

MEMORANDUM

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AFRICAN COUNTRIES SPLIT OVER TRADE IN IVORY

Member states of the United Nations Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species (Cites) will not meet until September, but some countries have already drawn their battle lines on divisive issues such as the ivory trade.

Proposals for the meeting in Johannesburg were made public last week, pitting bids by Namibia and Zimbabwe to open up the trade in elephant ivory against initiatives led by Kenya for a complete global ban on the coveted commodity.

Those seeking to open up the trade of wild animal products argue it will raise badly needed funds for conservation, but others say it will provide cover to poachers and make the products socially acceptable.

"In all of these issues, we have two competing views. They are all aiming for the same objective, which is ensuring the survival of species in the wild," Cites secretary-general John Scanlon said.

Global trade in ivory is banned, although Cites has allowed one-off sales of national stockpiles. Several countries also allow domestic trade.

Kenya, long at the forefront of efforts to shut down the ivory trade completely, torched thousands of elephant tusks and rhino horns last month.

"The poaching crisis is really out of control, and more and more countries realise the only way to really stop it is to stop the trade," said Susan Lieberman, vice-president for international policy at the Wildlife Conservation Society.

Cites held its last "Conference of the Parties", where proposed amendments regarding trade in wild animals and plants are voted on by member states, three years ago. The agreements are legally binding, but regulate only international trade, not national laws.

In some countries, notably in southern Africa, animal populations have been growing. In its proposal, Namibia noted that its elephant population had risen from 7,500 in 1995 to more than 20,000 at present.

"Namibia ... wishes to establish a regular form of controlled trade in all elephant specimens including ivory, in support of elephant conservation," its proposal says. Its ivory stockpile is growing 4.5% per year, mostly from natural deaths.

Surging security costs for wildlife against poachers are also a concern, which pro-traders say can be met by selling stockpiles.

Swaziland estimates it could raise almost \$10m from its 330kg of rhino horn at a wholesale price of \$30,000/kg.

"Who is going to pick up the tab for the annual security bill for rhinos, which is now estimated at R1.2bn-R2bn a year?" asks Pelham Jones, chairman of SA's Private Rhino Owners Association.

Cash-strapped Zimbabwe says trade is the only way to pay for the costs of protecting its 80,000 elephants. Zimbabwe's proposal says it has 70 tonnes of raw ivory in the government storage facility estimated to be worth \$35m.

"A legal trade in ivory would be beneficial for the Zimbabwe elephant population. Without it, elephants are likely to become extinct in Zimbabwe," it says in its proposal. (Reuters 09-05-2016)

ETHIOPIA CLOSE TO KICK-STARTING \$150B GREEN ECONOMY

Ethiopia is set to begin implementing her so-called green economy projects worth \$150 billion over the coming 20 years, according to the country's minister of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Kare Chawicha.

Speaking in Addis Ababa on Monday Chawicha divulged that of the total, \$50 billion will be spent constructing low-carbon emission infrastructures around Ethiopia.

The source of funding will be the Ethiopian government, the public, investors, and partners and from carbon trading, he added.

The main objective of the projects is to reduce greenhouse gas emissions, advance economic growth as

well as create jobs for women and youth.

A study confirmed that Ethiopia needs \$7.5 billion each year for its climate-resilient green economy.

The country has been prone to drought, one of the most serious being the 1984 crisis in which millions had died of starvation.

Ethiopia last month joined over 150 countries to sign the Paris Agreement on Climate Change to limit global temperature rise to well below two degrees Celsius, and to strive for 1.5 degrees Celsius.

The agreement was adopted in Paris by the 196 state parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) at a conference known as COP21 last December. (APA 02-05-2016)

ANGOLAN GROUP'S FIRST HYPERMARKET OPENS ON 10 MAY

The first store of the “Candando” (embrace) hypermarket chain owned by Angolan group Contidis is due to open on 10 May a shopping centre in Talatona, Luanda, the group said in a statement issued in Luanda.

The Contidis group, which will manage the chain of hypermarkets, was presented in September 2015 in Luanda by Miguel Osorio, former director of Portuguese group Sonae and now the Angolan project's director, after the end of the partnership of Angolan businesswoman Isabel dos Santos with the Portuguese retail group.

