

MEMORANDUM

N° 76/2018 | 19/09/2018

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12 YEARS OF PUBLICATION

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CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC: EU RELEASES €26.5 MILLION TO RESPOND TO THE REGIONAL HUMANITARIAN CRISIS

The European Commission has allocated €26.5 million in emergency aid for vulnerable families affected by the humanitarian crisis in the Central African Republic and its spill-over into neighbouring countries.

The funding comes as some 2.5 million, half the country's population, are in need of assistance, with the crisis triggering an influx of refugees into neighbouring countries.

"The EU is committed to support vulnerable families in the Central African Republic and neighbouring countries. Our humanitarian aid will provide essential supplies such as food, water, agricultural support and healthcare. Aid operations in the country are often hampered for security reasons. It is vital that humanitarian workers can deliver aid safely. Aid workers are not a target." said Commissioner of Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos **Stylianides**.

The European Commission is also supporting the UN humanitarian air services to deliver aid across the country. Since 2014, the European Union and its Member States have mobilised more than €500 million in humanitarian aid for the Central African Republic regional crisis.

Background

The humanitarian crisis in the Central Africa Republic erupted in 2014, due to onset violence between armed groups, aggravated by the fact that the country has the lowest human development index in the world (188/188) and very weak institutions. To this day, half the population is in need of humanitarian aid. Since 2017, the total number of internally displaced people and refugees has increased significantly. A quarter of the population (about 1.2 million people) is forcibly displaced, either inside the country or in neighbouring countries.

The crisis also affects neighbouring countries with some 573,000 Central African refugees mainly in Cameroon, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Chad. Their prolonged stay puts pressure on the local populations who are hosting them and on already scarce resources. EU humanitarian assistance is also delivered in these countries to both host populations and Central African refugees. (EC 18-09-2018)

[Central African Republic](#)

CAHORA BASSA HYDROELECTRIC PLANT IN MOZAMBIQUE INVESTS €500 MILLION IN 10 YEARS

The Cahora Bassa Hydroelectric Plant (HCB) has a 10-year investment plan in the amount of 500 million euros, Vital Capex, to recover and modernise the company's electricity production system, said the company's chairman.

Pedro Couto, in an interview with the Mozambican edition of Exame magazine, said that the Vital Capex will be financed partly through its own resources and the other part through national and international bank loans.

The financing will be facilitated by the fact that the company has a solid track record of results, a strong financial position and long-term energy sales contracts that provide stability and confidence to both domestic and international investors, the chairman said.

The investment programme is focused on renovating parts of the facility, improving the efficiency of installed capacity to ensure operability and sustainability of the production chain, he said.

"With these investments, HCB will increase the reliability of production and transportation of energy, ensuring that customers receive quality energy," Couto said.

HCB produces power for two regional markets – South Africa, its main customer, and Zimbabwe, and it is said that Malawi could be the next destination for the electricity generated at the dam.

The company has two types of long-term contracts with the Electricity Supply Commission of South Africa (Eskom) and Electricidade de Moçambique (EDM) and short-term contracts with the Zimbabwe Electricity Supply Authority (ZESA), as well as energy sales contracts depending on the availability of additional production.

Cahora Bassa production in 2017 was affected by a drought that hit the Zambezi River basin, to reach 13.77 million megawatt hours, a drop of 11.5% compared with 2016, with total sales of goods and services reaching 15.575 trillion meticaais (US\$253.5 million), a year-on-year increase of 3.5%.

HCB is due to be listed on the Mozambican Stock Exchange through a Public Offering of shares representing 7.5% of its capital stock, as announced on 27 November 2017 by the President of Mozambique, Filipe Nyusi.

Last year, the company handed over to its shareholders – the Mozambican state with 85%, Redes Energéticas Nacionais, of Portugal, with 7.5% and HCB itself, with the remaining 7.5%, dividends in the amount of 1.181 billion meticaais, equivalent to US\$19.6 million.

