MEMORANDUM

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11 YEARS OF UNINTERRUPTED PUBLICATION

SUMMARY

ACTIONAID STUDY SHOWS VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN IN TAXIS IS WIDESPREAD

Noord Street taxi rank in Johannesburg.

More than two-thirds of women who use public taxis and taxi ranks have witnessed violence and harassment, according to a survey conducted by advocacy group ActionAid South Africa.

ActionAid SA found that 56% said they had experienced violence, and 69% said they had witnessed it.

A third of the women surveyed said the solution was to create awareness about women's right to use safe public transport, while others said more security was needed.

The research was conducted last year as part of a campaign by ActionAid SA, the City of Johannesburg and the South African National Taxi Council to mark Global Safe Cities Day.

The campaign aimed to raise awareness among taxi drivers, marshals and commuters about the violence and harassment women face when they use this form of public transport.

ActionAid SA cited the research in a statement released on Thursday after reports this week that several women had been raped on taxis in Gauteng.

"Millions of people use public transport every day; it is the lifeblood of cities and the most efficient way to move people. However, over half the population is marginalised in these systems as the specific needs of women and girls are not catered for, leaving them vulnerable to violence and less able to fully access their rights," ActionAid SA said.

"For women and girls worldwide, the freedom to move safely around cities is greatly restricted, whether by gender-blind planning and design of transport infrastructure or by social and cultural norms that tolerate violence towards women.

"Poor street lighting, a lack of buses and stops, all-male transport staff, lack of public toilets and inadequate policing has created an environment where sexual violence against women in the city can thrive."

ActionAid SA's campaigns and communications coordinator Katherine Robinson said: "We welcome government's commitments to gender equality, but we need to see this translated into investment in public services that account for everybody's needs. More tax, well spent, can help make this happen."

*(*TMG Digital 24-03-2017)

IMF CALLS FOR SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE TO AVOID TAKING ON DEBT

Sao Tome and Principe should avoid getting into debt in order to maintain a situation that is sustainable, said on Wednesday in Sao Tome the new head of a mission of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) to the archipelago, Xiangming Li.

The IMF mission started its third assessment of the programme with Sao Tome and Principe, which will last for two weeks, having held an initial meeting with the Minister of Finance, Trade and the Blue Economy, AMERCO Ramos.

Xiangming Li, a Chinese national, said after the meeting that the archipelago's public debt is "a little high" but added that "if the government is aware of this issue it is possible in the medium term to control the debt."

The prime minister of Sao Tome, Patrice Trovoada, who returned on Tuesday from a meeting with the heads of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Washington, insists the country needs to borrow more for investment in infrastructure, according to Portuguese news agency Lusa.

“This country has potential, the issue of infrastructure is absolutely crucial, it is a key issue, but we must find ways to be able to promote development without creating excess debt,” said Xiangming Li.

The IMF mission that visited Sao Tome and Principe to assess the macroeconomic situation of the country consists of six members and includes the Deputy Director of the Africa Department, David Owen. (23-03-2017)

SOUTH AFRICA SUSPENDS BRAZIL MEAT IMPORTS AFTER SCANDAL

SA has asked Brazil to provide official information and a list of establishments that have been identified regarding unsafe meat being exported to various countries

The Department of Agriculture, Forestry and Fisheries has suspended imports of meat from establishments suspected to be involved in a Brazilian meat scandal.

On Wednesday, the department said it had asked Brazilian authorities to provide official information and a list of establishments that had been identified, regarding unsafe meat being exported to various countries, which could include SA.

"[The department] has also advised the Brazilian authorities to ban all exportation of meat from such establishments until the issue has been resolved to the satisfaction of the South African Veterinary Authority."

It is not known how many consignments may have already left Brazil and are on their way to SA.

However, the department said it was is in the process of ensuring that the establishments implicated were suspended from exporting meat to SA, until the Brazilian veterinary authority had fully investigated the matter.