This first store has an area of 10,000 square metres, and the group, which is 100 percent owned by Santos, plans to open a total of ten stores over the next five years, with an estimated investment of US\$400 million.

The statement said “Candando” will be the newest food and non-food distribution brand in Angola and there are plans for the chain to become the country's largest retail group.

Logistics, with the installation of a proper base in Luanda, as well as the support and promotion of a network of national producers are some of the objectives set. (06-05-2016)

EGYPT: EU CONCERNED AT STATE OF FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

The EU described the raid by the Egyptian security forces on the Egyptian Press Syndicate's building on Sunday 1 May as “a worrying development” which “continues a trend of restricting space for civil society and the freedom of expression, as manifested by the high number of arrests following the April protests”, according to a statement released on Monday 2 May, on the eve of World Press Freedom Day.

The EU calls for the release of all those “detained for expressing their opinion” and for the law regulating assembly to be “brought in line with the Egyptian Constitution.” (EC 03-05-2016)

OBTALA RESOURCES EXPANDS FORESTRY OPERATIONS IN MOZAMBIQUE

Obtala Resources, a company based in Guernsey, will apply the US\$900,000 received from its investor Basic Materials Ltd in the expansion of forest operations in Mozambique, the company recently announced.

The Obtala of operations in Mozambique are located primarily in the central province of Zambezia and take place under a concession contract that strictly stipulates the number of trees that can be cut and requires that the resulting wood is processed in the country.

Last February the company announced it had signed three agreements with three international sector investors to raise US\$3 million to fund activities in Mozambique in exchange for an equity stake in, and rights to a particular forest area.

The three investors are Global Timber Investment Limited, a company based in Hong Kong that will invest US\$900,000, George Miller, a US private investor, investing US\$1.16 million and Basic Materials Limited, a company with offices in Hong Kong and Russia (US\$900,000).

The latter was the first to pay the agreed amount, which will be applied in the construction of two furnaces for wood drying and installation of a new sales and distribution centre in Maputo, the capital of Mozambique. (06-05-2016)

NEPAD COUNTRIES URGED TO REFORM TAX CODES TO BOOST AGRICULTURE

Mr. Amadou Diallo, the ambassador of the Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) in Senegal, on Monday urged member states to reform their tax codes, noting that this could possibly impact the growth and increase "agricultural productivity."

African countries need to undertake tax reforms to increase agricultural productivity and boost growth. These must be able to woo more investors, Ambassador Diallo said.

He was speaking at the opening of the first meeting of the Facilitation Platform for agricultural investments in Senegal, a forum that brings together financial and development partners, including commercial banks, development finance institutions, microfinance institutions, agricultural banks and investment funds.

This meeting aims to facilitate and promote public-private dialogue to improve agricultural finance policies, provide financing opportunities for SMEs and create public-private national community.

Senegal was chosen from five countries (Zambia, Uganda, Ghana and Cameroon) to host the inaugural session. The meeting is placed under the aegis of the Ministries of Economy and Agriculture.

Furthermore, the NEPAD ambassador urged African countries to meet the Malabo commitment consisting of allocating 10 percent of state budgets to agriculture. (APA 02-05-2016)

TUNISIAN ECONOMIC REFORMS AT RISK AMID POLITICAL DIVISIONS

Political divisions in Tunisia's ruling coalition risk undermining economic reforms and paralysing the government as it tries to revive the country's post-revolution economy and tackle Islamist militancy. Until recently, compromise between secular and Islamist parties in the governing alliance had helped keep Tunisia's transition on track after the 2011 overthrow of Zine El-Abidine Ben Ali, which inspired uprisings across the Arab world.

But that consensus looks increasingly threatened by squabbling among secular allies and splits within the coalition.

When lawmakers voted for part of an economic reform package last week, the ruling alliance managed to force the bill through by just two votes after many of its lawmakers opposed the motion or abstained. The vote on the bill to protect central bank autonomy was just one of the financial overhauls Tunisia's international lenders are demanding to set the North African state's economy on track after five years of upheaval.

But for ruling coalition parties to muster only 73 votes of the 150 they control in the 217-member congress underscored how political splits are starting to undermine those efforts.

