

MEMORANDUM

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MALI OPPOSITION LEADER REJECTS RESULTS AS COUNTING UNDERWAY

Malian opposition candidate] said on Monday he would reject the results of a presidential runoff marred by accusations of fraud, violence and low turnout, calling on the population “to rise up.”

Ballot counting was underway on Monday (13 August) across the vast West African country after the vote Sunday saw one poll worker killed and hundreds of stations closed due to insecurity.

“The fraud is proven, this is why there are results we will not accept,” Cisse said at his party’s headquarters in Bamako.

“I call on all Malians to rise up... We will not accept the dictatorship of fraud,” he added.

President Ibrahim Boubacar Keita, 73, is the clear frontrunner in a reprise of his 2013 faceoff against former finance minister Cisse, 68.

But Cisse’s team and other opposition contenders have repeatedly accused the government of fraud, including ballot-box stuffing and vote buying.

However, the African Union (AU) election observers said the voting was carried out “inacceptable conditions,” in a preliminary report published Monday.

At this stage there is “no tangible element” pointing towards voting irregularities, the observers said, congratulating the Mali government for its efforts to improve the voting process and noting a drop in the number of untoward incidents in the second round of voting.

The European Union also said that in the 300 polling stations its observers visited, no “major incident” occurred.

Nearly 500 polling stations were unable to open on Sunday (12 August), the government said, mostly in regions plagued by jihadist violence and ethnic tensions.

“We had a little over 3.7% of stations which had not functioned properly” during the first round on July 29, Salif Traore, Mali’s security minister, said on Monday.

The figure fell to 2.1 percent of the 23,000 polling booths in Sunday’s runoff vote, which Traore said was due to the deployment of more military.

In a reminder of the jihadist threat that was a major campaign issue, the overseer of a polling station in Arkodia, in the northern region of Timbuktu, was shot dead on Sunday by armed Islamist militants, local officials said.

Aside from this “dramatic case,” the government said the poll occurred without incident.

Turnout, however, was just 22.38%, local monitors of the POCIM (the Mali Citizen Observation Pool) said.

Fraud allegations

In the first-round vote on July 29, Keita was clearly ahead, with 42% against 18% for Cisse.

Despite fierce criticism of Keita for his handling of the security crisis, Cisse failed to rally the support of other parties behind him for the runoff, leaving the incumbent seemingly on track for a second consecutive landslide.

Results are expected by mid-week at the earliest.

The three main opposition candidates had mounted a last-ditch legal challenge to the first-round result, alleging ballot-box stuffing and other irregularities.

But their petition was rejected by the Constitutional Court.

Cisse’s party told AFP in the early hours of Sunday that ballot papers were already circulating, several hours before polls opened.

In at least six stations in the capital of Bamako, voting reports -which give the number of voters and votes cast for each candidate- were signed before the numbers were filled in, an AFP journalist witnessed.

The opposition leader, in a meeting where hundreds of supporters had gathered on Monday afternoon, also said the programme his party uses to count votes -which had put him in the lead until then- was hacked overnight.

Six members of his campaign team, including four French, were arrested on Sunday, the team and Traore, the minister of security, said.

Five of the six were released without charges after being held for two hours in a Bamako police station, a source close to the team said. Their phones and laptops were seized.

Violence

Mali, a landlocked nation home to at least 20 ethnic groups where the majority of people live on less than \$2 a day, has battled jihadist attacks and intercommunal violence for years.

Beyond its borders, the international community hopes that the winner will consolidate a 2015 accord that the fragile Sahel state sees as its foundation for peace.

The deal brought together the government, government-allied groups and former Tuareg rebels. But jihadist violence has spread from the north to the centre and south of the vast country and spilt into neighbouring Burkina Faso and Niger, often inflaming communal conflicts. A state of emergency heads into its fourth year in November. France still has 4,500 troops deployed alongside the UN's 15,000 peacekeepers and a regional G5 Sahel force, aimed at rooting out jihadists and restoring the authority of the state.(EurAct 14-08-2018)

CHINA FINANCES CONSTRUCTION OF A MOTORWAY IN GUINEA-BISSAU

Construction of a motorway in Guinea-Bissau, estimated to cost US\$16.5 million and with funding from the People's Republic of China, is expected to begin shortly, according to a statement from the Ministry of Public Works, Buildings and Urban Development released on Tuesday in Bissau.

The statement said that Minister Óscar Barbosa and the Chinese ambassador to China, Jin Hongjun, held a meeting where, among other things, they agreed on the need to start work on this project that will connect Bissau to the town of Safim, 15 kilometres north of the capital.

Both parties spoke of the preliminary work to be done, namely the identification of properties and residences that will be affected along the stretch and calculate the value of the respective damages, the statement said.

The work will be carried out by companies from China and will have a local workforce, said the press release which did not specify the exact date of commencement of work.