Officials at all ports of entry that receive meat have been instructed to test every container of meat from Brazil using the existing policies regarding testing of consignments, the department said.

Consignments arriving at the ports of entry in the country may be tested microbiologically for organisms such as salmonella.(BD 22-03-2017)

BOTSWANA LOOKS TO PRIVATE SECTOR TO ADDRESS WATER CHALLENGES

Botswana’s Land and Housing Minister Prince Maele said Tuesday that the government has decided to engage the private sector in a bid to address recurring water supply challenges.

Speaking at a water conference in the capital Gaborone, Male said the aim of the meeting was to enable a more specific and coherent conservation about water supply.
He expressed optimism that through engaging the various stakeholders from the private sector as well as BGOs, the country would definitely see positive results in the long run.
Over the past few months observers have said there is need for Botswana to transform towards a water-conscious and water-smart economy with stronger water governance.
Meanwhile, Botswana secured a US$145.5-million loan from the World Bank for the Emergency Water Security and Efficiency Project to address the aftermaths of the El-Nino drought that affected the southern African region in 2016. (APA 23-03-2017)

ETHIOPIA: TRANSFORMING AGRICULTURE TO SUPPORT ECONOMIC GROWTH

Recently, Ethiopia has launched its first Agricultural Extension Plan of action that will use market-oriented, demand driven and pluralistic practices and methods.

Furthermore, the strategy has believed to contribute significantly to the attainment of food and nutrition security, poverty reduction, and wealth creation.

According to the government report updated by Agricultural Transformation Agency, Agriculture and Natural Resources Minister Dr. Eyasu Abreha said the strategy will create effective and efficient agricultural extension system in the country.

In this regard, he said, it can play a crucial role to improve agricultural productivity and livelihood of smallholders by developing innovative, systematic and dynamic agricultural services.

The strategy is meant to be implemented by smallholding farmers, pastoralists and semi-pastoralists across the country, it was indicated.

Moreover, the agricultural extension strategy will benefit females and youth.

It stated that the strategy will serve as an umbrella for the agricultural sub-sectors, including crops, livestock and fishery, natural resources management and other cross cutting issues.

The agricultural extension services have greater potential to help farmers throughout the years, the file noted.

It is recalled that research-based agricultural extension service has been provided since 1953 by Haremaya University.

The Agricultural Extension Strategy launched Monday was developed based on consultative and interactive processes facilitated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Natural Resources and Agricultural Transformation Agency.

The year 2025 is the an important point for Ethiopia and Africa as a continent to achiev the aim of feeding the fast growing population with own production as stipuplate in country's Growth and Transformation Plan..

As reports mentioned, the world will need Africa's help to feed an extra two billion people in the coming generation. So making the right investments right now is crucial to unleash the huge potential of Africa's farms and agribusinesses. The AfDB, as one of the leading investors in agriculture in the continent, has been firmly on track on how it has deployed US$5.5 billion in investments in the agriculture sector over five years to 2015, according to the new Development Effectiveness Review on Agriculture.

Meanwhile, the 2017 Annual Meetings of the African Development Bank (AfDB) Group will be held on May 22-26, 2017 in Ahmedabad, India.

The Annual Meetings are the Bank's largest annual event and serve to raise the profile of the institution on the global stage. In addition to the Annual Meeting of the Board of Governors, which constitutes the core purpose of the gathering, these Annual Meetings will bring together thousands of delegates and participants, and will feature a number of official, knowledge and side events. The Governors of the Bank are from the 54 regional member countries and 26 non-regional member countries. The Annual Meetings provide a unique forum for representatives of government, business, civil society, think-tanks, academia and the media - from Africa and beyond - to debate key issues on Africa's development, and to discuss the Bank's performance in delivering on its mandate.