Cahora Bassa is one of the biggest sources of revenue for the Mozambican state, which in 2017 in taxes, fees and dividends received about US\$130 million. (18-09-2018)

AN EU-FUNDED PROJECT STUDIES THE KEY ROLE OF EDUCATION IN THE PROFESSIONAL INTEGRATION OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE MARRAKECH REGION

FEMISE recently published a new brief to provide Forward Thinking for the EuroMediterranean region. The difficulties of young Moroccans, both in terms of their professional integration and in the education system have led us to question the constraints that can weigh on these young people in the pursuit of their studies and their access to paid employment. Our results highlight the important role of secondary education in gaining paid employment.

However, many young people drop out of school early. The analysis of reasons for stopping studies is essential so that public authorities can put in place effective measures. It is necessary for Morocco to clearly define the requirements of the socio-economic sectors in terms of competences and qualifications in order to redirect educational policies and the functioning of training systems accordingly. In order to reduce the drop-out rate, public authorities must focus both on primary school and college. In addition, government measures should focus on young girls especially in rural areas, where access to education is constrained. (EEAS 16-09-2018)

MOZAMBICAN CONTRACTORS ABANDON MORE THAN 800 PUBLIC WORKS

More than 800 public works have been abandoned by contractors in Mozambique and several public managers will be made criminally and disciplinarily responsible for the situation, said the Minister of State Administration and the Public Administration.

Carmelita Namashulua, quoted by Mozambican daily newspaper Notícias, said the state is being damaged by the abandonment of the works since as it paid for all the budgets submitted by the contractors.

Namashulua pointed out that the work has been abandoned because of a lack of capacity of the contractors and the violation of the principles that should guide public manager in awarding the contracts. (18-09-2018)

ETHIOPIA AND ERITREA REOPEN BORDER POST AFTER 20 YEARS

The leaders of Ethiopia and Eritrea reopened crossing points on their shared border on Tuesday for the first time in 20 years, clearing the way for trade between the former foes after a stunning reconciliation. Thousands of people from both countries watched one ceremony in Zalambessa, an Ethiopian border town that was reduced to rubble soon after hostilities between the neighbours broke out in 1998.

Soldiers and civilians waving Ethiopian and Eritrean flags lined the road as Ethiopia's Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrean President Isaias Afwerki opened the frontier in a ceremony broadcast live on Ethiopian television.

"This is the happiest day of my life," Ruta Haddis, an Eritrean from nearby Senafe town, told reporters. "I never thought this would take place in my lifetime."

The war over their border and other issues killed about 80,000 people before fighting between Eritrea and Ethiopia ended in 2000 in a contested peace deal. Tensions burned on over the position of the frontier — until Abiy offered to end the military stand-off in 2018 as part of a package of reforms that have reshaped the political landscape in the Horn of Africa and beyond. Ever since, landlocked Ethiopia has made it a priority to reopen roads connecting it to Eritrea, which has ports on the Red Sea.

The two leaders also opened another frontier crossing at Bure, Eritrea's information minister Yemane Meskel tweeted.

Pictures posted online by Abiy's chief of staff showed the leaders walking side by side, Abiy in camouflaged military fatigues and Isaias wearing sandals and a safari suit.

The Bure region experienced some of the fiercest fighting during the 1998-2000 war. Eritrea and Ethiopia share a border that stretches for more than 1,000km, but there were no details of other border openings on Tuesday. The leaders have moved swiftly to end two decades of hostility since signing a breakthrough agreement in Asmara on July 9 to restore ties.

Eritrea reopened its embassy in Ethiopia in July, and Ethiopia reciprocated last week.

The two countries have resumed flights. Eritrea has agreed to open its ports to its landlocked neighbour and last week announced plans to upgrade a connecting road.

The two leaders also celebrated Ethiopian new year together at the border with their troops on Tuesday, Abiy's chief of staff, Fitsum Arega, said.