Tunisia is struggling with lower tourism revenue after three militant attacks last year, protests over unemployment and slow economic revival.

"There are some in the coalition that think they can be in the government and the opposition at the same time," said Ajmi Ourimi, a lawmaker with the Islamist Ennahda party, which is part of the coalition. "We're in a crisis of co-ordination." After elections in late 2014, Prime Minister Habib Essid's cabinet, including ministers from secularist Nidaa Tounes party Ennahda and other minor parties, has struggled to make progress on economic reforms to match Tunisia's political progress.

The International Monetary Fund this month reached a preliminary deal to assist Tunisia with a four-year loan program worth about \$2.8bn tied to economic reforms. That came after offers of aid from European partners.

But IMF Tunisia mission chief Amine Mati urged the government to start work immediately.

Splits in secular party Nidaa Tounes and its ally Afek Tounes have angered Mr Essid, who felt the loss of political support as he seeks to pass more sensitive austerity-style reforms needing consensus to overcome any popular reactions.

"I feel frustrated after I saw the result of the vote on the central bank law. I held meetings with the four coalition parties in order to avoid the same scenario," Mr Essid told reporters.

But it is far from clear whether their positions will unify for new bills, especially with widening political divides among the four, Ennahda, Nidaa Tounes, Afek Tounes and Free Popular Union UPL party.

Nidaa Tounes, the party of President Beji Caid Essebsi, has already splintered over a dispute about the role his son might play in the party, and its secretary-general and a group of lawmakers broke away to form a new political movement.

In a sign of more rifts, Yassin Ibrahim, the leader of Afek Tounes party, has suggested the formation of a new parliamentary bloc which includes liberal parties but excludes Ennahda.

Although Nidaa Tounes leaders rejected the proposal, Mr Ibrahim's comments could further weaken the fragile government.

"There has been a crisis in the coalition since the announcement of possible new front in parliament and after the central bank law vote," Abd Elaziz El Koti, a Nidaa Tounes lawmaker. "We're in talks over better co-ordination now."

Bad timing

Political infighting could not come at a worse time.

Tunisia's economy has faltered since the revolt against Ben Ali, and problems have been exacerbated by last year's attacks by Islamist militants, who targeted foreign visitors and the tourism industry which accounts for 8% of gross domestic product.

Economic growth in Tunisia was 0.8% last year, and officials expect 2.5% this year, but unemployment stands at 15.3% and is far higher among young people.

Protests and rioting over jobs and economic opportunities at the start of the year illustrated how sensitive any austerity reforms may be given the simmering social tensions.

The rest of the reform package will be presented to parliament in the coming weeks, after a long delay, including the investment bill, retirement bill and banks project law.

Analysts say the banks bill may cause controversy after financial experts criticised the Islamic finance portion for favouring Islamic banks over traditional banks.

The government's proposal to raise the retirement age by five years — part of efforts to reduce public spending on pensions — is also facing a strong resistance from the powerful labour union UGTT.

Labour union protests have already forced the cabinet to act. The government scuppered an attempt to apply a fiscal law obliging thousands of doctors and lawyers to give details on their income after their unions threatened strikes.

"Prime minister Essid is now without partisan support, he is alone engaged in small and large wars," local newspaper Tunisie Telegraph newspaper said in a column. "Two lawmakers saved the central bank law and perhaps the country from early elections." (Reuters 29-04-2016)

BANKING SHOULD FOCUS ON MICROCREDIT, SAYS PRESIDENT OF CABO VERDE

Commercial banks should focus on microcredit and development banks should be set up to boost the growth of the social economy in the Portuguese-speaking countries, said Thursday the President of Cabo Verde (Cape Verde) in Praia.

Jorge Carlos Fonseca stressed the "important and essential" contribution of the economy promoted by cooperatives, mutual associations, community associations, foundations and others in developing countries.

"The icing on the cake would be 'banking' of the microcredit system, including the clearing house," he said while addressing the representatives of Portuguese-speaking countries during the opening session of the 1st Congress of the Social and Solidarity Economy of the Portuguese-speaking countries, which runs until Saturday in the Cape Verdean capital.