The motorway in question, "a modern engineering work," according to the former Chinese ambassador to Guinea-Bissau, Wang Hua, will have three lanes in each direction and its own lighting. (15-08-2018)

MOZAMBIQUE'S RUBY MINING GOES FROM 'WILD WEST' TO BIG BUSINESS

Sebastiao Pedro struck it lucky in 2014 when, as a 21-year-old small-scale miner, he found a large red ruby in northern Mozambique. He sold it to a buyer from Vietnam for \$43,000, returned to his family about 1,450km away and built a house with the proceeds.

Then the money ran out.

This year he went back to Montepuez, home to the world's biggest known ruby deposit, hoping to find another small fortune. He was disappointed. A crackdown by the authorities has seen thousands of local diggers and traders arrested. Hundreds of others from as far away as Thailand have been deported.

"The situation is difficult because the police have been sending people away and the concession areas are full of company security and we can no longer work," Pedro said as he and five fellow diggers in dust-stained clothes scratched around in the gravel beside a small dam.

A few hundred metres away is Gemfields Group's ruby operation. After a woodcutter discovered a shiny red stone there in 2009, as many as 10,000 people from all over the world descended on the dense woodland, digging and trading rubies, or offering goods and services to those doing the mining.

"It looked like a gold rush in the Wild West," said Gemfields CEO Sean Gilbertson, son of Brian, the one-time CEO of the world biggest miner BHP Billiton. "There was a lot of violence, a lot of criminality."

'Traffic light'

Four years ago, Pedro would sneak into mining concessions and dig up gravel containing the precious stones. Now it's too dangerous, so he and his colleagues wait for other informal miners who are able to get into the mining areas to bring back sacks of dirt — waste that's already been scoured for the gems. Though it's difficult to know the value of the global rough-ruby trade because it's so fragmented, the New York-based Natural Resource Governance Institute estimates the ruby, emerald and sapphire business is worth as much as \$2.5bn annually.

From nothing 10 years ago, Mozambique now accounts for as much as 80% of global ruby output, according to Richard Hughes, an expert on the stones at Lotus Gemology in Bangkok. Many of Montepuez's rubies are the colours consumers covet — "like a red traffic light", he said.

The promise of riches is perhaps best illustrated by the \$72m that Gemfields, which controls the only major mine in the area, raised at a June auction in Singapore. While the quality of stones differs at each sale, making comparisons difficult, prices doubled from a year earlier to \$122 per carat.

Chinese demand

Growing demand and rising prices, thanks mainly to Asian buying, have spurred plans by Gemfields to increase production at the site over the next two years, build a new processing plant and a sort-house for grading the stones. They've also attracted more robust competition.

Fura Gems, a Toronto-based miner, announced two deals in July to buy ruby concessions that would be the largest in the country. That's a sizable land package: Gemfields itself has an area almost half the size of New York City.

The startup is run by Dev Shetty, former CFO at Gemfields, and he has rapidly put together a team, many of whom he poached from his former employer.

Shetty shares Gilbertson's counter-intuitive reasoning that demand will follow production increases. As companies like Fura and Gemfields provide a more consistent supply of quality stones, buyers will have confidence to purchase more.

Growth plans

Small producers make up 90% of the coloured gemstone industry, said Shetty, who helped to build Gemfields' Montepuez operation. Fura plans to account for 10% of the trade in five years, and 15% in a decade.

"We need more organised players in this sector," Shetty said. "There is no doubt in my mind that prices will continue to increase."

Mozambique's shift to a more organised trade has caused strife. Because the deposits are shallow — starting at 2m below the surface in places — access is easy. That makes it attractive to informal miners, or "garimpeiros", as they are known locally.

In one of Gemfields's pits, thousands of pinkish red stones glisten on the floor, and can easily be plucked — were it not for the tight security. (Workers and visitors are patted down and made to remove their boots even when moving from section to section of the operation.)

Rights abuses

In April, law company Leigh Day brought a case against Gemfields in London, claiming more than 100 community members it represents suffered serious human-rights abuses at Gemfields's operation. Four claimants allege their sons were shot dead by security forces there.

Gemfields said it took the allegations seriously and denounced any form of violence or abuse. Many of the acts in the claim involved the Mozambican police, and Leigh Day wants to hold the company responsible, according to Gemfields, adding that it will defend itself vigorously.

Fabiao Namiva, an official in the Montepuez local government, said that while there have been some problems — the authorities want Gemfields to move more quickly in resettling a village away from its mining concession — rubies have benefited the country.

"The exploitation of rubies is contributing greatly to the revenue of the state. We are satisfied with that," he said by phone. "There are problems managing people's expectations."

Gemfields has built two schools and provides mobile clinics in the area. It has also created 1,000 jobs, according to Gilbertson.

But for people like Visado Mariano, who a year ago arrived from neighbouring Nampula province to hunt for the gems, opportunities are few. He toils on the banks of the small dam across the road from the mine, hoping to turn up something shiny and red.