Ethiopia follows a calendar similar to the ancient Julian calendar — which started disappearing from the West in the 16th century — meaning the country entered its year 2011 on Tuesday. (Reuters 11-09-2018)

CAR ASSEMBLY PLANT IN MOZAMBIQUE GOES INTO BANKRUPTCY AND LEAVES ONLY DEBT

The Matchedje car-assembly project in Mozambique, inaugurated in 2014 by the former President of the Republic, Armando Guebuza, has gone bankrupt leaving the state only with debts, said the Minister of Industry and Trade.

The factory built on 20,000 square metres of land in Machava required an investment of US\$ 50 million and was the result of a public-private partnership between the Mozambican state and China Tong Jian Investment.

Ragendra de Sousa, quoted by daily newspaper O País, said that the bankruptcy of Matchedje Motors left only debts for the Mozambican state, and praised the activity currently being carried out at the plant, transforming the bodies of buses into classrooms.

Matchedje Motors during the plant's inauguration was considered to be a step forward in Mozambique's industrialisation process, and it was announced that it would produce 500,000 vehicles a year by 2020, both for local consumption and for export.

Three years later, the plant stopped assembling vehicles and became little more than a repair shop for cars and buses, mostly owned by the municipal transport companies of Maputo and Matola. (18-09-2018)

ZIMBABWE WEIGHS UP USING RAND TO BOOST AILING ECONOMY

Newly appointed finance minister Mthuli Ncube faces an uphill battle to stabilise the economy Zimbabwe is seriously considering using the rand as its official currency, newly appointed finance minister Mthuli Ncube has said.

Ncube, a former dean of the Wits University Business School and deputy president and chief economist of the African Development Bank, said that Zimbabwe had only three viable options to get out of the cash crunch it was facing.

Ncube's major challenge is to stabilise the economy that has recently been hit by acute shortages of cash and basic commodities and skyrocketing prices, as well as a perennial foreign currency crunch. He told Zimbabwe's state media at the weekend that adopting the rand was a possible alternative in his bid to salvage the staggering economy.

"I am very clear that there have to be currency reforms and the [current] currency approach is not working," he said. "In doing so, there are three choices that I will explore and pursue with urgency. One is to adopt the US dollar only and remove the bond notes from circulation through a demonetisation process, and also liberalise exchange controls.

"Two, adopt the rand by negotiating to join the rand monetary area, and this will close the gap in loss of competitiveness against our largest trading partner, South Africa."

Ncube said the third option was to adopt a new Zimbabwean dollar. "Here one needs to be clear that it has to be backed by adequate foreign reserves and macroeconomic conditions for its stability."

Ncube said that foreign currency accounts would also be introduced into the system.

Zimbabwe is using a basket of currencies including the US dollar, the British pound, the Japanese yen, the rand and all regional currencies.

It also uses surrogate notes called bond notes, officially regarded as being at par with the US dollar.

In a paper published before his appointment, Ncube wrote that he was a strong advocate for the rand.

"I was one of the people who were of the idea that Zimbabwe should adopt the rand and join the rand monetary union for a seven-to 10-year period. This is because South Africa accounts for 80% of Zimbabwe's trade.

"So, clearly, you want a currency that is linked to your largest trading partner."

Ncube's appointment in the post-Mugabe cabinet was largely welcomed inside and outside Zimbabwe, with opposition leader Nelson Chamisa calling him "a good man who was joining a bad team".

"He is a good man, but being put into a basket of bad eggs will result in him turning bad as well," said Chamisa.

UK-based Zimbabwe academic Alex Magaisa said his success would depend on how much room he got to implement his policies in the Zanu-PF government, known for its self-defeating programmes.