Jacinto Santos, president of the non-governmental organisation Citi-Habitat, the host of the congress, told Portuguese news agency Lusa that one of the objectives of the Congress was to lay the foundations for an overall assessment of the weight of the social economy in the Community of Portuguese-speaking Countries (CPLP).

Present at the opening of Congress, the representative of the United Nations system in Cabo Verde, Ulrika Richardson stressed the positive results of the mixed model of this type of economy (public, private, social and charitable) in northern European countries such as Denmark, the Netherlands, Finland, Norway and Sweden, where the social and solidarity economy accounts for about 35 percent of gross domestic product. (06-05-2016)

SWAZI GOVERNMENT IN CONTROL OF AGOA

Parliamentarian Jan Sithole who is also President of the Swaziland Democratic Party (SWADEPA) says the task to retain the Africa Growth Opportunity Act (AGOA) status lies with government.

The MP and party leader is responding to some unionists who are blaming the people for the loss of AGOA, saying some people talked ill of Swaziland abroad and painted a bad image of the country, an allegation that was made during the May Day celebration on Sunday.

In a statement issued on Tuesday Sithole says government should address the laws that were a concern and resulted in the loss of the free trade opportunity.

The laws should restore human rights because failure to do so will result in Swaziland failing to be offered another chance to partake in the free trade opportunity or being removed in the special paragraph, he says.

Swaziland lost its AGOA status in 2014 after failing to meet two of the five benchmarks which are the Suppression of Terrorism (amendment) Bill and the Public Order Bill.

The three that have been met are the passage of amendments to the Industrial Relations Act; passage of amendments to sections 40 and 97 of the Industrial Relations Act relating to civil and criminal liability

to union leaders during protest actions; and establishing a code of good practice for the police during public protests. (APA 03-05-2016)

SOUTH AFRICA: AREVA CONTENDS IT MUST KEEP ESKOM TENDER AS DELAYS WILL AFFECT SAFETY

French nuclear specialist Areva wants a R5bn contract awarded to it by Eskom to stand even though the Supreme Court of Appeal has ordered that it be set aside.

Even if there were irregularities, the Constitutional Court should allow it to keep the tender, Areva has argued in papers before the top court. The practical implications of the dispute between Areva, Toshiba subsidiary Westinghouse and Eskom over the tender to replace six steam generators at Eskom's Koeberg nuclear plant are becoming clearer as the 2018 deadline for completion of the refurbishment looms.

Westinghouse challenged Areva's winning of the tender and in December the Supreme Court of Appeal set aside the decision but refused to order that it be awarded to Westinghouse. It instead left it up to Eskom to retake the decision.

Eskom had argued that Areva had got the contract due to "strategic considerations" and the Supreme Court of Appeal said if Eskom believed the considerations were "vital", it should begin afresh and properly include them in its evaluation.

Areva is now arguing that a significant delay to the project would not be safe.

Westinghouse wants the Constitutional Court to do what the Supreme Court of Appeal did not and order that the work be given to it.

Areva, which has been working on the project since September last year, wants the court to overturn the judgment of the Supreme Court of Appeal, arguing that the tender was awarded "lawfully, reasonably and fairly".

But, even if the highest court were to decide that there were "material irregularities", it should leave the tender undisturbed, said Areva.

Areva's counsel, Peter Hodes SC, said this was the kind of exceptional case that would warrant such an order.

SA needed stable and abundant electricity urgently and since Areva had long started work on the project, it would be able to deliver on the project "significantly faster" than Westinghouse.

"Delay is highly undesirable and even dangerous," Mr Hodes said.

"Koeberg is ageing. And the court does not need new or expert evidence to know that any risk in the context of nuclear power must be treated with extreme caution," he said.

The recent decline in the value of the rand would make a new tender award "conservatively, many millions of rands more expensive".

There was no suggestion that there was fraud or corruption in the awarding of the tender to Areva, he said Mr Hodes.

Westinghouse's legal argument is yet to be filed. But it has asked the court to allow it to admit new evidence to support its arguments that if it were to be awarded the tender immediately, it could still do the work within a time frame that would be safe and cost-effective.

But Mr Hodes said the new evidence should not be allowed because Areva had disputed every Westinghouse contention. The disputes were so substantial that to resolve them on paper without cross-examination — and as the first and last court, would be highly undesirable, he said.