"We know how to search for rubies. If the company got us to work with them in the mines, it would be better," he said. "I live badly and sometimes spend days without eating, but I will continue here. Even if I go home I have no job. It's the same thing.", (Bloomberg 13-08-2018)

MOZAMBIQUE'S ECONOMY GROWS 3.2% IN THE FIRST HALF OF 2018

Mozambique's economy grew at a rate of 3.2% in the first half of 2018, an increase of 20 basis points compared to the same period of last year, the Council of Minister's spokeswoman said on Tuesday in Maputo.

Ana Comoana, also deputy minister of culture, said that the performance of the economy from January to June is positive and "is essentially a result of the peaceful climate in which the country lives."

Mozambican daily newspaper Notícias reported that although the growth registered is very close to the value reached in all of 2017 – 3.7% – performance is still modest compared to the forecast of 5.3% for the entire year of 2018.

"Economic growth is well below the average of 7.0% a year between 2005 and 2014," she added, noting that the suspension of direct aid from cooperation partners and low levels of foreign direct investment have contributed to reduced GDP growth in recent years.

Comoana also said that exports grew by US\$205 million to reach US\$1.182 billion at the end of June, and the balance of trade recorded a deficit of US\$218 million based on imports reaching US\$1.4 billion.

The cabinet spokesperson said that although prices rose in the first half of the year with average annual inflation rising to 6.5%, "the government is satisfied that the indicator has been below two digits." (15-08-2018)

AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES URGED TO FOCUS ON FARMING TECHNOLOGY

The African Development Bank has urged academic institutions to adapt their curriculum to enable technology-driven farming, saying there is no reason why Africa should be spending \$35bn a year importing food.

According to the bank's president, Akinwumi Adesina, the rapid pace of growth in the use of drones, automated tractors, artificial intelligence, robotics and blockchain technology, will transform agriculture. He said technology transfer was needed immediately and evidence from countries such as Nigeria had demonstrated that technology coupled with strong government backing was already yielding positive results.

"Technologies to achieve Africa's green revolution exist, but are mostly just sitting on the shelves. The challenge is a lack of supportive policies to ensure that they are scaled up to reach millions of farmers," Adesina said last week in an address at the 2018 Agricultural and Applied Economics Association annual meeting, held in Washington, DC.

All it needs to do is to harness the available technologies with the right policies and rapidly raise agricultural productivity and incomes for farmers, and assure lower food prices for consumers

"It is more likely that the future farmers will be sitting in their homes with computer applications using drones to determine the size of their farms, monitor and guide the applications of farm inputs, and with driverless combine harvesters bringing in the harvest."

Adesina said African universities needed to adapt their curriculum to enable technology-driven farmers and to focus on agribusiness entrepreneurship for young people.

"All it needs to do is to harness the available technologies with the right policies and rapidly raise agricultural productivity and incomes for farmers, and assure lower food prices for consumers."

According to a recent report by the University of Stellenbosch Business School, which was commissioned by the Western Cape provincial government, agriculture could benefit from digital technology, such as blockchain, to provide product traceability, which is increasingly important for consumers. The report recommends that producers turn to blockchain technology to provide verifiable information to track food origins.

Blockchain, or the distributed ledger system, has given rise to cryptocurrencies. The system uses independent computers to synchronise transactions online without the need for validation.

The report says tertiary institutions will need to strengthen their courses with the theory, skills and knowledge related to the fourth industrial revolution, which will in turn attract new students to the sector. (BD 13-08-2018)

VALE MOÇAMBIQUE ENDS 1ST HALF OF 2018 WITH LIABILITIES OF US\$7.9 BILLION

Vale Moçambique ended the first half of 2018 with a debt of US\$7.9 billion, or an increase of US\$100 million compared to the amount recorded at the end of the first quarter, the company said in Maputo on Tuesday.

The chief executive of the Mozambican subsidiary of Brazilian mining group Vale, Marcelo Tertuliano, reported that the company's net profit in the second quarter remained negative by US\$193 million, higher than the negative result of US\$139 million in the first quarter.

Rains, high operating costs and appreciation of the Mozambican currency, the metical, are among the main causes affecting the performance of the company during the second quarter, according to the Mozambican press.

Tertuliano noted, however, an increase in production, revenues and royalties to the Mozambican state, with coal production, for example, growing from 2.9 million tons in the second quarter, against 2.4 million tons in the previous quarter.

Revenues from coal sales amounted to US\$354 million, an additional US\$17 million compared with the first three months of the year and the company paid US\$6.0 million in royalties, compared with US\$5.1 million in the period from January to March.

Vale Moçambique's chairman, Márcio Godoy, pointed out that despite the negative results, the company will continue to make large investments in its assets in Moatize, Tete province, as well as in the Nacala Logistics Corridor. (15-08-2018)

MADAGASCAR'S VANILLA PRICES EXPECTED TO STAY SWEET

Madagascar's vanilla producers expect prices to remain high during the 2018-2019 season but they will not match the record levels the luxury spice reached in 2017.

