MEMORANDUM

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SUMMARY

EU CONSIDERS ENLARGING COTONOU AGREEMENT INTO LATIN AMERICA AND ASIA

The Cotonou development agreement currently includes the EU and 78 countries in the Caribbean, Africa and the Pacific.

Relations between the EU and a large group of developing countries are set to change as the Cotonou Agreement nears its end. Some argue that the cooperation deal should be enlarged into Latin America and Asia.

A cornerstone of development cooperation and trade relations between the EU and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP group), the Cotonou Agreement expires in 2020.

Member states and their ACP partners have already begun preparations for the next phase of their cooperation. Since the year 2000, the EU's political and trade relations and development cooperation with 78 other countries have been governed by the agreement. This single structure unites a group of countries as diverse as South Africa, St Kitts and Nevis and the Bahamas.

The EU's development and foreign trade ministers discussed how the end of the Cotonou Agreement should be managed at an informal meeting in the Netherlands on Tuesday 2 February.

These discussions will be followed by the publication of the results of a public consultation on the Cotonou Agreement and an assessment of its implementation. A negotiation mandate for the post-Cotonou cooperation framework will be given to the EU by June this year.

Binding agreement

"For now, the EU member states are divided into two camps: those that want a simple repackaging of the Cotonou Agreement and those that want the post-2020 agreement to be non-binding," a French source explained.

But the composition of the ACP group may also change after 2020. The same French source told EurActiv that the question of integrating certain Latin American or Asian countries into the agreement "had been raised by the member states".

Towards enlargement?

This enlargement could see a future agreement based on a broad common framework, embroidered with regional variants that take into account the different situations in different geographical zones.

Further uncertainty has arisen over the form that future cooperation between the EU and the ACP countries will take. "We can cast a critical eye on the ACP group, which is not the most legitimate grouping of countries. That is one of the issues in question," our source said. The ACP group does not exist in any other international organisations, and its relevance is often challenged.

But negotiations on the future EU-ACP cooperation framework "should not erase the past altogether", our French source argued, but should take care to protect the achievements made to date, notably on human rights.

Human rights

Political dialogue between the EU and the ACP countries was one of the pillars of the Cotonou Agreement, and has been one of its greatest successes.

Michèle Rivasi, a French Green MEP and the vice-chair of the European Parliament Delegation to the ACP-EU Joint Parliamentary Assembly, said, "I am in favour of maintaining this cooperation with ACP countries, because up to now no alternative has been proposed, and the ACP-EU parliamentary delegation has opened up some extraordinary debates on gender equality and gay rights."

In return for European Union aid, beneficiary countries must respect a series of political, technical and democratic conditions defined in the agreement.

The Cotonou Agreement provides a framework for both partners regarding the respect of fundamental rights, and prescribes a consultation period of up to four months when these rights are breached. Article 96 of the agreement allows states to take "appropriate measures" if the terms of the agreement are violated, which may include the suspension of aid programmes.

In practice, restrictive measures have rarely been adopted, and usually in cases where democratic processes have been violated. Article 96 has been invoked around 15 times since 2000, in response to coups d'état and human rights violations in Fiji (2000 and 2007) Zimbabwe (2002) and Madagascar (2010). It was also recently invoked against Burundi.

But according to a report published in January by the European Centre for Development Policy Management (ECDPM), the Cotonou Agreement has failed to bring the expected results, a problem that various revisions have been unable to change.

The scope of the agreement, particularly on issues like sexual orientation, has often been weak.

During a review of the Cotonou Agreement in 2013, the European Parliament denounced the absence of a framework for the rights of homosexuals. But this is a taboo subject between the two partner groups, and sexual orientation has never been successfully included in the agreement.

Homosexuality is still considered a crime in 28 ACP countries, and discriminatory laws in certain countries often provoke tensions between the EU and certain members of the ACP group, like Uganda.