Reflecting the significance of agriculture in Africa and in the Bank's development work, the 2017 Annual Meetings will be held on the theme: "Transforming Agriculture for Wealth Creation in Africa." Agriculture has a central place in the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and the African Union's Agenda 2063, both of which focus on poverty reduction, overcoming hunger and food insecurity.

Reflecting the global and continental agenda, the Bank has aptly prioritized agriculture transformation by designating it as one of its High 5s: Feed Africa.

Agriculture is an important economic sector in Africa given its centrality to poverty alleviation, food security and economic transformation. Africa spends about US $35 billion per year on food imports and this figure could rise to US $110 billion by 2025.

The potential of the agricultural sector in Africa and the need to bridge the gap on food supply is itself a compelling business case for private sector investment. With over 65% of the world's remaining arable land, a youthful population - with 420 million people between the ages of 15 and 35 years - and a favorable climate, Africa has the potential to become a global agriculture powerhouse and the setting of the next Green Revolution. Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia, Senegal and Burkina Faso provide valuable examples of successful agriculture transformation, the report stated.

Access to food - in quantity and quality - is a fundamental human right. It is also essential for ending hunger and malnutrition, and ensuring a healthier and productive workforce. Although agriculture employs over 60 percent of the African workforce and accounts for roughly a third of the continent's GDP, Africa is the most food-insecure region in the world with more than 232 million under-nourished people, or approximately one in four.

Structural food insecurity is a particular challenge in fragile economies, which are disproportionately susceptible to resource and commodity price shocks and where poor agriculture infrastructure, governance and weak institutions result in low productivity and a heavy dependence on food imports. Women face systematic discrimination across the continent, for example in terms of land ownership, which severely limits their opportunities to benefit from agricultural value chains. This is further multiplied by women's unequal access to inputs, household decision making, education, finance, and markets. FAO estimates that closing the gender gap could increase farm yields by 20-30%, and there is wide-spread evidence that closing the gender gap within households has wide-spread benefits for families.

As a result of these factors, Africa had an estimated net food import bill of US $35.4 billion in 2015, with about 15 food chains accounting for most imports, including 5 staple commodities such as wheat, sugar, rice, beef, soybeans.

Africa's potential for agricultural production is enormous, with 60% of the world's unused arable land. Increased food demand and changing consumption habits are leading to rapidly rising net food imports, which are expected to grow from US $35 billion in 2015 to over US $110 billion by 2025, which could be offset by increased African production. Export of primary agricultural production is still very high in Africa compared to other regions of the world. Therefore, agriculture offers a realistic prospect for large-scale job creation, especially in fragile economies. Given the importance of food and nutrition, promoting agricultural value chains and improving market access have the potential to diversify economies, raise incomes, increase food security and macroeconomic stability, contribute to mitigating conflict and prevent internal and external migration.

The Bank has developed a strategy for long-term agricultural transformation in Africa. In October 2015, the Bank organized a high-level Ministerial Conference on "Feeding Africa - An Action Plan for Transforming Agriculture in Africa" in Dakar to map out how to unlock Africa's agricultural potential and boost job creation in view of diversifying economies. The Agricultural Transformation Agenda (ATA) supports the realization of key Sustainable Development Goals through the development of an inclusive and competitive African agribusiness sector. Underpinning this vision are four specific goals: (i) contribute to the end of poverty; (ii) end hunger and malnutrition; (iii) make Africa a net food exporter; and (iv) move Africa to the top of export-orientated value chains where it has comparative advantage.

Through its strategy, the Bank will help unlock the potential of low-income countries using an approach where countries start treating the sector as a business and a starting point for industrialization. Unlocking agricultural potential and tackling food insecurity will require sustained multi-sectoral interventions (e.g. infrastructure development, intensive use of agro inputs and mechanization, enhanced access to credit and improved land tenure systems), appropriate policy reforms, promoting employment of the youth and women, and adopting an integrated value-chain approach that emphasizes access to markets and climate-smart agriculture. The Bank will work with others to promote, where appropriate, the development of agro-allied industrial zones that can produce value-added products. The Bank will also invest in regional infrastructure and enhanced policy dialogue to remove trade barriers, thereby assisting in reducing food price volatility and food insecurity. Finally, the Bank will prioritize agricultural projects that target gender inequality and enable women to have equal access to opportunities throughout agricultural value chains.