Nearly halfway through the harvest of green vanilla beans that runs from July to September, prices have reached \$56/kg, 20% higher than prices at the start of the harvesting season on July 15. Once the vanilla is ready for export its price is eight to 10 times higher than for green vanilla, meaning the export price is expected to be \$376-\$560/kg.

The forests of the northeast tip of the Indian Ocean island are the world's vanilla capital due to the perfect climate. Vanilla from Madagascar is known for its rich and creamy taste.

In 2017, the price of black nonsplit Madagascar vanilla VAN-MG-BNS, the benchmark price, rose to a record \$635/kg from \$100/kg two years earlier.

The surge in prices, sparked by growing luxury market demand for natural — as opposed to synthetic — vanilla, caused a wave of thefts of vanilla pods by illicit vanilla hunters. Police and vigilante groups have taken to guarding the valuable beans to ward off thieves.

Even though prices remain high in 2018, and there has been a lack of prefinancing from international buyers, green vanilla has attracted demand.

"Many local buyers have earned enough money in recent years and could buy green vanilla at these prices without waiting for funding," laly Raharijaona, secretary-general of a buyers group in the Sava region in the northern part of the island, said.

Many exporters said at the beginning of the green vanilla buying season that they had not yet received prefinancing from their international buyers.

In 2017, when the thieves were active, farmers harvested the green vanilla pods early rather than risk having them stolen. This meant immature vanilla came on to the market, which reduced the quality of Madagascar vanilla, buyers said. The quantity exported also fell.

Some containers were returned by international buyers during the 2017-2018 season because of the poor quality, a senior industry source in Madagascar told Reuters on condition of anonymity. (*Reuters* 13-08-2018)

ANGOLA'S CURRENCY LOSES MORE THAN 40% OF ITS VALUE AGAINST THE EURO

The euro is now worth 306.400 Angolan kwanzas following a currency auction held on Tuesday by the National Bank of Angola that provided banks with 35 million euros, according to information from the central bank.

At the end of the session, in which rates of between 307.248 kwanzas and 305.891 kwanzas were calculated, the Angolan currency had lost 1.669% of its value, accumulating a depreciation of 40.9% since the introduction of the floating exchange regime in January.

Each dollar now costs 268.02 kwanzas and with this new price, the Angolan currency has depreciated by a total of 38% against the US currency.

The amount made available in the auction was used to cover travel, family assistance, health care, school fees, including salaries of foreign workers up to the individual monthly limit of 15,000 euros.

The single European currency surpassed the 300 kwanza mark on 31 July following two days of foreign currency auctions by the National Bank of Angola, in which 384.19 million euros were made available to commercial banks

Angolan news agency Angop reported that on the black market on Tuesday the euro was sold at 430 kwanzas and the US currency at 380 kwanzas. (15-08-2018)

NIGERIA TO CONCESSION SIX HYDRO POWER DAMS

The federal government has announced that it has completed arrangements to concession six hydro power dams to private operators, who are in turn expected to build, operate and transfer them.

Speaking at the 29th Power Sector Stakeholders' meeting in Minna, Niger State, Minister of Power, Works and Housing, Mr. Babatunde Fashola disclosed that the move is aimed at energizing educational institutions and markets in the country.

Government initiative

The State Minister further noted that the step is among the government-led initiatives based on the rural electrification plan approved by the president in 2016 in a bid to provide power access for rural dwellers and vulnerable members of the society.

The six proposed small hydro dams are said to have been abandoned for decades and will now be used to energize federal government universities while also acting as market anchors.

Apart from the varsity's, where the government is directly funding the intervention the minister noted with great concern that the markets are privately financed contrary to allegations that have been made in the media and challenged those responsible for the claim to provide proof to the contrary.

Energy Consumers

"While the whole value chain and power privatization gradually evolves, it is possible to create Oases of success by showing to our children that they can have reliable power while in school. If that is a reason to get children to school and keep them there, certainly, no good business can oppose this," said Mr. Babatunde.

Meanwhile, Fashola, in spite of the recent quit threat issued by Distribution Companies, DISCOs insisted that they are the significant obstacles militating against progress in the power value chain. He noted that those who genuinely desire to solve problems in the industry don't need to be told about the pressing challenge of the sector today which is centered at distribution.

He reiterated on the pressing challenges at the sector of the value chain, most urgent being the distribution of available energy to consumers and the unused energy in the region of 2,000MW(CRO 15-08-2018)

CHINA-AFRICA FORUM TO DEEPEN COOPERATION BETWEEN CABO VERDE AND CHINA

The government of Cabo Verde (Cape Verde) hopes that the September ministerial conference in Beijing will increasingly intensify cooperation between Cabo Verde and China, especially with the creation of the Special Economic Maritime Zone in São Vicente, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance Olavo Correia said on Monday.