Background

In 2000, the European Union and the African, Caribbean and Pacific Group of States (ACP) signed a 20 year partnership agreement known as the "Cotonou Agreement", with a clause enabling revisions every five years.

The three pillars of this partnership are political dialogue, development aid and trade cooperation.

One of the objectives of the partnership was to establish free trade zones between the European Union and the countries of the ACP group, or between ACP countries themselves, to comply with WTO rules that prohibit the discrimination of developing countries.

Under the terms of the agreement, the countries of the Global South were obliged to open their markets to most products from the European Union. This is the only such regional agreement has been signed so far, due to the strong reservations expressed by civil society organisations and states. (EurActiv 10-02-2016)

AFRICAN EXPERTS DISCUSS CONTINENTAL FREE TRADE AREA AGREEMENT

A group of experts from seven African regional economic commissions, academia, research institutions and civil society have met in Abidjan to discuss the possible structure and content of a Continental Free Trade Area agreement (CFTA), the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA) in Addis Ababa said in statement on Thursday.

Hosted by the African Development Bank (AfDB), the meeting reviewed the Renewable Energy Certificates (RECs) experience of trade liberalization and potential lessons for the CFTA; the Abuja Treaty and AU treaty-making process.

In their opening statements, representatives from the African Union Commission (AUC), the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), AfDB and ECA all emphasized the importance of the meeting in relation to the technical preparations for the CFTA negotiations.

It was noted, particularly, that the CFTA is a huge and complex institutional and legal structure, which is expected to include all the 54 AU member states.

For the CFTA to be established by the target date of 2017, negotiations will need to be conducted effectively and concluded expeditiously.

It was within the framework of providing technical support to the CFTA Negotiating Forum and facilitating the process of the CFTA negotiations, therefore, that the CFTA Task Force requested input from the expert group.

The group agreed on a proposed outline of the CFTA agreement and follow-up work to prepare a working draft for an initial exchange of views ahead of the first substantive CFTA trade-negotiating forum in April 2016.(APA 11-02-2016)

JAPAN GRANTS NIGERIA $11 MILLION FOR ELECTRICITY PROJECTS

The Japanese government on Thursday granted Nigeria 1.3 billion Yen (about $11million) to improve electricity supply in the country.

The grant is coming through the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA).

Mr. Sadanobu Kusaoke, Japan Ambassador to Nigeria, said the grant was meant to improve electricity supply facilities in Abuja and its environs.

Kusaoke explained that the power sector had been one of the priority areas in Japan's development assistance to Nigeria.

According to him, since the 1970s, Japan has been helping to strengthen the capacity of Kainji Hydro Power Station to boost power supply in Nigeria.

He also said that his country had always partnered Nigeria to electrify its rural areas, especially in the northern part of the country.

``Power sector is key to improve the quality of life for people and also to promote industry and it will make Abuja more attractive for investors as well as residents.

``Power is one of the determinant factors when both domestic and foreign investors decide whether or not to invest in a country,'' he said.

According to the ambassador, Japan will assist Nigeria to prevent voltage drop, reduce power loss and stabilise power supply to approximately 7, 000 households in Abuja and Nasarawa State.(APA 11-02-2016)

NIGERIA: ETISALAT LOCKS HORNS WITH MTN OVER VISAFONE BUY

Etisalat has raised objections to MTN's recently-concluded purchase of Visafone Nigeria and has called on the regulator ,the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC), to reverse its approval of the deal.

According to a report in The Guardian, Etisalat's Public Relations Regulatory and Corporate Affairs Division Officer, Chinesie Amanfo, said: "The legal action is considered necessary to prevent the use of Visafone's 800MHz spectrum by MTN at this time, as it will entrench the dominance of MTN in the retail data services market.

"You will recall that MTN Nigeria was declared dominant by the Nigerian Communications Commission (NCC) in 2013 and remains dominant in the wholesale leased line and retail voice markets.
"The use of the 800MHz spectrum to deploy broadband services ahead of its competitors, particularly those who, prior to MTNs purchase of Visafone, held similar spectrum bands as MTN, will further entrench MTN's dominance in the Nigerian telecommunications sector.