The Bank intends to play a key role in catalyzing agricultural transformation, working in conjunction with its partners, in three ways: (i) orchestrate at the sector level the activities of the Bank and partners to create impact-oriented borrowing plans and an evidence-based implementation plan for transformation, in the form of an 'Agricultural Transformation Partnership for Africa' (ATPA); (ii) design and lead the operation of areas that are both critical to drive transformation and for which the Bank is able to leverage its comparative advantages; and (iii) scale and replicate the activities and programs of partners that have demonstrable success and the potential to play a key role in country and commodity specific transformation.

The overall goal of the Feed Africa priority is to make Africa a net food exporter by 2025. Transformation will involve mobilizing resources and capital, representing a significant opportunity for potential to drive inclusive and green growth actors along the value chains. Transforming an initial set of agricultural value chains will require approximately US $280-340 billion over the next decade. Such an investment would likely create new markets worth US $55-65 billion per year by 2025. The Bank Group's investments in agriculture (both public and private) are envisaged to quadruple from a current annual average of US $612 million to about US $2.4 billion.

There is absolutely no reason why Africa is a net food-importing region, spending over $35 billion importing food. Africa must feed itself - and Africa must become a global powerhouse in food and agriculture, "AfDB President, Akinwumi Adesina" (Ethiopian Herald 23-03-2017)

NIGERIA: CONTRACTORS IN TROUBLE AS NDDC BARKS

The Niger Delta Development Commission (NDDC) has started compiling a list of abandoned projects and has given 30 days to the contractors to return to work.

The Commission warned the contractors, who abandoned jobs in the nine oil producing states that it was no longer business as usual.

The Commission warned that defaulting contractors would be arrested and prosecuted.

Mr. Chijoke Amu-Nnadi, the commission's Head of Corporate Affairs, said in a statement in Abuja on Monday that the action had become imperative to fast track development of the region.

They have also embarked on the audit of projects awarded in the region in line with federal government's directives.

Amu-Nnadi declared that it was important for contractors to realise that it was not business as usual.

"President Muhammadu Buhari is determined to change how government business is conducted and everyone must wake up to that reality.

"But beyond that is the fact that we owe the Niger Delta region and our people the duty to implement and complete these projects to facilitate sustainable regional development.

"This is a necessary process to ensure that things are done properly," he said.

He added that the Initiative was to restructure the balance sheet of the commission and determine poor performing projects.

The 20-Point Agenda of the Petroleum Ministry with regards to the Niger Delta, as well as the Amnesty Programme, had been reviewed.

He added that the 16-point demands of the Pan Niger Delta Forum had also been reviewed.

According to him, it is important to consolidate the agenda with that of Ministry of Petroleum Resources, as well as the blueprint of state governments, the amnesty office and the NDDC master plan to roll them into one workable plan.

He assured that the commission would work with Ministry of Environment and NOSREA to facilitate the Niger Delta clean-up of the affected areas by oil spill.

They would encourage International Oil Companies (IOCs) to provide more electricity to host communities.

Satellite mapping, he said, would be used to identify polluted areas and a comprehensive plan of action adopted to ensure regional clean up. (APA 21-03-2017)

BUILDING HOTELS IN AFRICA: RADISSON OWNER IDENTIFIES ITS TOP CITIES

"For some of these economies that are in a downturn right now, it is actually the right time to get into **the** market – at the bottom of the cycle, not the top."

So says Andrew McLachlan, Carlson Rezidor Hotel Group's senior vice president of business development for Africa and the Indian Ocean. The hotel operator – which owns the brands Radisson Blu and Park Inn – launched its first African hotel (a Radisson Blu in Cape Town) in 2000. It has since expanded to 29 countries on the continent.