The minister, who noted the excellence of China-Cabo Verde cooperation, expressed his conviction that the China-Africa Cooperation Forum summit, designed to "further deepen new models of future cooperation," "will be another step in confirming the excellence of the relationship between the People's Republic of China and Cabo Verde."

At a ceremony to hand over scanners for the customs services of Praia, Sal and Boa Vista, Correia made a point of highlighting the relevant milestones of Chinese cooperation in Cabo Verde in terms of investment, culture, sport, business promotion, and technology, according to the Inforpress news agency.

The equipment offered by China to Cabo Verde includes hand luggage and container scanners, which will be linked to an image control centre at Praia Customs, reducing customs clearance time, but with guarantees an security for the country.

The equipment, built by a Chinese company, is "the most advanced in the world, with the highest automation and computerisation standards and widely used in dozens of countries," according to the Chinese ambassador, with an estimated cost of 58.85 million yuan or about US\$10 million. (14-08-2018)

CHINA TO FUND MOATIZE-MACUSE RAILWAY PROJECT IN MOZAMBIQUE

The Moatize-Macuse Railway Logistics Corridor, which is the largest infrastructure project in Mozambique, has reached its final stage, with the launch scheduled for 2019 and completion in 2022.

This is according to the new newsletter, China-Lusophone Brief (CLBrief). The 639 km railway will transport coal from the mines of Moatize and Chitima in Tete to a new floating coal terminal off the coast at Macuse, Zambezia, just north of Quelimane.

Project consortium

The consortium is led by Thai Mozambique Logistica (TML), a subsidiary of the Ital-Thai Development (ITD) of Thailand, which won the project in 2013, and holds 60% of the capital.

The TML will be financed exclusively by Chinese capital through public banks targeting Africa, and China Export & Credit Insurance Corporation (Sinasure) based in Beijing, according to CLBrief. The World Bank, through the Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency (MIGA) covers the political risk of such an investment.

Mota Engil Mozambique and China National Complete Engineering Corporation, a subsidiary of the China Machinery Engineering Corporation, are the signed contractors in charge of the project.

Local owners with 20% each are Mozambique railways (Caminhos de Ferro de Mocambique, CFM) and the Corredor de Desenvolvimento Integrado do Zambeze (Codiza). Local owners of Codiza are said to include Graca Machel; Olivia Machel, a daughter of Samora Machel; and Salimo Abdula, who often represented former President Armando Guebuza's business interests.

Coal prices have doubled since their low two years ago, reaching US \$100/tonne for thermal coal and US \$175/t for coking coal. Most coal is now exported via Nacala along a railway that is almost twice as long as the proposed Macuse line, and it costs more than US \$50/t to ship the coal by railway. The shorter Macuse line will cut that substantially, making thermal coal profitable again.(CRO 02-08-2018)

WORLD BANK COMMITS US \$500M TOWARDS ROADS PROJECTS IN LIBERIA

The [World Bank](#) has agreed to offer the Government of Liberia an initial US \$500m for road projects across the country. This is according to Information Minister, Lenn Eugene Nagbe.

The Information Minister, Mr Nagbe said the government is considering the offer in a positive manner adding that modalities are ongoing to ensure that the money is made available. Upon a reached agreement between the Liberian Government, the IMF, [African Development Bank](#) and the World Bank, Nagbe disclosed that they will pull money together for road projects as well.

"We are yet to conclude the agreement; the Minister of Finance is leading the discussion, but we have been given an offer where the government will pay a concessional interest rate over a very concessional period at 0.5% interest rate, which is very minimal," said Lenn Eugene Nagbe.

Loan agreement

Minister Nagbe dismissed speculations that the government was abandoning the two previous loan agreements, since the World Bank made the commitment and emphasized that the agreements are laws and they would be used to development road across the country.

He further elaborated that ambassadors from countries including America and China and representatives of development partners requested President George Weah not to expand the country's borrowing space.

According to him, President Weah instead asked the ambassadors to help provide money to execute road projects across the country, since they want him to borrow in a sustainable way.(CRO 08-08-2018)

ANGOLA'S MALANJE PROVINCE HAS OVER 100,000 HECTARES OF UNEXPLORED FORESTS

One hundred and fifteen thousand hectares of forests to explore wood and 1,000 for charcoal exploration are as yet unexplored in the municipalities of Massango and Cambundi-Catembo, in the

Angolan province of Malanje, due to lack of companies licensed for this purpose, the local official for the Forestry Development Institute said recently in the city of Malanje.

Tomás Mizalague also told Angolan news agency Angop that the province does not have any concessionaires to explore wood and/or charcoal, "so it is urgent to create companies in the sector to take advantage of the potential that the region has in this area."

The Congo Basin is one of the most important wilderness areas on the planet, containing 20% of the world's rainforests and Africa's largest biological diversity, although areas adjacent to cities are being threatened by population growth.