"We have in addition and in line with Section 86 of the Nigerian Communications Act, 2003 engaged the NCC to understand the basis of its decision to approve the acquisition. As you are aware, the matter is already in court, as such, we are restrained from commenting further on the matter."

With just over 2 million subscribers, Visafone is the largest CDMA operator in Nigeria.(IT News Africa 08-02-2016)

MACAU BUSINESSMAN LAYS FIRST STONE OF TOURIST COMPLEX IN CABO VERDE

The first stone of the tourism project in the islet of Santa Maria in Praia, the capital of Cabo Verde (Cape Verde), was laid Monday by Chinese businessman David Chow who is also consul of the archipelago in Macau, the Cape Verdean press reported.
The Prime Minister of Cabo Verde, who attended the ceremony, said this project would make Cabo Verde reach a higher level of tourism, developing both tourism and other economic sectors and creating many jobs.
This tourist resort, the largest in Cabo Verde, will occupy an area of 152,700 square metres and will launch the gambling industry in the archipelago, should be ready within three years and during construction will provide more than 2,000 jobs.
The complex in Santa Maria islet includes a hotel/casino, a marina, a pedestrian area with shops and restaurants, a conference centre, hotel and residential facility in the area of Praia da Gamboa and a parking area.
David Chow, who owns casinos in Macau, has received a 25-year license from the Cape Verdean government, 15 of them on an exclusive basis on the island of Santiago, and the gambling concession cost the CV Entertainment Co., a subsidiary of Macau Legend Development, US$1.35 million. (11-02-2016)

TURKISH BROACASTER OPEN TO CONTENT SHARING PARTNERSHIPS WITH AFRICAN MEDIA

The Turkish Radio and Television (TRT), through its Deputy General Manager Erkan Durdu, has expressed its openness to quality content exchange partnerships, among other services, with sub-Saharan African media that could lead to the establishment of an African channel to be called TRT Africa, reports said on Thursday.

During a meeting held recently with Senegalese media stakeholders, Mr. Durdu showed a strong commitment led by the desire to support the Turkish government in its strategy to strengthen relations in various fields with African countries.

Convinced that culture is one of the best ways to interconnect people, the Turkish channel favors the exchange of films, historical and contemporary documentaries, reports on societies and company reports on the economy with African countries' media.

TRT's Deputy General Manager noted that the state-owned channel will spare no efforts for a reliable and balanced information processing, in accordance with the rules established in his country.

Currently, he said, TRT is already broadcasting in 41 languages, including Swahili, a very popular language spoken in East Africa.

As for Senegal in particular, a country with significant resources such as a good working environment, skilled human resources, political stability and effective democracy, among others, Mr. Durdu expressed the wish to renew his 2012 positive experience with RTS (Senegal's public broadcaster.)

As a reminder, TRT has 55 national radio stations, 23 regional radio stations and 1,000 local municipal radio stations. Its channel is the 2nd most followed in Turkey, with programs on 16 thematic frequencies (entertainment, general information, children, sports, Arabic, education, documentaries, Kurdish, TRT World, Avas, TRT Music, religion ...) in order to support the development of the country.(APA 11-02-2016)

COMMISSIONER MIMICA VISITS BURKINA FASO TO SHOW SOLIDARITY AND SUPPORT

On behalf of the European Commission, Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development, will visit Burkina Faso on February 12, to welcome the peaceful and successful elections which concluded a remarkable transition process. The visit of the Commissioner will also be an opportunity to show support to the country, following the terrorist attacks in Ouagadougou and in the northern part of the country on 15 January that killed 32 people and injured more than 60. Ahead of the visit, Commissioner **Mimica** said: *"I want to welcome the peaceful and successful elections that were the last step of an exemplary transition process. This is a victory for Burkina Faso and good news for the region and the continent. I also want to reiterate our solidarity after the January attacks and underline the fact that Europe is strongly committed to support Burkina Faso and the Sahel countries in their fight against terrorism and extremism."* (EC 11-02-2016*)*