According to McLachlan, the group hopes to grow to 15 hotels in Nigeria by the end of 2020 – from the two that it is currently operating. Hotel brands targeted at the west African powerhouse include Radisson Blu, Park Inn, the luxury five-star Quorvus Collection, as well as its new hotel concept, Radisson Red, which is aimed at a millennial mindset.

Nigeria's economy has been struggling since the downturn in global oil prices – mainly due an overvalued naira and shortage of foreign currency. A fall in investor confidence has translated into a drop in FDI. But McLachlan says Nigeria remains its second key market on the continent after South Africa (where it plans to grow its 14 hotels to 20 by the end of 2020).

"When you go into the hotel sector it's a long-term play, not a short-term play. So you look at the long-term fundamentals."

Outside of South Africa and Nigeria, McLachlan said the group has identified "pro-active countries" – where it sees potential to operate about five hotels.

"So we might not go into the depths of those markets but we think there are probably at least two locations within each country where we could have a couple of our hotels under at least two of our brands. These would be Ethiopia, Kenya, Tanzania, Mozambique, Angola, Ghana and Algeria. We think in those markets we can have at least five hotels each."

A key part of the company's strategy is focusing on economic regions – such as the East African Community (EAC), the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS), and the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Here the operator aims to have a hotel in the commercial hub of each market to cater to regional business travellers. For example, ECOWAS covers 16 countries, of which eight share the same currency, the CFA. Many of these markets are small, and there is not much demand for Carlson Rezidor's hotel brands outside each country's main economic hub.

"So we create a business circuit within ECOWAS, where we say we would like to have a hotel in Cotonou, which is the financial hub of Benin, as well as a hotel in Lomé (Togo), Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire), and Freetown (Sierra Leone). And we start developing a business circuit within west Africa and one within the upscale segment. So we develop a Radisson Blu first in each of these financial hubs and if the market is developed enough then we follow with a Park Inn by Radisson," he explains.

"And we do exactly the same in the EAC. Again, because it is a community that has free trade and free movement, we will develop a business route within that community because you might find that the same person from Deloitte, as an example, who is based in Nairobi (Kenya), is actually servicing Kampala (Uganda), Kigali (Rwanda), Bujumbura (Burundi), Arusha and Dar es Salaam (Tanzania) too."

First comes Radisson Blu…

Typically, Carlson Rezidor enters a market with its upscale Radisson Blu brand first – mainly because the group finds that many African cities need to be more developed before it becomes feasible to launch a mid-scale brand like Park Inn. For example, to launch in a city like Kinshasa (DRC), the group would have to ensure there is a water treatment plant, sewerage, diesel generators, as well as facilities like a bakery, butchery, laundry and dry-cleaning to adequately run the back-end of the hotel. As a result, it can cost the same to enter a market with the group's upscale brand as it does to launch with its mid-scale offering.

"So it makes sense… to rather do a Radisson Blu first than a Park Inn by Radisson, because you are almost building the same engine to drive a different car. So we see Radisson Blu going into every financial hub in Africa… Whereas we do not see Park Inn by Radisson going into every market, purely because the market might not be sophisticated enough," says McLachlan.

Carlson Rezidor's other two brands that are being targeted at Africa are Radisson Red and Quorvus Collection. It is expected to open its first African Radisson Red hotel in Cape Town in September. The brand – which emphasises art, music and fashion and has a modern, minimalist design – is likely to launch in other South African cities, such as Durban, Johannesburg and possibly Pretoria. McLachlan says he also sees potential to launch the brand in Nairobi, Lagos, Abidjan, Dakar, and Luanda.

"And that is probably as far as it's really going to go at this stage, because outside of those markets there isn't a customer base that will really understand the brand."

