to assist the Ministry in the implementation and execution of key policy reforms which help to improve Egypt's competitiveness and assist in its further integration into the regional and global economies. The Programme is structured around two components; foreign trade and trade agreements and industrial policy and quality infrastructure. With support of the EU, the Trade and Domestic Market Enhancement Programme will reinforce the business environment in Egypt by strengthening the capacity of different stakeholders in the trade & industry supply chain through: • Assisting the Ministry of Trade and Industry in developing the Trade and Industry Strategy for Egypt and in providing guidance and support for its implementation. • Establishing a modern and supportive regulatory framework that facilitates the development of a competitive industrial sector in Egypt. • Supporting the setup and development of EGYTRADER. • Developing institutional support mechanisms & procedures for the National Trade Facilitation Committee (NTFC). • Introducing risk management on border inspection and supporting electronic integration with other functionalities. • Providing a supportive environment for MSMEs and informal actors, building on analyses of their business processes for export. • Supporting the development of a modern, efficient and effective Quality Infrastructure that will enable Egyptian manufacturers to produce products that are safe, of good quality and competitive on international markets. • Facilitating trade by strengthening of institutional structures and technical capacities of quality infrastructure institutions with the aim of concluding mutual recognition agreements with major trading partners (such as ACAA with the EU)
(EEAS 11-02-2016)

BOTSWANA DEFENDS HIGH MILITARY EXPENDITURE

Botswana's Secretary for Economic and Financial Policy in the Ministry of Finance and Development Planning Dr Taufila Nyamazabo has defended government's expenditure on development budget, Yarona FM news reported here on Friday.
The expenditure has attracted criticism from many commentators and stakeholders saying Botswana does not need a huge budget for the military.

The radio station reports that Nyamazabo told attendants of a breakfast budget review recently that the military expenditure was huge because equipment had reached its lifespan hence the need for new equipment.

Among those who are concerned by the expenditure is leader of opposition Duma Boko, who says Botswana does not face any threats of war that warrants such expenditure.

Boko added that instead, Botswana is now becoming a threat to the region as they continue to acquire military equipment unnecessarily.

The Ministry of Defence Justice and Security was awarded close to P4 billion (over $355 million), an amount which was above all ministries.(APA 12-02-2016)

EGYPTIAN GOVERNMENT AND VISA INC. SIGN MOU

H.E. Dr. Khaled Hanafy, Minister of Supply and Internal Trade said, "The MOU is an additional step towards the empowerment of Egyptian citizens and signifies that the government is keen to enhance the quality of services offered to them. Visa, the most experienced company in the field, is financing the study that aims at transforming the current subsidy scheme and providing Egyptians with a payment tool that would provide more services and benefits. This will result in greater financial inclusion which requires cooperation amongst all stakeholders."

"We consider the study as a milestone in our greater plans for the development of Egypt by 2030. It reflects the government's resolve to address the challenges and improve the lives of Egyptians by collaborating with companies like Visa. It is a testament that we are seeking international standards when it comes to the services offered to our citizens," said H.E. Dr. Ashraf Al Arabi, Minister of Planning, Monitoring, and Administrative Reform.

"This MOU signing represents not only an important milestone in our ongoing cooperation with the Egyptian government, but is also a major step forward in our efforts to bring more Egyptians into the formal financial system, with all the associated benefits that brings," said Stephen Kehoe, senior vice president, Visa Inc. "Our shared vision for enhancing the quality of services and employing the latest payment technologies makes this partnership a great opportunity for Egyptian families, the financial services industry, merchants and the government alike."

As part of the MOU, the Egyptian government will first work with Visa on a study that reviews the current subsidy program, so that an informed action plan can be created to move the disbursement process to electronic payments. The study will also look into increasing electronic payment acceptance at subsidy-accepting merchants, especially bakeries, and capitalize on the widespread usage of mobile phones in the country.
Additionally, Visa will introduce payment innovations and share global best practices in risk management and anti-fraud applications.

The use of electronic payments will bring greater payment security and convenience to Egyptian families, while lowering costs and bringing increased transparency to the government subsidy program.

“Today, less than two percent of payments in Egypt are made electronically which is just one reason why this partnership can be so impactful,” said Tarek Elhousseiny, general manager for North and West Africa, Visa Inc. “The financial inclusion needs of Egypt have some similarities to those we have addressed in Latin America and other regions, which is why we are excited about the best practices we can bring to this partnership.”