As a court of appeal, the Constitutional Court does not hear oral evidence with cross-examination, which is seen as the best way to resolve factual disputes.

Westinghouse's attorney Trevor Versfeld said it would respond to Areva's arguments when the company filed its own arguments on Tuesday. (BD 03-05-2016)

PRESIDENT OF MOZAMBIQUE VISITS CHINA

The President of Mozambique Filipe Nyusi is due to make an official visit to the Republic of China next week, with meetings scheduled with his counterpart Xi Jinping and other Chinese officials, learned from a diplomatic source in Maputo.

This will be the first official visit by Nyusi to Beijing since he became president of Mozambique, although he met President Xi Jinping in December 2015 in Johannesburg during the Forum for China-Africa Cooperation.

During the visit, the Mozambican delegation will travel to Beijing and the provinces of Shandong and Jiangsu.

The visit of the President of Mozambique will be essentially of economic nature and diplomatic sources contacted in Maputo have noted its importance at a time when China is likely to strengthen the financial support granted to Mozambique following a retraction from other donors and international institutions.

Last year China became Mozambique's largest bilateral creditor after increasing funding to the African country by 160 percent since 2012, and providing a new loan of US\$400 million in mid-2015.

Last week China and Mozambique signed an economic and technical cooperation agreement, under which African country will receive US\$16 million to fund drilling of 200 boreholes for drinking water, the purchase of 80 buses for public transport, construction of the China / Mozambique Cultural Centre and other projects of social impact to be agreed between the two governments.

On signing the document, the Chinese ambassador to Mozambique, Sun Jian said that China wants to increase aid to Mozambique as a way to help the country overcome "this bad time" as Mozambique "has been an example and one of the fastest growing economies in the region." (09-05-2016)

SWAZILAND EYES SHARE OF \$845 000 GREEN CLIMATE FUND

Swaziland through support from the UNDP and the Ministry of Tourism applied for accreditation to the \$845 000 Green Climate Fund.

The money will assist local companies dealing with the environment to have access to resources of the Fund to carry out initiatives like reduction of carbon emissions and renewable energy.

UNDP Programme Specialist Sithembiso Hlatshwayo-Gina said the fund was underpinned by international instruments that the country was a signatory to.

Specifically, the Convention on Bio-Diversity, which Swaziland ratified, is what informs the Fund that the country is committed to biodiversity, she told local journalists on Tuesday.

She expressed hope that job opportunities will be created, especially in the private sector which will be a major beneficiary. (APA 03-05-2016)

MEDIA FREEDOM IN AFRICA REMAINS UNDER ATTACK

Imagine a world without the media, where we have no verified information about what's going on around us. Where everything is hearsay and gossip, where there are no trusted sources of information. It would be hard to operate in a world like that: to make decisions about what to do about the things that affect our lives.

Think for a minute too about what it would mean for those in power; they would be able to act as if we, the people, did not exist. It would be impossible to hold them to account, to know that they're keeping the election promises they made in their wordy manifestos, and it would be impossible for our voices to be

heard. Similarly, it would be difficult to know how companies are behaving, how they are treating their workers and the environment, and whether they are colluding to extract ever more from our pockets. The role of the media in providing credible information, of giving voice to the people and holding those in power to account is fundamental to the realisation of our freedom and human rights. Whilst there are differences of opinion about whether the media are part of civil society, what is undisputed is the key role that they play in social and economic development, democracy, human rights and the pursuit of justice. Organisations and activists that work on social issues and help articulate public opinion need the media to disseminate the voices they represent. Without a plurality of voices, ideas are diminished, debate is stifled and tolerance is weakened.

Yet, or perhaps *because* of their role in giving voice and speaking truth to power, the media are increasingly under attack from both governments and corporate interests.

In its recently released [World Press Freedom Index](#), Reporters Without Borders say that there has been a “deep and disturbing decline in respect for media freedom at both the global and regional levels” and that there is a “climate of fear and tension combined with [increasing control over newsrooms](#) by governments and private-sector interests.”

This assault on journalistic freedom takes many forms, including regular harassment of journalists, censorship, confiscation of equipment, closure of media outlets, arrests and in some cases direct and dire attack. Research by the Committee to Protect Journalists is quite chilling: [72 journalists were murdered](#) in 2015 and a further [199 imprisoned](#).