"However, much will depend on the latitude [President Emmerson] Mnangagwa is willing to give him. Past finance ministers have failed to achieve their objectives not because they were bad but because there was ... political interference and toxic policies based on populism." (11-09-2018)

FIRST FORESTRY WAREHOUSE BEGINS TO BE BUILT IN ANGOLA

The first of six warehouses to be built in Angola to monitor timber exploration activities began to be built on Monday in Luena, Moxico province, with the laying of the first stone, according to Angolan news agency Angop.

The ceremony was attended by the State Secretary for Agriculture and Livestock, Carlos Alberto Jaime Pinto, who, without giving details of costs and the timing of the work, said that the construction of the warehouse would benefit the province and the country in general, due to the greater control in the exploration and sale of the timber.

Last August, the Secretary of State for Forest Resources, André Moda, announced the construction of six forest products warehouses to receive the entire national timber production, both from concessions and semi-industrial units.

"After the construction and start-up of the warehouses, no forest product intended for external sale may leave without first passing through one of these structures, for inspection and certification purposes by the Forestry Development Institute, General Tax Administration, Commerce and Fiscal Police," he said.

The six warehouses will be built in Catete (Luanda) and Caxito (Bengo), which are a priority because of their proximity to the port of Luanda, in Luena (Moxico), Menongue (Kwando Kubango) and in the cities of Cabinda and Benguela.

The new legislation for the timber sector sets out that for export operations, a letter of credit or proof of transfer issued by a bank abroad in favor of the exporter's account must be presented at a bank domiciled in Angola. (18-09-2018)

UGANDA'S YOWERI MUSEVENI ACCUSES FOREIGN STATES OF INTERFERENCE

Uganda's President Yoweri Museveni has warned against foreign interference in the country's politics days after an opposition call for the US to suspend military aid over the government's human rights record.

Museveni also accused foreign countries of seeking to influence the nation's politics by funnelling assistance to the opposition through nongovernmental organisations (NGOs).

"It is important that external players refrain from interfering in the internal affairs of other countries," Museveni said.

"If there's any problem in Uganda, I surely will handle it better than the outsider."

Last week, the US lawyer for opposition MP Robert Kyagulanyi called on the US to stop funding Uganda's military as a punitive measure against what Kyagulanyi said was torture by authorities in his country.

Kyagulanyi and fellow MP Francis Zaake say they were tortured by security forces while in detention in August.

Kyagulanyi, who has emerged as a formidable threat to the president, was charged with treason over his alleged role in the stoning of Museveni's convoy during campaigning for a parliamentary seat.

The government in Kampala denies torturing Kyagulanyi.

Museveni, in power since 1986, has been widely accused of using security forces to suppress opposition to his rule.

"NGOs funded by foreign governments give money to opposition players, lie on their behalf," said Museveni.

His government would deploy thousands of auxiliary troops in the capital, Kampala, to boost security after a rash of assassinations, including two police officers, an MP and a public prosecutor, he said.

In July, the constitution was amended to remove the presidential age limit of 75 years, meaning Museveni can run again for president in 2021, the year the country hopes to begin oil production. (Reuters 11-09-2018)

CONGO'S RAWBANK SIGNS THE CHINA-AFRICA INTER BANK ASSOCIATION ESTABLISHMENT AGREEMENT

About 16 African banks including RAWBANK, the first banking institution in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC), and China Development Bank (CDB) signed an agreement for the establishment of the China-Africa Inter Bank Association in Beijing (CAIBA)



Creation of the China-Africa Interbank Association.

Based on the presentation by Xi Jinping, President of China, aimed at enhancing China-Africa relations and promoting “10 principal cooperation plans” between China and the African continent, eight major actions of China-Africa cooperation were planned in order to advance the partnership.

Taking into account the deficit in meeting the funding needs of African countries with regard to industrialisation, infrastructure connectivity and poverty alleviation, a closer collaboration between Chinese financial institutions and African countries was decided.

Within this context, CDB, represented by its President, Mr Hu Huaibang, and peer financial institutions in Africa jointly established the China-Africa Inter Bank Association (CAIBA), which is a concrete move in achieving win-win cooperation and better quality and higher common development.