Through this program, the Egyptian government hopes to improve the quality of services offered to its citizens, and adopt innovative payment technologies that will drive financial inclusion for more Egyptians. By providing fully functional digital payments accounts, the 22 million family beneficiaries, most of whom are unbanked, will gain easier access to other financial service offerings. The government also intends to include banks in the subsidy scheme given their growing role in financial inclusion.(05-02-2016)

SIERRA LEONE: WORLD BANK POISED TO PUT US$4M INTO FISHERIES SECTOR

The World Bank plans to spend US$4 million to boost Sierra Leone’s fishing industry, the World Bank Country Manager in Sierra Leone said Wednesday.

Mr. Parminder Brar said the programme, which is still under the design phase, is meant to boost the economy of the Ebola-ravaged West Africa country. He said the programme will involve the revival of a high tech monitoring system designed to forestall illegal fishing ongoing in the country.

The Bank estimates that over 80 illegal fishing vessels were engaged in the Sierra Leonean waters, which are depriving the country of much needed revenue, hence the need for monitoring.(APA 11-02-2016)

SIERRA LEONE: EU SIGNS €60M REGIONAL ROAD CONTRACT

The European Union and the Sierra Leone Government has signed a grant agreement for the construction of a major road linking Liberia and Sierra Leone, the Ministry of Finance said Friday.
The Senegalese company CSE was awarded the contract that involves 103km and will cost Eur 62.2m to complete, the ministry said.

The contract also includes the construction of three major bridges, as the road will pass through three rivers Moa, Wanje, and Sewa, said Dr Kaifala Marah, Minister of Finance and Economic Development.

He said the project will increase West African economic activities and connectivity among the people of Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

The road, when completed, will open up a vast area of agricultural production in the three countries, including coffee, cacao, and rice.

The road runs from the town of Bandajuma on the Sierra Leonean side to the Liberian boarder. It will take 36 months to complete.

European Union Ambassador to Sierra Leone, Peter Versteeg, said at the signing in Freetown that this is the largest project to be funded by the EU in the country. (APA 13-02-2016)

EU GIVES $5MILLION TOWARDS KENYA'S PREPARATIONS FOR 2017 POLLS

The Ambassador of the European Union (EU) to Kenya, Stefano A. Dejak, on Thursday handed over 560 million Shillings ($5million) from the EU to support Kenya's preparations for transparent, credible and peaceful elections in 2017.

Speaking to journalists in Nairobi, Ambassador Dejak said this is more than double the funding provided by the EU in 2013 in a bid to strengthen further Kenya's young and vibrant democracy.

“The growth and prosperity every Kenyan deserves depends on ensuring political stability and the full respect of the will of each and every citizen especially on polling day,” he said.

“Kenya is fast progressing as one of the leading democratic market economies in Africa. The European Union stands firmly as a reliable friend to every Kenyan citizen to make sure their dreams will come true,” he added.

The European Union's contribution will benefit the UNDP basket fund established to support Kenyan institutions in their efforts to make sure that the vote of every Kenyan will be respected and will make a difference in 2017.

Meanwhile, Alojz Peterle, former Prime Minister of Slovenia and currently Member of the European Parliament is in Kenya to meet key institutions, in particular the Independent Elections and Border Commission (IEBC), political leaders, officials, women and civil society leaders in his capacity as the former head of the EU Election Observation Mission in Kenya in 2013.

He said he is also here to exchange views on preparations for the 2017 elections, drawing on recommendations he made in 2013. (APA 11-02-2016)

NIGERIA: CUMMINS SEALS 300 MW POWER GENERATION PACT WITH SAPELE POWER

Cummins Cogeneration Limited has signed a 300 MegaWatts (MW) Power Purchase Agreement (PPA) with Sapele Power Plc, as part of its plans to build one of Africa's largest gas-fired power plants.

This partnership is coming just weeks after the company announced the signing of a 300 MW investment in neighbouring Beyin, Ghana.

Speaking at the event, held in London recently, Chairman of Cummins Cogeneration, Deepak Deepak said his company was “excited about our partnership with Sapele Power Plc, because we believe this synergy will bring strengths and capabilities that will deliver a clean and sustainable long-term energy solution for Nigerians.

“This project will be operated using Cummins Combined Heat and Power (CHP) lean burn gas generator sets, which emit up to five times less nitrogen oxide than comparable diesel generator sets and near-zero particulate matter.