Its Quorvus Collection is also only being targeted at a handful of countries. “Probably just 10 markets in Africa – like your bigger, traditional capital cities. So we see it going into Pretoria, possibly Cape Town, Addis Ababa, Nairobi, Abuja, Abidjan and Luanda, probably, as well,” he adds.
“And then it is also going into the Indian Ocean island resort offering, where we are offering a luxury beach resort.” (How we made it in Africa 17-03-2017)

GHANA'S PRODUCER INFLATION RISES TO 5.4 PERCENT IN FEBRUARY

The year-on-year producer inflation rate for February 2017 has risen significantly to 5.4 percent, the Ghana Statistical Service has revealed.

This was against the 3.1 percent recorded in January 2017, thereby resulting in a 2.3 percentage increase.
The acting Government Statistician, Mr. Baah Wadieh, who made this known at a media briefing in Accra, said the rise was across the three major sectors.
He said the mining and quarrying sectors recorded the highest year-on-year inflation at 19.7 percent, followed by the manufacturing sub-sector with 3.5 percent.
The utilities sub-sector recorded the lowest inflation of 1.3 percent.
Ghana has targeted a single digit inflation and recorded significant reduction in January. (APA 24-3-2017)

SOUTH AFRICA SEEKS BAN ON FOREIGNERS BUYING AGRICULTURAL LAND

South Africa has proposed a new law banning foreigners directly buying agricultural land in the country as the government seeks to boost ownership for the black majority.
Non-residents will be allowed to take long leases on the properties or the land should be majority owned by a black South African, according to the Regulation of Agricultural Land Holdings Bill, published in the Government Gazette on Friday. The proposal is open for public comment until April 17.

The ruling African National Congress is seeking to accelerate the transfer of land to the black majority to help reduce inequality and reverse the legacy of white-minority rule. President Jacob Zuma has also vowed to step up wealth distribution, promising “radical economic transformation” in his final year as leader of the party. While Zuma has suggested changing the constitution to allow the state to expropriate land without paying for it, an ANC policy document calls for fair compensation.
Foreigners considering selling land must give the Minister of Rural Development and Land Reform first option on the property, according to the bill. The government would have 90 days to take up the offer, after which it can be sold to a citizen.
The minister will also impose limits on the size of farms people can own, depending on the region and following consultation, according to the document.
The “increasingly populist rhetoric” from Zuma about land doesn’t signal a sharp shift in policy, but it may harm investor sentiment, BMI Research, a unit of Fitch Ratings Ltd., said in an emailed note.
“While President Jacob Zuma has begun to adopt an increasingly populist tone in his discussions of land reform, the policy measures put forward by the ruling African National Congress are likely to remain more moderate, it said. “That said, the more left-leaning policy statements will offer continued headwinds to investor sentiment, further undermining growth (Bloomberg 20-03-2017)

NAMPOWER SEALS POWER PURCHASE DEAL WITH SOUTH AFRICA’S ESKOM

In its continued efforts to ensure security of power supply, Namibia's power utility firm, NamPower has signed a new five-year power supply agreement (PPA) with Eskom for the supply of 200mw and additional non-firm supply dependent on transmission capacity.

The agreement was signed on Thursday in Lesotho capital of Maseru, on the side-lines of the 42nd Southern African Power Pool (SAPP) Executive Committee meeting, the company announced in a statement on Friday.

Berthold Mbuere from NamPower's Energy Trading unit said the national power utility continues to employ all possible means to supplement generation capacity to ensure security of supply.

"The power supply situation in Namibia and the region is currently under control and NamPower will continue to implement various efforts, including demand side management initiatives, to ensure that the delivery of electricity supply services to the national economy is carried out in a sustainable manner.

"With due consideration of the credibility and good standing of the relationship between NamPower and Eskom, NamPower is confident that the agreement will be beneficial to both companies and by extension, to our electricity customers," he said.