RAWBANK, Congo’s lone bank to be selected owing to its leading position in the banking sector for more than 16 years, is henceforth one of the 16 founding members of CAIBA alongside international and Pan-African banks such as Standard Bank, Absa, Attijariwafa Bank and others.

With CDB, CAIBA is set to enhance financial cooperation between all member banks to advance partnership in various domains such as China-Africa infrastructure interconnection, international cooperation and exchange in the humanities.

This agreement aims to strengthen the economic ties and investments between China and African countries, as part of the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation (FOCAC). (AR 12-09-2018)

BOTSWANA SAYS CHINA AGREED TO EXTEND LOAN, CANCEL DEBT

China plans to extend a loan to Botswana for rail and road infrastructure as well as writing off some debt, Botswana’s President Mokgweetsi Masisi says.

Speaking at the airport on his return from last week’s China-Africa forum in Beijing, Masisi said Botswana had made a pitch to China and “I am happy to report that, judging from what President Xi Jinping told me, we were successful”.

In addition to the loan and a debt cancellation of P80m, China has also offered a P340m (\$31m) grant, he said.

“We got a little bit more than just the loan,” he told reporters.

He did not disclose the size of the loan, but last week the ministry of finance said Botswana was seeking a P12bn (\$1.09bn) loan for transport infrastructure.

Botswana is the world’s leading producer of diamonds by value. Chinese companies, mostly state owned, are largely into construction in Botswana such as dams and roads.

The bulk of the loan is expected to fund the Moseitse-Kazungula railway line project, which will link the central part of Botswana to the tourism hub in the northwest.

The railway line will also promote regional trade as it will connect Botswana to Zambia via the Kazungula Bridge, currently under construction.

China's Xi has offered another \$60bn in financing for Africa and wrote off some debt for poorer African nations, while warning against funds going towards "vanity projects".

Speaking at the opening of the forum, Xi said the financing would include \$15bn in aid, interest-free loans and concessional loans, a \$20bn credit line, a \$10bn special fund for China-Africa development, and a \$5bn special fund for imports from Africa.

The Zambian government also on Saturday denied reports that it was in talks with Chinese companies for them to take over Kenneth Kaunda International Airport and the Zesco power utility due to debt default.

Government spokesperson Dora Siliya tweeted a denial. She pointed out that some of the China-funded projects had not even been completed. (Reuters 10-09-2018)

CHINA'S SINOTRUK TO ESTABLISH ASSEMBLY PLANT IN GHANA

China national heavy duty truck group Sinotruk International has signed a deal with the government of Ghana to develop an assembly plant in Ghana, a move that is expected to provide service to Ghana and West African markets



After completion, the new assembly plant is expected to assemble about 1,500 trucks per year for sale in West Africa.

The agreement was signed during the Ghana-Shangdong Business Conference.

As reported by *Ghana News Agency*, during the signing ceremony, Zhang Yuzong, general representative of Sinotruk International, explained the role of the company in developing a vast range of heavy duty trucks, buses, special trucks and engines.

After completion, the new assembly plant is expected to assemble about 1,500 trucks per year for sale in West Africa, noted Yuzong. In addition, the plant will play a major role in creating more jobs and employment opportunities to the local people, with providing them training to the truck transfer technologies.

Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo, President of Ghana, lauded the initiative of Sinotruk to develop the assembly plant and assured the government's extensive support for the execution of the project.

The President further described Ghana as a stable country do business and as an ideal place to have a manufacturing base to reach the entire West African market, noted the source. (AR 07-09-2018)

SOMALIA, ERITREA AND ETHIOPIA TO HOLD TRILATERAL TALKS ON ECONOMIC INTEGRATION

The President of Somalia Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo is leading efforts to consolidate gains made at the Forum on China-Africa Cooperation by facilitating the prospect of a tripartite agreement on economic integration between the countries of the Horn



Mohamed Abdullahi Farmajo, President of Somalia, is leading the efforts.