“In adding to this, it offers a 48 per cent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions compared to traditional steam turbine engines, which makes this a highly efficient and environmentally sustainable project.”

Currently, Sapele Power Plc operates Nigeria's second largest power plant by an installed capacity of about 1020MW, capable of meeting the energy needs of around 750,000 homes at full capacity.

With this partnership, the plant will distribute electricity generated from the plant directly to Nigerian Bulk Electricity Trading Plc (NBET), supplying millions of homes and businesses with clean power.

Expressing delight on the signing of the agreement, Chairman of Sapele Power Plc, Anthony Onoh said: “We know that Nigerians have high expectations from the privatized power sector and that is why the company, has a strong focus on sustainable power generation, focused on capacity recovery from its existing asset, as well as expansion from a mix of projects which would double the plant installed capacity within the next three years.

"The project will be split into two phases; the first phase is expected to be completed and exporting power by July 2016 and the second phase is forecast for commissioned by December 2017. Upon completion, the project will supply approximately three billion kilo-watt-hours of electricity to the Nigerian grid per annum, which is approximately 10 per cent of total production today.

"We are innovatively rising to the challenge of improving performance at our generating station; as well as integrating more renewable energy into the grid."

Onoh added that talks with the U.S. EXIM Bank, the African Development Bank, and the African EXIM Bank about funding for the power generating plant expansion projects were ongoing.(The Guardian 05-02-2016)

SWAZILAND GOV'T APPEALS FOR MORE DONOR ASSISTANCE

Donor partners have been urged by the Swaziland government to help bring along more organisations to aid Swaziland in dealing with effects of natural disaster, local media report here Thursday.

The appeal was made to delegates, who included the Taiwanese ambassador to Swaziland, United Nations officials as well as government officials gathered at a conference on Effective Development Corporation in Mbabane, the capital, by Economic Planning and Development Minister Prince Hlangusemphi.

The minister acknowledged that the country's economic growth was not healthy due to the global economic situation as well as reduction in Southern African Customs Union (SACU) receipts.

He also highlighted the current drought which has resulted to farmers not being able to produce much from their fields.

"Perhaps you can assist us to develop bilateral programmes in addition to the assistance that we receive presently," he said, also noting that aid is not only in monetary form.(APA 11-02-2016)

RWANDA: GOVT TARGETS $100 MILLION FROM FLORICULTURE, HORTICULTURE EXPORTS

The Government targets $104 million annually from floriculture and horticulture sector by 2018, up from current $10 million, an official said yesterday.

Tony Nsanganira, the state minister for agriculture, said this would be possible owing to the increasing number of investors in floriculture growing in Rwanda.

He was speaking at a meeting with investors from Japan and session on Japan floriculture experimental study that seeks ways to boost flower growing in the country.

The minister noted that current earnings from floriculture are still low compared to vegetables and fruits.

During the dialogue, Japanese companies, including Toyota, Hachimantai City and research organisations, explored ways to intervene in funding a firm, Bloom Hills, for seeds and seedlings developing, cultivation techniques, agricultural techniques and logistics to expand their activities in Rwanda.

The Japanese firm, Bloom Hills, is already developing farms and greenhouses in Kinigi Sector in Musanze District for flower growing.

“The government had already started growing flowers and horticulture in Gishari centre and few private investors have come on board in Rulindo District, but floriculture is the sector where we have not yet generated any profits.

We need more investors to develop the sector,” Nsanganira said.

He added that ‘because floriculture requires high technology and investment in transport, harvesting and storage, farmers would embrace the practice once they are trained and supported by the investors.

Nsanganira said flower products are still few compared to horticulture but past experience and challenges could be foundation of progress.

“Our investment will add value to Rwandan exports, expand to the world market as well as create job opportunities for the youth in rural areas,” Shungo Harada, managing director of Bloom Hills, said.

Japan is trying to expand floriculture in sub-Saharan Africa by experimenting with their technology using specific flowers from Japan to Rwanda, especially those with high prices on the international market, thus contributing to foreign exchange earnings.

Some of the technology also to be used includes solar energy, geothermal power, and rain harvesting to facilitate the growing.

Harada’s company targets to establish an export system to export flowers to The Netherlands and Japan, with the initial volume planned for 480,000 flower stems.

Starting next month, Bloom Hills Company plans to begin shipping 18,000 plants (stems) per week. Takayuki Kusajima, of Toyota Motors Corporation, said Rwanda has potential to produce flowers with high value.