In Africa, the situation for media varies in different countries across the continent. Alongside Eritrea and Ethiopia as two of the [most censored countries](#) in the world – in first and fourth place respectively – there are countries like Namibia, Ghana, Cape Verde and South Africa that score highly when it comes to freedom of information (even though those countries too experience challenges to media freedom). However, in far too many African countries the media come under regular attack and freedom of information remains a distant right.

There is perhaps no clearer indication of both the importance of the media and the assault it faces than when governments crackdown on journalists and media houses in the run up to and during elections. In January this year, [Ugandan officials shutdown](#) an independent radio station after it broadcast an interview with a leading opposition candidate. A few months earlier, police shot and injured radio journalist Ivan Vincent as he covered squabbles between supporters of the leading opposition candidate and the police. Between October 2015 and January 2016, the Human Rights Network for Journalists–Uganda documented about [40 election-related incidents](#) in which journalists have been shot at, assaulted, their gadgets damaged, detained and released without charge and blocked from accessing news scenes.”

The situation for media in Burundi following the violence and repression that started ahead of last year’s election has not improved, and some say that the country has seen the near complete destruction of independent media with [journalists and civil society being targeted](#). Facing shutdowns and direct attacks, many journalists have fled the country out of fear for their lives.

Similarly, during the last year in Djibouti and the Republic of Congo, the desire of leaders to hold onto power and to silence voices opposing them, contributed to election-related violence and media repression.

Of course, the media don’t only face attack during elections. In Angola, the government has kept a decades-long close watch on the media, frequently arresting and harassing those it disagrees with. Currently, journalist [Domingos da Cruz](#) is one of 17 activists in prison for his participation in a private gathering to discuss non-violent strategies for civil disobedience.

An Ethiopian human rights advocate that [spoke with CIVICUS recently](#) reiterated that “Ethiopia has for a long time severely restricted press freedom and the work of civil society. It is one of the top countries when it comes to jailing journalists, many of whom it charges under the 2009 anti-terrorism law.”

This attack on the media is itself part of a broader attack on the fundamental freedoms of expression, association and assembly that CIVICUS has been documenting during the last few years (in 2015 there were serious violations of these freedoms in more than 100 countries). Attacks on the media often go hand in hand with those on activists and organisations that challenge or question the powers that be. In many countries, this crackdown happens with impunity and attacks often go unpunished.

While governments are the main culprits when it comes curtailing media freedom, the private sector also often seeks to control or manipulate media outputs in ways that favour them and their narrow interests:

putting profit before people. This takes place in multiple ways, from the [concentration of media ownership](#) and the power that allows corporates to yield, to [bribing journalists](#) and [influencing editorial content](#) in exchange for paid advertising.

Often caught between state repression and corporate influence, media in many African countries face huge challenges. While there is no one-size-fits-all solution to these challenges a key part of the solution must be to support independent media, including citizen-journalism; for regional governance institutions to hold African countries accountable and for African countries to hold each other accountable; and for education and awareness about rights related to freedom of information and expression.

With regard to the latter, [recent research](#) shows that there is widespread support for media freedom and freedom of expression in Africa but that support for these rights is not universal. In some contexts, journalistic ethics need to be strengthened; media outlets need to invest more in their journalists and support for independent media amongst civil society and the general public needs to be amplified. We need to look towards innovation too, to think of ways to use inexpensive technology to produce people-powered information and data.

Media that is accurate, credible, ethical and impartial is crucial to development, freedom, human rights and justice in Africa – as it is elsewhere. A study on [freedom of expression across 34 African countries](#) in 2013 showed the link between this most basic right and a range of factors, stating that “freedom of expression is also consistently linked to better ratings of government performance, especially with respect to government effectiveness in fighting corruption, but also in other sectors such as maintaining roads and managing the economy.”