NamPower has entered into a number of power purchase agreements of which the biggest import portfolio is with Eskom, in an effort to supplement its generation capacity, improve its import portfolio and have diversified energy sources.

In addition, the company has also concluded a number of plans to establish renewable energy projects in the country to enhance its local generation. (APA 24-03-2017)

ZIMBABWE: VIC FALLS AIRPORT TO BOOST TOURISM

The Zimbabwean government hopes to boost tourism to the Southern African country following the completion of $150m upgrade to Victoria Falls International Airport. The enhancements allow wide-body aircraft, such as Boeing 777 and Airbus A340 planes, to land.

The development of the airport – which included increasing the length of the runway from 2.2km to 4km, building a new terminal complete with a new control tower and improving the surrounding road network – was funded by the China Export-Import Bank. The upgrade now means the airport can handle 1.2m passengers annually, up from 500,000 passengers per year.

Some African airlines, including South African Airways, Ethiopian Airlines, Kenya Airways and Rwanda's RwandAir, have committed to routes to the improved airport. Meanwhile, non-African airlines, such as Dubai-headquartered Emirates and the UK's British Airways, also have flights travelling to the new-look Victoria Falls airport.

The Tourism will grow in Zimbabwe because of the new Victoria Falls airport and the commitment of international airlines is an indication that the tourism sector will recover, Walter Mzembi, Zimbabwe's minister for tourism, told the BBC.

"In the past, we've suffered from accessibility [to Victoria Falls] problems where people are at sixes and sevens about how to reach a natural wonder like Victoria Falls," he said. "Now they are able to land directly."

Zimbabwe's tourism sector has stagnated since the preceding events that led to the violent fast-track land reform in 2000, which saw 4,000 white farmers forced from their land which was given to around one million black farmers. Zimbabwe's economy has since shrunk over the last two decades, falling from 10.4% growth in 1996 to 0.5% in 2015.

Tourists to the Southern African country have been put off by regular police roadblocks where drivers are forced to pay fines of up to $20 for a series of trivial infringements. The airport would allow tourists to bypass the roadblocks and land directly near one of the seven natural wonders of the world.

The importance of the new airport bringing in visitors to Victoria Falls avoid travelling to Zimbabwe and the tourists travel to Zambia instead, denying Zimbabwe's economy much-needed foreign currency. The issue was recently highlighted when American actor Will Smith's bungee jump video off the Victoria Falls bridge went viral last week.

Media reports suggested that the Men in Black actor had travelled to Zimbabwe, however, Zambians on social media were quick to point out that Smith had actually travelled to their country.

- See more at: http://africanbusinessmagazine.com/region/southern-africa/zimbabwe-vic-falls-airport-boost-tourism/#sthash.0uuxlYBP.dpuf(African Bus. 24-03-2017)

AFREXIMBANK SAYS INCREASED INFRASTRUCTURE, MANUFACTURING KEY TO AFRICA'S INDUSTRIAL COMPETITIVENESS

AFREXIMBANK

The President of the African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank), Dr. Benedict Oramah, has said that Africa should focus on developing labour-intensive industries and providing effective logistics and transport infrastructure from factories to ports in order to become a globally competitive industrial player.

Speaking during a panel discussion on "Will economic nationalism put Africa first?" at the 2017 Africa CEO Forum in Geneva, Oramah pointed to reports that showed that African industries were often more competitive than those in Asia at the factory level, but noted that that advantage was lost once goods moved from the factory to the ports due to high logistics and transport costs.

He said that African governments should support the competitiveness of local industries by reducing the infrastructure gap while African enterprises should analyse global industrial value chains and set up activities in areas where they can deploy Africa's competitive advantage, which currently favoured labour-intensive industries.

Labour was competitive in Africa, but was not a tradable asset, Oramah noted, adding, "at this stage, it might be better to import fabrics and transform them into garments or to produce and assemble other labour-intensive light-manufacturing goods rather than processing raw materials in a way that may not enable Africa to compete globally".