Kenya and Ethiopia top sub-Saharan Africa in exporting flowers, earning $699 million and $610 million, respectively, according to 2014 figures.(New Times 04-02-2016)

SWAZILAND GOV’T TARGETS $706M REVENUE EARNINGS FROM TAXATION

The Swaziland Revenue Authority (SRA) has a target to collect $425 million for the 2016/17 budget, which, when added to the $281.3million from the Southern African Customs Union (SACU) pool, will give the country a total budget of $706 million, APA reports here on Thursday.

This amount will form part of the 2016/17 budget which is expected to be slightly over last financial year’s $937.5million.

SRA acknowledges that it will be a challenge to meet whatever targets will be set for next financial year as it is rather difficult to forecast the impact of the current drought situation, further projecting a decline of SACU revenue.

SACU comprises Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Swaziland and South Africa.

In the past financial year, revenue and grants accounted for $912.5million and of this amount, external grants amounted to $16.8 million, a reduction from the previous year as one of the European Union’s grants for agricultural developments dropped.(APA 11-02-2016)

ETHIOPIA: TEXTILE INDUSTRY TOWARDS ACCELERATING INTENDED DEVELOPMENT

In Ethiopia, textile industry is undergoing major development that is aided by the availability of a skilled and highly motivated workforce. This surge has been helped by the country's impressive economic growth over the past years. The country determined to expand and develop cotton plantation and apparel industries in order to realize the national economic development ambition. This can also help the country to benefit from the growing international market since the major target of the government for the industry is the export market.

Last week, Ethiopian Textile Industry Development Institute (ETIDI) presented the 2015/16 first half year cotton development and textile industry performance evaluation for stakeholders. The evaluation shows that during the 2015 production year, it was not managed to meet planned cotton production. During the same production year, the planned land for cotton production was 262,000 hectares but the actual land covered was only 65,000 hectares.

Due to the El Niño, more than 14,000 hectares of cotton cultivation were damaged and replanted with other short term crops to overcome the effects of the drought. A total of 65,000 hectares were reserved from sugar to cotton production. Besides, other areas with potential for cotton cultivation such as Shinile, Wabe-shebele, Genale Basin are also under consideration for cotton development while a total of 43,000 tone lint cotton is expected in the coming year.

On the other hand, it was noted that on the evaluation there are several challenges associated with cotton production. The first is the dalliance of cotton purchase by the Ethiopian Industrial Inputs Development Enterprise from producers. The other challenge is unwise use of loan (loan taken for cotton production is utilized for other purposes). Out of 200 farms loan given for cotton production during 2015, only 40-50 per cent are used in cotton production and the rest are misused loan. Further, the other major challenge facing that country that produces cotton is the holding of land without commencing production for a long time. Around 100,000 hectares of land were held by investors for 10 years without commencing production.(Ethiopian Herald 03-02-2016)

GAMBIA SIGNS $24M FUNDING FOR READ, WATER PROJECTS

Gambia has signed a $24 million funding agreement with Saudi Fund for Development (SFD), meant for the construction of the 'Lamin koto-Pasamas road' in the Central River Region of the country and to provide clean drinking water for rural communities in the area.

The agreement was signed by Gambian Minister of Finance and Economic Affairs, Abdou Colley and the Managing Director of the SFD, Yusseph Ibrahim Albadsah, at Sate House in Banjul on Friday evening.

Minister Colley described the agreement as a step forward in overcoming short falls on the construction of the strategic122km road as well as the provision of clean drinking water for communities in rural Gambia.

He said the Saudi Funds has been a good partner to the Gambia government in terms of funding in different areas of developments.

According to him, the project will henceforth resume soon and work is expected to be completed given the availability of Funds thanks to SFD.(APA 13-02-2016)

VODACOM BUSINESS NIGERIA, ETISALAT SEAL ENTERPRISE PARTNERSHIP

Vodacom Business Nigeria and Etisalat Nigeria have announced a partnership agreement that enables Vodacom provide mobile voice and data services to its customers and equips Etisalat to provide improved enterprise solutions to its customers. This strategic partnership brings together two forward-looking companies focused on delivering superior telecommunication services to businesses in Nigeria.

With this Partnership, Vodacom is now well-placed to offer a fuller package of custom-made enterprise class Mobile Services to businesses in Nigeria through its Enterprise Mobile Voice Solution.