Given the challenges we face on the continent, the current media crackdown is untenable and dangerous, and does nothing to facilitate the progress so many are working hard to achieve. As citizens of Africa, we need to increase our efforts to protect those that give us voice and help us realise the full scope of our rights.(IPS 30-04-2016)

BANKS FROM ANGOLA AND BRAZIL HAVE ALREADY MADE PAYMENTS IN CHINESE CURRENCY

Banks from Angola and Brazil have already used the new cross-border payment mechanism in Chinese currency, the manager of the financial institutions department of the Bank of China’s subsidiary in Macau told Portuguese-language newspaper Tribuna de Macau.

Zhao Hao also said that cooperation network of the Macau branch of the Bank of China with banks in Portuguese-speaking countries has not stopped growing in recent years and that this trend will continue in the future, driven by the launch of the renminbi real time settlement system by the Macau Monetary Authority.

He recalled that the branch in Macau had been authorised by the People’s Bank of China, in 2015, to offer the new service to the financial system of the Portuguese-speaking countries.

With this new mechanism, the Chinese authorities intend to promote the international use of the renminbi as well as to “facilitate trade and transactions between China and the Portuguese-speaking countries and Latin America.”

“In 2015 we made the first payment in renminbi from Angola to China via Macau, and in April this year, the first from Brazil to China,” said Zhao Hao, arguing that “this shows that Macau is taking on an important role as a business service platform between China and Portuguese-speaking countries.”

The total settlement amount in renminbi in Macau reached 1.570 billion yuan in 2015, showing an increase of 22.8 percent compared to 2014, and the territory occupied the 9th place in the world, according to data presented by Zhao Hao in Brazil, where he was part of a business delegation coordinated by the Macau Institute for Promotion of Trade and Investment (IPIM).(09-05-2016)

NIGERIA CAN EARN OVER \$25BN ANNUALLY FROM SOLID MINERALS SECTOR

Nigeria's Minister of Solid Minerals Development Kayode Fayemi has said that the country's mining sector has the potential to contribute N5 trillion (about \$25.3bn) a year to the economy and bright prospects of creating thousands of job opportunities.

Speaking at the third Chief John Agboola Odeyemi's yearly lecture at Obafemi Awolowo University, Ile-Ife, Oyo State, Fayemi explained that the states may exploit mineral resources from their respective domains, despite its being on the exclusive legislature list, through a reform programme being scripted by the government.

Fayemi noted that Nigeria is blessed with various natural endowments, scattered in every state within the country.

"Ironically, these natural endowments contribute less than one percent to the country's Gross Domestic Product (GDP)," he said.

According to him, Nigeria can generate at least N5 trillion yearly from mining and exporting of its vast solid mineral deposits with several multiplier effects on job creation, state development and social infrastructure that could position the solid minerals sector as the main catalyst for national development.

"Nigeria's potentially most beneficial solid minerals are spread around the nation," he added. (APA 03-05-2016)

MEDITERRANEAN ELECTRICITY OPERATORS: TOWARDS A SUSTAINABLE COOPERATION IN THE MEDITERRANEAN BASIN

Med-TSO (the Association of Mediterranean Transmission System Operators) organized a Workshop about enhancing Transmission System Operators' (TSO) cooperation during its 11th General Assembly, which took place on April 21st in Istanbul, hosted by TEIAS, the Turkish Transmission System Operator. The meeting focused on Med-TSO's activities in the framework of the Mediterranean Project and the role of the various Mediterranean TSOs to enhance cooperation and power system integration.

The Mediterranean Project, supported by the EU, is setting up a roadmap to share resources, costs and risks of investments in energy infrastructures in the Mediterranean Region. Furthermore, the Mediterranean Project aims at establishing a permanent exchange of knowledge among the countries along both shores of the Mediterranean, promoting the development and implementation of a harmonized and integrated Mediterranean electricity grid.

ENTSO-E, UfM, MedReg and the representative of the European Commission participated to the works. All the participants highlighted their views in terms of grid development and power system strengthening in the entire Euro-Mediterranean region. Furthermore, the debate confirmed the importance to proceed toward a continuous cooperation and coordination between TSOs, Regulators and the other involved stakeholders. In Med-TSO's vision, the enhanced cooperation among the various stakeholders will lead to the creation of an integrated energy market. In this perspective, Med-TSO is playing a leading and essential role in creating a common database to share data, studies and information, aimed at facilitating the realization of an integrated regional system and market.