President Farmajo, Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and Eritrea's President Isaias Afwerki are scheduled to meet in Asmara from 6-7 September 2018, to hold discussions on strengthening the economic and security stability of the region.

The leaders would also discuss measures to end all political and social conflicts between the countries of the horn to promote harmony and a happy coexistence between neighbours of the horn.

President Farmajo's vision is to promote free trade flow and a mutual economic cooperation between all the countries of the Horn of Africa.

Somalia seeks to play a key role in the economic and social integration of the Horn of Africa to foster trade and investment and to improve connectivity between the people and businesses of the Horn.

In Beijing, Somalia signed the Belt and Road Initiative that enhances connectivity and promotes economic development and an agreement on improving Economic and Technical Cooperation between China and Somalia.

Somalia's ambition to take the lead in facilitating a robust Horn of Africa trade bloc would foster stronger economic stability and development for the Horn nations.(AR 06-09-2018)

UGANDA TO TELECOMS FIRMS: YOU NEED TO LIST TO GET A LICENCE

Uganda will introduce a requirement for all telecoms firms to list shares on the local bourse as a condition for obtaining a licence to operate in the country, a government statement said on Tuesday.

The statement on resolutions agreed at a cabinet meeting said the move would "help mitigate capital flight, among other benefits". Outlining a series of changes for the telecoms industry, the statement also said the cabinet agreed at a meeting on Monday to renew the operating licence of the local unit of South African telecom company MTN Group.

However, it was not immediately clear whether that was conditional on the new requirements for operators.

The new policy will also bar operators from selling their allocated spectrum in any merger or acquisition deal.

"No operator whenever selling its stake through 'mergers and acquisitions' should ever have a claim on spectrum," the statement said, adding the measure was to preclude the hoarding of spectrum by some operators.

Under the new plans, customers will also be allowed to switch providers without changing their numbers. Currently, this is not possible in the country, and customers have long complained this effectively tied them to a provider.

MTN Uganda is the east African country's biggest telecoms firm with more than 10-million subscribers and competes with a local unit of India's Bharti Airtel, as well as smaller companies.

MTN launched in Uganda in 1998 after acquiring a 20-year operating licence, which was due to expire in 2018.

The sector regulator, the Uganda Communications Commission (UCC), has been reviewing its application for a 10-year extension since 2017.

In August, the commission told Reuters it was asking MTN to agree to list its shares on the local stock exchange as a condition for the renewal.

MTN was not immediately available to comment.

MTN Uganda has faced criticism on social media platforms such as Twitter and Facebook from some subscribers about data bundles getting used up quickly and the firm not responding to complaints.

Uganda's telecoms sector has expanded rapidly over the past decade, but analysts say a new tax on social media use could reverse some of those gains by hitting investment. (Reuters 18-09-2018)

ZIMBABWE'S OPPOSITION MPS WALK OUT OF EMMERSON MNANGAGWA'S ADDRESS

On Tuesday, Zimbabwe's opposition MPs walked out on President Emmerson Mnangagwa as he delivered a state of the nation address devoid of any significant changes to the status quo.

The opposition lawmakers walked out in a planned protest over what the MDC Alliance, led by Nelson Chamisa, sees as an electoral fraud that ushered Mnangagwa into office.

The opposition MPs heckled Mnangagwa soon after he started reading his speech before gathering outside the parliament building to continue their protests.

In his first state of the nation address in parliament, Mnangagwa said he would maintain the multi-currency system, ruling out any immediate currency reforms, despite the country's liquidity crisis: "The multi-currency system will continue until all the economic fundamentals are in place. We have negotiated a number of facilities to address the foreign currency situation."