The Partnership enables Etisalat to provide point to point and point to multi-point connectivity solutions to its customers, thereby offering them a one-stop shopping experience. Furthermore, Vodacom and Etisalat customers will be provided with a single billing platform to negate the trouble of dealing with multiple communications service providers.

Commenting on the partnership, Chief Executive Officer of Etisalat Nigeria, Matthew Willsher said, “In the fast paced telecommunication market of today, the successful companies will be those who build the right strategic partnerships to accelerate innovation, growth, and offer customers more value for their money. Etisalat is committed to offering quality services both in voice and data, and to continuously provide solutions that help enterprises and startups excel in their businesses. This partnership brings together two outstanding industry leaders, with proven track record of innovation.”(IT News Africa 10-02-2016)

EASTERN AFRICA RECORDS STRONG ECONOMIC GROWTH AMID RISING INEQUALITIES

Although most countries in Eastern Africa have experienced strong economic growth and are broadly improving the living standards of their citizens, national averages often mask uneven progress and rising disparities, according to the UN Economic Commission for Africa announced on Thursday.
Inequality is still a growing concern in Africa and there is robust evidence that it undermines economic and social development in many parts of the continent. The meeting of the Intergovernmental Committee of Experts in Nairobi, organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), discussed how to attain inclusive development.

The participants to the meeting examined the African Social Development Index (ASDI), as a tool to measure inclusive development and social transformation, and a way to ensure economic development translates into wellbeing for African populations.

ECA launched ASDI to help African countries track progress made towards the reduction of human exclusion, to identify specific social challenges and thus develop equitable and inclusive social policies.

Adrian Gauci, ECA Senior Economist who presented the ASDI explained that the index follows a life-cycle approach recognizing that people can face different forms of exclusion at different stages of their lives. This Index aims at estimating the depth of human exclusion in six key dimensions over time, including survival, nutrition, education, employment, means of subsistence, and decent life for the elderly, said Gauci.

Pedro Martins, ECA Economic Affairs Officer said Mapping inequality at regional, a national and sub-national level is critical to design and implement policies that promotes inclusive and transformative development he emphasised.

As emphasized by the experts who participated to the session, national factors of inequality include the strength of social institutions, factors of economic growth and government policies. Therefore, evaluating and addressing inequality in the region will help member states achieve their transformation, not only at the economic level but also on social and societal levels.(APA 11-02-2016)

OSLO: MIDDLE EAST - QUARTET: DO NOTHING TO COMPROMISE THE “TWO-STATE SOLUTION”

On 8 and 9 February, Envoys of the Middle East Quartet met in Oslo as part of their continued engagement with key regional and international stakeholders.

The Envoys from the European Union, the Russian Federation, the United States and the United Nations met with Norwegian Foreign Minister Brende and the Envoy for the Middle East Peace Process, Ambassador Tor Wennesland.

The Quartet Envoys highlighted the vital contributions Norway has made over the years to the pursuit of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians based on a two-state solution.

The Quartet Envoys condemned in the strongest possible terms all acts of terror and violence against civilians. They also expressed concern about current trends on the ground that pose a threat to the two-state solution and reiterated the call for concrete steps that resume the transition contemplated by the Oslo Accords.

The Envoys look forward to the upcoming Principals meeting in Munich (Quartet 11-02-2016)
http://eeas.europa.eu/statements-eeas/2016/160210_02_en.htm

US PLEDGES TO ADDRESS ABUSE OF HARMFUL AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS IN KENYA

The United States government has expressed willingness to partner with Uasin Gishu County government in Kenya’s Rift Valley in an effort to reduce over-use and abuse of agricultural chemicals, which are feared as being the major causes of rising cases of cancer in the country.

US Ambassador to Kenya Robert Godec was addressing the issue brought about by Uasin Gishu deputy governor Daniel Chemno over concerns of exaggerated use of chemicals in agriculture, whose effect suspected to be leading to cancer.

“The US will look into this matter. It is a very genuine issue which needs to be hastily addressed and sustainable measures put in place,” he said on Thursday in a statement.

“But the Kenyan government needs to also put standards, check on the farm produce that goes to the market. It is important because the state has the powers to do that, but US will partner with it to see how some gadgets can be availed,” he continued.

In his response Governor Chemno said; “As a county we would like to be the first to try and curb these cases of lack of care in farms because these are the products we take every day. Someone somehow has to try and stop it and that is where we come in”.