FARMERS IN GUINEA-BISSAU AND CHINESE COMPANY SIGN AGREEMENT TO MODERNISE AGRICULTURE

State-owned China CWZX Real Estate Development will support the modernisation of the agricultural sector in Guinea-Bissau under a recently signed agreement with the National Association of Guinea-Bissau Farmers (ANAG).

The president of ANAG, Jaime Gomes, told in Bissau that the agreement provides for the supply of tractors and training in maintenance and conservation of agricultural products.

Gomes, who recently paid a visit to China, said that the partnership aims to help farmers increase and diversify production of products such as rice, beans and mancara, among others.

The president of ANAG said his visit was very positive, especially the signing of the agreement with the Chinese company that manufactures agricultural machinery and also works in the construction and energy sectors.

The signed agreement will now be submitted to the Guinean government for consideration, and if it is approved a mission from the company will visit Guinea-Bissau at the invitation of ANAG. (11-02-2016)

BRITISH FIRM EXPRESSES DESIRE TO BUY OUT ILLOVO SUGAR

Associated British Foods (AB Foods) wants to buy 48.6 percent shares owned by Illovo Sugar, 10 years after acquiring 51.4 percent shares, media reports on Thursday.

Illovo, which is based in Durban South Africa, has agricultural and manufacturing operations in six African countries including Swaziland, Mozambique, South Africa, Malawi, Zambia and Tanzania and employs over 30 000 people.

AB Foods will offer $1.24 per share for the stake it does not own, Illovo says in a statement, a move that will make the deal worth $253.9 million.

In Swaziland Illovo owns 60 percent shares while the remainder is owned by Tibiyo Taka Ngwane on behalf of the Swazi nation.

Ubombo Sugar Limited Managing Director Oswald Magwezi told the media that they are aware of the intended move, saying it will not affect the operations of Swaziland per se.(APA 11-02-2016)

ZIMBABWE CALLS FOR $1.6BN IN AID TO PAY FOR FOOD

Zimbabwe on Tuesday appealed to local businesses and charities for $1.6bn aid to save more than a quarter of the population from starvation due to drought.

"The government of Zimbabwe requires a total of $1,57m with effect from February to December 2016," Zimbabwean Vice-President Emmerson Mnangagwa told a news conference in the capital, Harare.

"The amount of rainfall received to date is inadequate to meet basic household consumption needs as well as support for livelihoods, agriculture and wildlife."

The figure includes nearly $720m to pay for 1.4-million tonnes of grain imports from February to December, with money also needed for irrigation infrastructure and a nutrition programme for young children, Mr. Mnangagwa said.

Mr. Mnangagwa's appeal comes barely a week after President Robert Mugabe declared a "state of disaster" in many rural areas hit by severe drought.

Zimbabwe has been affected by a regional drought worsened by the El Nino weather phenomenon that has also affected other southern Africa countries including SA, Malawi and Zambia.

Mr. Mnangagwa said the southern parts of the country were the worst affected with tens of thousands of cattle dying, boreholes drying-up and dam levels are decreasing due to the poor rains.

"There is a threat to human and animal life as safe water, irrigation water and drinking water sources for animals are increasingly drying up," he said.

Most of the funding is sought for the import of foodstuffs but part of the $1.6bn will be used to repair irrigation equipment across the country to increase food production.

Formerly known as the breadbasket of Africa, Zimbabwe has suffered perennial shortages in recent years and has relied on importing grain from neighbouring countries to meet its needs.

Mr. Mugabe has blamed the low farm yields on erratic rains due to climate change, as well as sanctions imposed by Western countries over his government's tainted human rights record.