EU's support to Med-TSO's initiatives aims at maintaining a constructive cooperation and permanent engagement of both Mediterranean shores, in order to contribute to the development of a special relationship between the EU Member States and their neighboring Mediterranean countries. The effective integration of the transmission networks across the EU and the Mediterranean opens up greater perspectives in terms of experience exchange, security of supply and sustainable growth.

Med-TSO's President, Mr. Nouredine Boutarfa stated: "The support of the European Union to Med-TSO reflects the importance of our vision and confirms Med-TSO's role as a reliable institutional and professional long-term partner. We work closely with our members to find technical solutions that will enable us to strengthen peace and security in the Mediterranean region, focusing on how to integrate and share risks and rules. "

The workshop was followed by the 11th General Assembly of the Association, in the presence of representatives from 14 Med-TSO member countries.

Med-TSO's Members approved the 2015 balance sheet and income statements, as well as the 2016 budget. The statement related to the activities of the Asso (EC 29-04-2016)

MOZAMBICAN MINISTER NAMES PRIORITIES FOR BUILDING INFRASTRUCTURE

The Mozambican government will this year spend at least US\$11.6 billion on the construction of new infrastructure, such as railways, roads, bridges and airports, said recently the Minister for Transport and Communication of Mozambique.

Minister Carlos Mesquita, cited by Mozambican daily newspaper Notícias, said that Mozambique will need an additional US\$2.2 billion to pay for the maintenance and expansion of existing infrastructure.

Among the government's priorities for 2016, the minister mentioned in the rail and port sector the completion of reconstruction and commissioning of the Cuamba-Lichinga line, the start of operations at the port of Nacala-a-Velha and in early August the second phase of the modernisation works of the port of Nacala.

The list of priorities include completion of the expansion project of the Sena railway, from 6.5 million tons of cargo per year to 20 million, completion of the study for reconstruction of the Machipanda line and completion in December of construction of the Boane railway bridge.

As well as beginning dredging of the access to channel to the port of Maputo this month, the government wants the study for reconstruction of the Ressano Garcia railway to be completed this year. (09-05-2016)

SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA TO OUTGROW NIGERIA IN 2016

Nigeria's economy will be growing at a slower pace in 2016 than sub-Saharan Africa's as a whole, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) said on Tuesday.

After an extended period of strong economic growth, sub-Saharan Africa is set to experience its lowest economic growth rate in 15 years – yet the region's growth will outpace Nigeria's growth.

Local media reports quoted the April 2016 regional economic outlook for sub-Saharan Africa of the IMF as saying that the continent is set to face a second difficult year, projecting a GDP growth of three percent for 2016.

Nigeria's projected GDP growth rate for the same year is at 2.3 percent – the country's lowest in 16 years.

The IMF advises that it is "Time for a Policy Reset" – with Antoinette Sayeh, director of the IMF's African department, saying "Africa needs a substantial policy reset to reap the region's strong potential."

"This is particularly urgent in commodity exporters and some market access countries, as the policy response to date has generally been insufficient," Sayeh said.

The slowdown reflects the adverse impact of the commodity price slump in some of the larger economies and more recently the drought in eastern and southern Africa.

According to the statement, the sharp decline in commodity prices, a shock of unprecedented magnitude, has put many of the largest sub-Saharan African economies under severe strain. It added that as a result, oil exporters, such as Nigeria and Angola, but also most countries of the Central African Economic and Monetary Union, continue to face particularly difficult economic conditions.

The report noted that non-energy commodity exporters, such as Ghana, South Africa and Zambia, have also been hurt by the decline in commodity prices, while several southern and eastern African countries, including Ethiopia, Malawi, and Zimbabwe, are suffering from a severe drought that is putting millions of people at risk of food insecurity.

However, Sayeh insists that the outlook remains favourable as many countries in the region continue to register robust growth and most oil importers are generally faring better with growth in excess of 5 percent in countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Kenya, and Senegal, as well as in many low-income countries.(APA 03-05-2016)

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The Memorandum is also made available by AHEAD-GLOBAL, Chamber of Tenerife (by posting it at the Africa Info Market), CCA - Corporate Council on Africa (USA), ELO,HTTC ,NABA,NABC (by posting selected news) to their Members.



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