Since his appointment a fortnight ago, finance minister Mthuli Ncube has indicated currency reforms, including possible adoption of the South African rand and jettisoning the disliked bond note local currency, but it appears Mnangagwa is content with the existing scenario.

The president said the country should move forward from the "political season" and unite to address economic challenges after the hotly disputed July 30 elections. "The election period is decisively behind us. It is now time for us as MPs and political leaders to exert our efforts towards delivering promises we made to the electorate," Mnangagwa said in his speech.

He also castigated corruption and called for modernised education and health systems. Zimbabwe's health system is in dire straits and a cholera crisis in the country has left 30 dead and more than 5,000 infected.

Chamisa's spokesperson, Nkululeko Sibanda said Mnangagwa's address was "shocking" and lacked substance. (BD 18-09-2018)

RAPID POPULATION GROWTH AND ATTENDANT POVERTY WILL PEAK IN AFRICA

The report calls for empowering women to exercise the right to choose the number of children they have

Rapid population growth in some of Africa's poorest countries could put future progress towards reducing global poverty and improving health at risk, according to a report by the philanthropic foundation of Bill Gates.

Demographic trends show a billion people have lifted themselves out of poverty in the past 20 years, the report found, but swiftly expanding populations, particularly in parts of Africa, could halt the decline in the number of extremely poor people in the world — and it may even start to rise.

"Population growth in Africa is a challenge," Gates told reporters in a phone briefing about the report's findings.

The report found that poverty in Africa is increasingly concentrated in a few countries, which also have among the fastest-growing populations in the world. By 2050, it projected, more than 40% of world's extremely poor people will live in just two countries: Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) and Nigeria.

Asked about the best ways of tackling the growing population and poverty challenge, Gates said improving access to birth control was key, and this should be combined with investment in young people's health and education.

"The biggest things are the modern tools of contraception," Gates said. "If you have those things available then people have more control over being able to space their children." The report, entitled *Goalkeepers*, tracks 18 data points on the UN development goals, including child and maternal deaths, stunting, access to contraceptives, HIV, malaria, extreme poverty, financial inclusion, and sanitation.

In its family planning section, the report called on policymakers to empower women to exercise the right to choose the number of children they have, when they have them, and with whom.

According to UN data, Africa is expected to account for more than half of the world's population growth between 2015 and 2050. Its population is projected to double by 2050, and could double again by 2100. Yet if every woman in Sub-Saharan Africa were able to have the number of children she wanted, the projected population increase could be up to 30% smaller, said the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation's annual report.

This would also enable more girls and women to stay in school longer, have children later, earn more as adults, and invest more in their children, it added. Smaller families tend to be healthier and more productive.

"To continue improving the human condition, our task now is to help create opportunities in Africa's fastest-growing, poorest countries," the Microsoft founder and his wife wrote in the report. "This means investing in young people." (Reuters 18-09-2018)

ATTACKS IN ETHIOPIA TARGETING MINORITIES LEAVE SCORES DEAD

At least 23 people were killed in a weekend of violence targeting minorities in the ethnic Oromo heartland near Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, police said.

It is a blow to new reformist Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed's efforts at reconciliation.

The violence escalated on Saturday, the day of a rally marking the return to Ethiopia of leaders of the exiled Oromo Liberation Front (OLF), which had waged a four-decade insurgency for self-determination for Ethiopia's largest ethnic group.

Abiy, himself the first Oromo leader in the ethnically diverse country's modern history, has been pursuing a reconciliation strategy since taking power in April, steering the state away from a hardline security policy in place for decades.

In the latest unrest, local residents said shops were looted and people attacked by mobs of Oromo youth who stormed through streets targeting businesses and homes of ethnic minorities on Saturday after two days of sporadic attacks in the Oromiya region's Burayu district northwest of Addis Ababa.

"Mobs of ethnic Oromo youth then marched here in Ashwa Meda and attacked our homes and looted businesses chanting 'Leave our land!'," said Hassan Ibrahim, a trader in an ethnically diverse part of the district, said.