In 2014, a number of European markets declined to take agricultural produce from Kenya giving reasons that there was a high level of chemicals in the produce.

The produce was brought back to the country and it is feared that it may have found its way into the local market.(APA 11-02-2016)

TUNISIA: ENVIRONMENT, TRANSPORT AND ENERGY, JOINT OPERATIONAL CONCLUSIONS

The conclusions of the 7th Sub-committee on "Environment, transport, and energy", which took place in Brussels on 3 February, have been published by the EU Delegation in Tunis. The novelty here is that civil society (SCO) was consulted in advance of the event and its opinion was noted. The EU as well as the Tunisian authorities "emphasized the importance of this tripartite consultation".

The EU and Tunisia confirmed their "determination to promote the active participation of civil society in environmental projects carried out within the framework of the Privileged Partnership. They recalled the importance they attribute to the presence of an active civil society in the environmental field and to taking its opinions into consideration".

The sub-committees are joint thematic structures established under the terms of the Association Agreement.

Information about recent developments was exchanged between the partners on several subjects relating to the three themes. Operational conclusions have been published.

Among the points on the agenda was "environmental governance", one of the axes of which is "cooperation with NGOs and (their) access to environmental information".

During the consultation, civil society participants were "given the opportunity to raise questions and challenges that are at the core of their concerns, in particular regarding the status of the environmental situation", as noted in an online document containing conclusions. The document in question also indicates that in regards to environmental matters, the SCOs "keenly wished for intensified dialogue and increased opportunities to meet with public authorities". According to the same source, they "stressed the importance of a decentralized management of environmental issues". (EEAS 10-02-2016)

MOZAMBICAN CAPITAL POISED TO BE HIT BY WATER SHORTAGES

The Maputo Regional Water Company has warned that the supply of drinking water in the southern Mozambican cities of Maputo and Matola will be restricted over the next ten days, APA learns here on Thursday.

According to a report by state-controlled Radio Mozambique, the company explained that less water would be available due to maintenance work at its treatment plant on the Umbeluzi River. During the scheduled work, which includes installing four new pumps and fixing cracks, capacity would be reduced from 9,000 to just 6,500 cubic metres per hour, a drop of about thirty per cent.

In response to the reduction in supply the company has reactivated standpipes around the cities.

The Umbeluzi River is the source of most of the drinking water for the greater Maputo metropolitan area (APA 11-02-2016)

MINING FIRMS 'MUST GET USED TO' HIGHER ELECTRICITY TARIFFS IN ZAMBIA

Mining companies operating in Zambia would have to get used to higher power tariffs because the government could not afford to subsidise them and needed to encourage private investment in generation to alleviate a chronic supply shortage, Mines Minister Christopher Yaluma said.

"The tariffs have been very, very low and far from cost-reflective," Mr Yaluma said in an interview at the Mining Indaba in Cape Town on Wednesday. The mining companies "want us to pay. They must be realistic."

The government increased electricity charges for mining companies to 10.35 US cents a kilowatt-hour from January 1. While it reversed a 200% increase in charges for commercial and industrial customers on February 6, two months after it came into effect, no concession was announced for the mines, which use more than half of the Southern African nation's power.
Zambia, Africa's second-biggest copper producer, gets most of its electricity from hydropower plants, which have been hobbled by drought. Some power is being imported at a cost of 19c/kWh, meaning mines are still being subsidised and the government will consider further price increases, Mr Yaluma said.
"We must get cost-reflective tariffs, so we allow independent participants in power generation to come in," he said. "We have liberalised but they can't come in because of the low tariffs."
The old electricity prices differed from mine to mine. Vedanta Resources said last month the charges at its Zambian unit, Konkola Copper Mines, increased 25%, adding $3m a month to its costs.
In 2014, mining companies filed a lawsuit challenging proposed power tariff increases, a case that is still being considered by the Lusaka High Court.
Mr. Yaluma said power shortages would ease when the 300MW Maamba coal-fired project came into operation in June.
"By next year, we'll have adequate power to cater for our mining needs," he said. "It will be from renewables, it will be from coal. We are getting another 120MW from hydro. The only problem is if we don't have sufficient water."
The minister also said the government was still evaluating proposals from the nation's chamber of mines to introduce a new sliding-scale mine royalty system, with the levy that operators pay determined by metal prices. (Bloomberg 11-02-2016)

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