Angop also wrote that the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry is currently assessing 18 applications for concessions for the exploration of wood and two for charcoal in that province.

The forestry campaign is expected to officially open this week, with less than 200 licenses planned nationwide to explore 300,000 cubic metres of timber. (13-08-2018)

ETHIOPIAN AIRLINES INTRODUCES STOPOVER SERVICE TO BOOST TOURISM

Ethiopian Airlines has announced rolled out stopover packages without any additional airfare that cater for all leisure needs with a view to promote tourism in the country.

The service commenced on August 1. This is also expected to encourage passengers to visit historical and tourism sites in Ethiopia and return to the airport to continue flights to their final destinations.

Passengers traveling through Addis Ababa and continuing their journey to one of the destinations on Ethiopian network can now take advantage of stopover offerings from Ethiopian Holidays, the tour operator wing of Ethiopian Airlines, enabling them to discover and experience the many historical, cultural, religious and natural treasures of Ethiopia, Land of Origins. An online e-visa service for processing stopover visa is available for all international visitors to Ethiopia.

The airline said the packages range from sightseeing in Addis Ababa, the diplomatic capital of Africa, to visits to the pre-Christian era obelisks of Axum, the stunning medieval rock-hewn churches of Lalibela, the amazing 9th century mosques of Harar, the majestic castles of Gondar, the stunning source of the Blue Nile, the jaw-dropping Simien Mountains, the splendor of the lake side resorts of Hawassa and Arba Minch, or the unique coffee farms of Kaffa, birth place of coffee and many others.

Group CEO of Ethiopian Airlines, Tewolde Gebremariam said, "Ethiopian is working with all stakeholders in the tourism chain to make Ethiopia a tourism destination of choice. With its many riches, the world has yet to truly discover Ethiopia and tourism has the potential to become the main foreign currency generator for the country and a mass job creator for the youth. With the stopover packages, we aim to attract a significant portion of our transit customers in Addis as tourists and to considerably enhance the flow of tourism into the country."

Ethiopia airlines said the stopover packages are easily accessible on its website and would pop-up as an option when passengers book flights transiting thru Addis Ababa or can directly be accessed at Ethiopian Holidays website.(This Day 13-08-2018)

AU TCHAD, L'AUTRE VISAGE DE LA CRISE DES REFUGIES

Cerné par les conflits et miné par la pauvreté, le Tchad accueille pourtant à bras ouverts près de 400 000 réfugiés des pays voisins, notamment la Centrafrique.

À Dilingala, les enfants de Saint-Paul Nodjimadji sont partis ramasser du karité. Les noix de l'arbre à beurre sont une des rares denrées à pousser en ce début de saison des pluies à l'extrême sud du Tchad.

« Les autochtones [les tchadiens] nous ont autorisés à ramasser le karité, pour nourrir nos familles », explique Saint-Paul Nodjimadji. Le jeune homme de 35 ans a quitté la Centrafrique en 2014, poussé sur les routes de l'exil par la guerre civile qui a éclaté en 2013 dans la foulée de la chute de l'ex-président, François Bozizé.

Installé dans un village tchadien proche de la frontière avec ses trois femmes et ses neuf enfants, il a été relocalisé un peu plus loin, sur le site de Dilingala, avec 2 300 autres réfugiés centrafricains. Le village jouxtant le site des réfugiés compte lui 2 500 habitants tchadiens, respectant ainsi la règle tacite de ne pas installer plus de réfugiés que de locaux.

Et des deux côtés de Dilingala, l'inquiétude sur la mise en culture et la pénurie alimentaire est sur toutes les lèvres. « Je ne veux pas attendre le PAM [Programme alimentaire mondial] pour pouvoir nourrir ma famille », peste Saint Paul, qui attend d'avoir accès à des terres cultivables pour lancer le labour. « Si on me donne de quoi cultiver, je pourrais nourrir les miens, comme je le faisais en Centrafrique avant la guerre. »

Les réfugiés centrafricains ramassent les noix de karité

L'impatience de Saint-Paul est aiguillonnée par l'urgence de planter maintenant. La saison des pluies vient de commencer, et la fenêtre de tir s'amenuise pour la mise en culture du sorgho, du mil et du maïs, plantations traditionnelles de la région.

De plus, la période de soudure, pendant laquelle les réserves s'épuisent avant la nouvelle récolte, a commencé particulièrement tôt cette année, faisant grimper les prix des denrées alimentaires.

Mais depuis l'installation récente du site par le Haut-Commissariat aux Réfugiés (HCR) dans la sous-préfecture de Goré, l'accès aux terres, aux semences et au matériel agricole prévu dans le cadre de l'approche « hors-camps » de l'agence onusienne se met difficilement en route.