Critics say the food shortages have been partially caused by the president's land reforms enacted since 2000 when the government oversaw the often violent eviction of white farmers. The economy shrank nearly 50% between 1999 and 2008, blamed on economic mismanagement by Mr. Mugabe's government.

Many farms are now underutilised, and the government has vowed to hold an audit to ensure agriculture land is put into production. (AFP 09-02-2016)

ANGOLAN MINISTER CALLS FOR EXPORT OF ORNAMENTAL ROCKS TO HELP OVERCOME CRISIS

The minister of Geology and Mining of Angola Wednesday in Lubango called for a boost to the ornamental rocks processing sector as a way to overcome the current crisis caused by a fall in oil prices.

Francisco Queiroz was speaking at the end of a meeting with mining operators in the south of the country, including the provinces of Huila, Namibe, Cunene and Kuando Kubango, under the government's approval of measures for overcoming the crisis, according to Angolan news agency Angop.

The minister also suggested reducing bureaucracy of the finished product export system, studying means of access to foreign markets through cooperation agreements and international promotion campaign of Angolan granites and marbles.

During his visit, the Minister visited the southern regional head office of the Geological Institute of Angola, quarry company Omatapalo and the granite processing plant of Emanha. (11-06-2016)

DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC OF CONGO 'WILL NOT CHANGE MINING CODE'

Democratic Republic of Congo's Mines Minister Martin Kabwelulu said he has dropped plans to change the mining code in Africa's biggest copper producer after opposition from mining companies.

"The mining code, which is currently in place, will stay in place," Mr. Kabwelulu said at a speech to investors in Cape Town on Wednesday.

"You don’t have to think about modifying your business plan. Those who are thinking of investing can do so based on this code."

Copper production in the country dropped for the first time in six years in 2015, and this year could be another tough one as low commodity prices continue to bite, the Central African country’s chamber of mines said in Kinshasa on Wednesday.

Output dropped 3.3% in Africa’s top copper producer to 995,805 tonnes from 1.03-million tonnes in 2014, the first time production fell since the global economic downturn in 2009.

The sharpest fall was in the fourth quarter when production slumped 12% year on year, in part due to the suspension of some production at miner and trader Glencore’s Katanga Mining unit, the industry group said in its annual report.

The mine, one of the largest in Congo, producing 113,674 tonnes of copper in the first nine months of 2015, is not expected to reopen until mid-2017.

Congo’s economy is highly dependent on the mining sector, which accounts for about 20% of gross domestic product (GDP). Copper and cobalt alone accounted for 79% of the country’s exports in the first half of 2015, the central bank said.

Benchmark copper fell 25% last year, a slump that the chamber said could continue. Indeed, copper prices were expected to hit their lowest average in more than a decade this year as global supply outran demand, a Reuters survey of metal analysts showed in January.

The government scaled back its 2015 growth estimate to 7.7% from more than 10% because of low metals prices. It has said Katanga Mining’s 18-month suspension would cost it more than $200m in tax revenues this year.

The government expects growth to rebound to 9% this year while the International Monetary Fund (IMF) predicts 7.3% growth.

The country’s copper-producing southeast receives only about half the electricity it needs. The government is backing a series of projects to boost supply but the chamber said "inadequate and highly nontransparent management" of the sector led to "little progress" in 2015.

The chamber’s report, however, cited causes for optimism, noting that new mines started commercial production in 2015 and several major projects that were expected to come online in the coming years.

Ivanhoe Mines’ Kamoa project, slated to begin production in 2018, is thought to be the world’s largest untouched high-grade copper discovery.

In the same report, the chamber of mines said gold production rose 30% to an estimated 25,516kg, partly because of stronger-than-expected production at Randgold Resources’ Kibali mine. Congo’s industrial gold production stood at near zero in 2011.