"By night time, there were several dead bodies along roads," he said.

Another resident said some of the violence was carried out by people returning from Saturday's rally in support of the returning OLF leaders. The OLF did not immediately comment on the unrest.

Alemayehu Ejigu, head of Oromiya region's police commission, said that 23 people were killed in the latest violence and more than 70 people were arrested.

He denied accusations that police were slow to respond.

The Oromo have long complained of being marginalised during decades of authoritarian rule by governments led by politicians from other smaller ethnic groups. In recent years the Oromo have been angered by what they see as encroachment on their land.

Since taking power, Abiy has lifted a state of emergency, freed political prisoners and removed leaders of banned groups including the OLF from a blacklist, paving the way for their return to the country.

Abiy's chief of staff, Fitsum Arega, said on Twitter that the prime minister "strongly condemns the killings and acts of violence against innocent citizens around Ashwa Meda, Kataa and Fili Doro last night.

"These cowardly attacks represent a grave concern to our unity and solidarity of our people and will be met with appropriate response," he said.

On Monday, hundreds of people staged protests outside parliament, the central square, the headquarters of state television and other places in the capital, demanding justice.

"Our homes were destroyed and our women raped simply because we belonged to another ethnic group. Yet the government is yet to respond properly," said Atnafu Worku, one of the demonstrators.

(Reuters 18-09-2018)

ABUNDANT RAIN BOOSTS COCOA CROP PROSPECTS IN IVORY COAST

Above-average rain in most of the Ivory Coast's cocoa-growing regions last week continued to boost the October to March crop, farmers said on Monday, despite fear of the humidity affecting bean drying.

Farmers said they expect a big crop this season. Harvesting, which began slowly in some areas, will pick up gradually in October and November.

In the western region of Man, including the town of Duekoue, farmers said rain is making it hard to dry beans properly.

"The rain is tiring us a bit. We worry the beans will not dry enough and become mouldy if there is not enough sunshine," said farmer Daouda Fofana.

Reuters data showed that Man had 79.6mm of rain last week, 42.1mm above the five-year average.

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In the western region of Soubre, the heart of the cocoa belt, farmers said trees are laden with good-sized pods to be harvested by the end of this year.

"We had good rains this month. If this continues in October, and if the sun shines, the crop yield will be very high," said Kouassi Kouame, who farms near Soubre.

Soubre, which includes the towns of Sassandra and San Pedro, had 32.6mm of rain last week, 14.5mm above average.

In the centre-western region of Daloa, which produces a quarter of national output, farmers said they expect a bigger main crop than last season's.

"It rained well this month, and we had sunshine, so we think we will have more cocoa than last season," said Albert N'Zue, who farms near Daloa.

Daloa had 50.1mm of rain last week, 19.5mm above average.

Rainfall was below average in the southern region of Agboville. But farmers welcomed this as they had feared black-pod disease.

"The brown-rot situation has improved because rainfall has decreased and there is more sunshine," said Alfred Bile, who farms near Agboville.

Agboville had 10.4mm of rain last week, which was 5.9m less than the five-year average. Rainfall was also lower in the central region of Yamoussoukro last week at 21.1mm, which was 2.8mm below average. (Reuters 18-09-2018)

The Memorandum is supported by the ACP-African, Caribbean, Pacific Secretariat, Chamber of Commerce Tenerife, Corporate Council on Africa, CIP-Confederation of Portuguese Enterprises, Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce and Development, HTTC - Hungarian Trade & Cultural Centre, NABC- Netherlands-African Business Council, SwissCham-Africa and other organisations. The Memorandum is also made available by AHEAD-GLOBAL, BCA, Chamber of Tenerife (by posting it at the Africa Info Market), CCA - Canadian Council on Africa, CCA - Corporate Council on Africa (USA), CIP,HTTC,NABC (by posting selected news) and SwissCham-Africa to their Members.



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