Cette approche prônée par les Nations-Unies consiste à favoriser l'intégration socio-économique des réfugiés – qui demeurent en moyenne 17 ans dans leur pays d'accueil – en les répartissant in situ dans les villages. Ainsi intégrés à la population tchadienne, les réfugiés peuvent plus facilement sortir de l'ultra-dépendance à l'aide internationale. Un des dommages collatéraux engendrés par les vastes camps de réfugiés totalement coupés des centres urbains, qui ont longtemps constitué le gros de la réponse internationale aux situations de crise.

À Dilingala, les Centrafricains se sont pourtant vus promettre l'accès à 300 hectares de terres cultivables, concédées par le chef de canton. Mais les hectares doivent encore être défrichés, et faute d'outils agricoles, la tâche n'a pas commencé. L'accès aux semences demeure aussi incertain, faute de financements. Autant de freins qui hypothèquent l'intégration économique prônée par le HCR.

Prix alimentaires

« Les difficultés sont énormes, avec l'afflux de réfugiés les prix de la nourriture augmentent. Nous avons donné les terres, mais il faut les semences pour planter », réclame le chef du village de Dilingala. En poste depuis 23 ans, l'homme a vu passer toutes les vagues de réfugiés centrafricains depuis 2003.

« Beaucoup sont intégrés maintenant, dans les villages. Mais les gens continuent à arriver, il faut les aider », affirme-t-il.

En attendant la mise en route des projets d'accès aux terres, les réfugiés centrafricains sont tributaires de l'aide alimentaire fournie par le Programme alimentaire mondial (PAM). Une fois par mois, les sacs de farine, de sorgho, de mil ou de maïs s'entassent à l'entrée du site. Chaque famille dispose d'un approvisionnement défini en fonction du nombre de personnes.

La pénurie de fonds a toutefois poussé le PAM à limiter les distributions de nourriture. « Nous sommes obligés de réduire l'assistance alimentaire aux réfugiés », explique Mary-ellen Mc Groarty, directrice du Programme alimentaire mondial au Tchad.

« Aujourd'hui, ce qu'on nous donne avec l'aide alimentaire, ce n'est pas suffisant pour vivre », rage Saint-Paul. « Avec ce qu'on nous donne pour un mois, je peux nourrir ma famille 3 jours. Et après on a plus que ça pour le reste du mois », affirme-t-il, en montrant le tas de karité ramassé par les enfants.

Tradition d'accueil

Malgré la situation alimentaire, le Tchad a toujours accueilli les réfugiés des pays voisins sans que cela n'entraîne de tension. « On ne peut pas refuser d'accueillir les gens, ce sont des frères et leur pays est

en guerre », tranche le chef de Dilingala. Politiquement, la crise des réfugiés n'a jamais été instrumentalisée, ce qui a certainement évité au pays, pourtant divisé entre chrétiens et musulmans, des crispations communautaires et religieuses.

« Le Tchad est un pays accueillant pour les réfugiés. Les Centrafricains et les Tchadiens sont des mêmes ethnies, ils parlent les même dialectes, cela facilite l'intégration », explique Olivier Brouant, chef de l'aide humanitaire européenne au Tchad (ECHO), un des principaux bailleurs au Tchad.

Dirigé par Idriss Déby, le pays est pourtant un des plus pauvres du monde. Il n'a pas su tirer profit de ses réserves pétrolières, dont la découverte avait précédé de peu la chute des cours du baril, enterrant au passage tout espoir de redressement de l'économie tchadienne. En dépit de la situation de pauvreté alarmante du pays, nombre de Centrafricains, de Soudanais ou de Nigériens viennent s'y réfugier, le Tchad bénéficiant d'une relative stabilité en comparaison de ses voisins. Au total, le pays sahélien accueille plus de 400 000 réfugiés, dont environ 80 000 Centrafricains pour une population d'environ 14 millions de personnes. Il figure ainsi parmi les principaux pays d'accueil de réfugiés dans le monde. (EurAct 24-07-2018)

AFRICA OIL & POWER AND AFRICAN ENERGY CHAMBER (AEC) SIGN STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

On July 16, 2018 1:45 pm In News by Emmanuel Okogba 0 Comments Africa Oil & Power, the continent's premier platform for energy investment and policy, and the African Energy Chamber (AEC) signed a strategic partnership in Johannesburg today. Both organizations will be sharing capacities to facilitate investments and deal-making in Africa across their networks. Under the agreement, the AEC will also become an official partner of the Africa Oil & Power 2018 conference taking place September 5-7, 2018 in Cape Town. As part of the partnership, the Africa Energy Chamber is extending to all its members and partners across its network an exclusive discount of 15% to attend the summit in Cape Town from September 5-7, 2018. "As the AEC, we always encourage all our members to seek new partners and investors and expand their horizons to support their growth across the continent. We believe Africa Oil & Power is a perfect platform for them to do that," explained NJ Ayuk, the chamber's chairman. As a prestigious international forum to take place in Cape Town this fall, Africa Oil & Power is an ideal place to strike business deals and meet investors. For its third edition, Africa Oil & Power has put together a prestigious program with 15 African petroleum and power ministers confirmed to date, 600 C-level delegates and 75+ speakers from across the continent, Europe, Asia, and the Americas spanning the entire value chain, from upstream to power generation. As Africa's energy sector enters a new phase of growth and oil prices stabilize around \$70, AOP and the AEC have expressed their excitement over this new collaboration which capitalizes on renewed optimism across Africa's investment community. Guillaume Doane, the CEO of Africa Oil & Power, said: "The vision of Africa Oil & Power and the Africa Energy Chamber are the same — to combine a pro-African attitude with a pan-African influence. We are excited to have access to their extensive African energy network." (Vanguard 15-08-2018)