Production is likely to rise further as Randgold, AngloGold Ashanti and Banro Corporation continue to ramp up output at large mines they have opened in the past five years. (Bloomberg and Reuters 10-02-2016)

ANGOLA ISSUES US$2.1 BILLION IN DEBT IN 2016

The government of Angola this year plans to issue over US$2.1 billion in Treasury bonds, US$423 million of which in foreign currency, to finance public works, according to two executive orders signed by the Minister of Finance.

One order states that the issue of Treasury bonds in kwanzas amount to US$1.693 billion (264 791 800 000 kwanzas), to be placed under auction, to “finance public works planned in the state budget.”

In foreign currency, the government will issue Treasury Bonds amounting to US$423.2 million (66.197 billion kwanzas), according to another executive order.

Next May, Angola will start paying interest on the first issue of Eurobonds in the amount of US$1.5 billion, whose maturity is set for November 2025.

The fall in oil prices, Angola’s main export and its main source of tax revenues, has forced the government to borrow from various institutions, both in Angola and abroad. (11-02-2016)

POWER ELECTRIFIES AFRICA AS ELECTIONS LOOM

More than a quarter of the African countries south of the Sahara have presidential elections this year, and renewable energy developers could stand to benefit.

The region has the world's biggest concentration of people — more than 620-million according to the International Energy Agency — living without reliable electricity supplies.

From Uganda to Zambia and Ghana, politicians are using the issue to lure votes, turning to clean energy as the quickest way to power rural areas. "The power issue is really going to drive elections," says NJ Ayuk, managing partner in Centurion, a law firm based in Malabo, Equatorial Guinea.

"It will be a key campaign issue. Africa is moving in a direction of industrialisation. People are beginning to see power as a right."

Investors see an opportunity for African nations to leapfrog beyond traditional coal-fired power plants where electricity is distributed by sprawling grids. They are proposing smaller-scale renewable plants closer to the consumers, bypassing a generation of technology, much as cellphones have spread across Africa faster than the fixed-line alternative.

The trend is making Africa one of the leading emerging markets for renewables, drawing $25bn in investment in the past six years. Investment rose 68% to $5.2bn last year alone.

"There has been significant growth in investment in renewables in Africa since 2011," says Nico Tyabji, an analyst at Bloomberg in London. "The majority has been in SA. There are some question marks over whether project pipelines in other countries will actually build out."

With 48 countries south of the Sahara, 14 have presidential elections this year, and in many of those places electricity is high on the agenda.

In the first contest in Uganda next Thursday, President Yoweri Museveni boasts that he has extended the power grid to 15% of households and that hydropower, along with geothermal, will expand the roll-out in his next term.

Zambia's President Edgar Lungu reversed a sharp increase in power prices last month when he announced his re-election bid, and is looking for ways to make up for supplies lost due to drought reducing flows through the Kariba hydropower dam on the Zambezi River.

Ghana's President John Dramani Mahama faces voters in November and promises to build new power plants that halt the blackouts roiling the capital, Accra.

The West African country's minister of power resigned on December 31 in protest at the prolonged electricity crisis.

"When elections are coming up, the ruling party sometimes tries to accelerate development of power projects in the pipeline so they're up and running before the elections," says Anthony Marsh, CEO of Frontier Markets Fund Managers in London. The firm manages the Emerging Africa Infrastructure Fund, which has invested in 12 power projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

The entire installed generation capacity south of the Sahara is 90GW, about the same as Britain's network, according to the International Energy Agency. There is often less power available due to disrepair.

It is not certain that power politics will change many of the results at the polls, says Alex Vines, head of the Africa Programme at the Chatham House research group in London.

"Chad, Gabon, Congo-Brazzaville, Equatorial Guinea and Uganda are run by strongmen and so it will not tilt the results in any dramatic way," Mr. Vines says.

"But it is a massive issue in the presidential elections in Ghana and Zambia and the municipal elections in SA. The energy debate will be really quite central."

Elections are not always good news for power developers, since officials can hold up paperwork while the campaign is under way.