AVOCADOS: A STAPLE FOR EUROPEAN HIPSTERS AND A BOON FOR KENYAN FARMERS

Kenyan farmers are switching other, more labour-intensive crops, such as coffee and tea, for the increasingly popular avocados

Across Kenya's ochre fields, farmers are switching coffee and tea for avocados in a bid to profit from increasing European demand for that most instagrammable of dishes.

Among them is Simon Kimani, who tends 2ha of avocado trees. "Recently, when the avocado trade started growing up we thought that it is better to plant avocados, that's how I started," he says, pointing to his first trees, planted less than a decade ago.

Avocado toast is becoming a staple of European menus, says Laura Hannoun, a blogger who has listed the top-10 places to order the simple, hip dish which can set one back €14. "The fair price is between €10 and €11."

Harvesting is a low-tech affair: a broken wooden ladder and an old machete are all it takes ... In this way, Kimani produces about 28,000 avocados a year

In Kenya, smallholder farmers grow avocados and sell them on to exporters. Kimani's buyer is Bernard Kimutai of Fair Trade Company. Kimutai has seen a sharp increase in exports of the popular hass avocado in recent years. "In 2016 we exported 20 tonnes, in 2017 we did about 40 tonnes," he says, hoping to double the figure again this year.

Harvesting is a low-tech affair: a broken wooden ladder and an old machete are all it takes for Kimani and his two employees to chop down the hard, green avocados, collected young so they reach Europe ripe. In this way, Kimani produces about 28,000 avocados a year, and is paid the equivalent of a little more than €0.10 each.

In European supermarkets, where they are sold alongside others from Chile, Israel and Mexico, they easily fetch 10 times that amount, if not more.

"One-hundred percent of our avocados are for export. We try to improve the quality to make sure what we get from the farmer is 90% exportable," says Kimutai, adding that any which do not make the grade are sold on to oil-processing companies.

Kenya's temperate climate is well-suited to avocado cultivation, especially around the high altitude town of Thika, north of Nairobi, where Kimani has his farm. In its terraced orchard, avocado trees grow alongside banana and coffee trees as part of a well-planned multi-culture that keeps the soil fertile. However, for Kimani, avocado is the crop of choice. "With the coffee there is a lot of work to manage the coffee but with avocados it is easier, to have more money, less labour."

Less than three years since planting his first avocado trees, he now takes in two harvests a year. The Kenyan government is also onside, even providing courses to help farmers learn new skills, says Kimutai. "The Kenyan government has encouraged farmers to grow more avocados because of the market."

Kenya is the world's sixth largest exporter of avocados — with 3% of the world's total — and Africa's biggest, producing 63,000 tonnes last year. The strong demand from European countries allows companies such as Kuitaisi's to export throughout the year. "Demand is going high, especially in the rich countries where they care more about health, considering that avocados in Kenya are produced organically."

Renowned as a healthy food, full of vitamins, fibre and trace elements, avocado is an increasing staple of European diets. Hannoun eats avocado at least once a week, usually on toast, maybe with a poached egg or some pomegranate, which, she says, "Fulfils my desire for something tasty, while being healthier than pancakes or burgers." (AFP 15-08-2018)

MAURITANIA JAILS ANTI-SLAVERY LINCHPIN

Mauritania's anti-slavery leader Biram Ould Dah, a candidate for September's legislative and local elections has been jailed on the orders of an investigating judge, a judicial source disclosed in Nouakchott.

The president of the Initiative for the Resurgence of Abolitionism (IRA) was arrested last Thursday in Nouakchott, following a complaint filed by a local journalist who accused him of defaming him and encouraging his supporters to harm him.



However, in a statement, IRA declared that "the sole purpose of his arrest was to compromise his candidacy which must be validated by the National Independent Electoral Commission (CENI)".

Ould Dah has served two previous prison sentences, in 2012 and 2014 respectively, for burning religious books and assault on law enforcement officer during a demonstration.

He ran for president in the June 2014 election, and obtained more than 8 percent of the votes.

Officially abolished in Mauritania in 1980, slavery was banned by law in 2007 before being classified as a crime against humanity and further proscribed in 2015. (APA 14-08-2018)

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