Mr. Marsh says the financial close of a gas-fired project in Nigeria was delayed by almost a year before President Muhammadu Buhari took office last year.

Elections "can cause a delay if you need to have a document signed off", Mr Marsh says.

At Amsterdam-based Gigawatt Global Cooperatief, president Yosef Abramowitz is planning to install one gigawatt of solar energy in the continent, beginning with Burundi, Liberia and Benin. "Leaders will have to decide if they want to be re-elected, having literally delivered power to their people. Or do they want to use their position for personal gain, while their people continue to suffer," Mr. Abramowitz says.

"These are real battles that are gripping many African countries." (Bloomberg 10-02-2016)

ANGOLA EXPOSED TO MORE RISK FROM AUSTERITY AND UNCOORDINATED REFORMS

Applying “disorderly” budget cuts and structural reforms may bring more risks to Angola, beyond those associated with its excessive dependence on oil, according to the office of economic reports at Portuguese bank BPI.

“The short-term outlook continues to present major challenges due to the adverse external climate, as international oil prices should not quickly recover to levels seen in the past,” said the BPI analysts in a research note to African markets.

According to the BPI analysts, negative impacts can also arise from abroad, mainly from the monetary policy decisions of the United States, whose rise in interest rates affect the emerging markets in general and Angola in particular.

In the analysis of the challenges for this year, the analysts said they believed that “despite macroeconomic data having improved (…) the prospect of development of the economy remains vulnerable to a slow recovery in oil prices.”

Increased oil production in recent months, which helped overcome the effect of low prices, “was not, however, sufficient to prevent a significant drop in tax revenues and exports,” the document said. (11-02-2016)

ANGLOGOLD SUSPENDS SEARCH FOR PARTNERSHIPS IN GHANA AND COLOMBIA

Anglogold Ashanti has suspended the search for partnerships at its Obuasi mine in Ghana and its exploration project in Colombia, said CEO Srinivasan Venkatakrishnan.

Last year, Mr. Venkatakrishnan outlined a programme to cut debt and restructure the company’s asset portfolio, as one of the world’s major gold miners deepened its focus on profit margins rather than output.

Speaking at the Mining Indaba, Mr. Venkatakrishnan said AngloGold had decided to suspend the search for a partner for its exploration project in Colombia, which is nearly at a point to start developing a mine.

"Colombia is a highly prospective region for us but current market conditions do not lend themselves to conclude a partnership at this stage, so we are focused on reducing the spend while we move the project up the value curve," he said.

The Obuasi mine, which has been put on care and maintenance after making heavy losses for a number of years, remains "top of our to-do list," Mr. Venkatakrishnan said.

An attempt to develop a partnership at Obuasi with Randgold Resources, which is AngloGold’s partner at mines in Mali and the Democratic Republic of Congo, failed.

Randgold CEO Mark Bristow said at a results presentation earlier this week the mine, despite having world-class resources, could not be developed into a world-class mine and did not meet Randgold’s investment hurdle rates.

AngloGold has started talks with the Ghanaian government to secure an investment agreement and will complete work on a feasibility study into restarting the mine before resuming the search for a partner, said Mr. Venkatakrishnan. (BD 10-02-2016)

GHANA: JANUARY INFLATION RATE SHOOTS UP TO 19 PERCENT

Ghana’s monthly consumer inflation rate for January 2016 has shot up from 17.7 percent in December 2015 to 19.00 percent in January, APA learns here.

Ghana's Deputy Government Statistician, Mr. BaahWiredu, Thursday revealed at a news conference in Accra that this represents 1.3 percent increment in inflation.

He attributed it to the astronomical increases in utilities and fuel prices, which recorded over 69 percent increment.

Wiredu attributed other contributing factors to the food and beverages sectors.(APA 11-02-2016)

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Fernando Matos Rosa

fernando.matos.rosa@sapo.pt
fernando.matos.rosa@skynet.be