He discouraged protectionism, saying that such an approach would not serve the interest of African economies as it could be an impediment to the creation of regional value chains and could play against the growth of local companies.

The President also participated in a public-private sector working group on the industrialization of Africa.
On the sidelines of the forum, President Oramah held bilateral meetings with Emmanuel Issoze Ngondet, the Prime Minister of Gabon; Mr. Azevedo; Mr. Guislain; and several other business leaders operating within Africa.
The two-day Africa CEO Forum 2017, was organized under the theme "Shaping the Future of Africa". (APA 24-03-2017)

L'ÉGYPTE REÇOIT SES PREMIERES LIVRAISONS DE PETROLE SAOUDIEN DEPUIS DES MOIS

Voitures faisant la queue devant une station service au Caire le 26 juin 2013.

L'Égypte a reçu durant ces dernières 48 heures les deux premières livraisons de pétrole du géant saoudien Aramco, après une suspension de plusieurs mois, a annoncé dimanche à l'AFP un porte-parole du ministère du Pétrole.

« Nous avons reçu vendredi et samedi les deux premières livraisons de pétrole après la reprise du contrat avec Aramco », a confirmé ce dimanche 19 mars Hamdi Abdel Aziz. « Nous recevrons deux livraisons supplémentaires les 26 et 27 mars », a-t-il ajouté.
Cette déclaration fait suite à l'annonce mercredi 15 mars d'un accord sur la reprise des livraisons de pétrole vers l'Égypte, suspendue depuis des mois, par le ministère du Pétrole égyptien.

Cinq mois sans livraisons

Le géant pétrolier saoudien Aramco avait décidé en octobre de ne plus approvisionner l'Égypte à cause d'un désaccord entre les deux pays au sujet de la Syrie. Le Caire s'était rapproché de la Russie, alliée du président syrien, Bachar al-Assad, alors que Ryad soutenait des groupes d'opposition au régime syrien (BD 27-03-2017)

BOTSWANA: SMARTPHONES OVERTAKE COMPUTERS IN INTERNET USAGE

Smartphones have overtaken portable computers as the most popular device for accessing the internet, according to Statistics Botswana (SB).

Latest data on Information Communication Technology (ICT) seen by APA on Thursday shows that in 2014, smartphones were the most favoured devices to access internet.

This it said accounts for 77.3 percent of the 494,000 total individuals who use the internet.

Portable computers, including laptops, notebooks and tablets, were the next most used devises to access internet after smartphones with 43 percent of individuals using them.

"Individuals aged 10-54 years mainly used mobile cellular telephones to access internet while 55 to 74-year olds preferred portable computers to access internet," SB said.

In addition, the statistical body indicated that individual internet users engaged in different types of activities on the internet, the most activity being participating in social networks.

Individuals who engaged in this activity constituted 78.4 percent of all internet users.

The second most common activity of internet users in Botswana was reading or downloading online news/newspapers/magazines/electronic books, which was done by 56.6 percent of all users, according to data. (APA 23-03-2017)

AIRBNB AIMS TO DOUBLE AFRICAN CUSTOMERS THIS YEAR

Co-founder and CEO of Airbnb Brian Chesky sits on a bed at a bed and breakfast in Langa township, Cape Town, South Africa

Airbnb expects to maintain its rapid growth in Africa this year and double its customer numbers to 1.5 million, its CEO Brian Chesky told Reuters on Friday.

The number of people using the online room rental service on the continent rose by 143 percent to about 765,000 guests in 2016 from the year before, said Nicola D'Elia, the firm's Africa and Middle East chief.

"If you just look at 2017, it's going to double. You will have 1.5 million people at the end of this year," added D'Elia.

Airbnb CEO Chesky confirmed that the California-based company expected to double African customer numbers this year. "Certainly that would be the forecast," he said in an interview in Cape Town, adding: "This is literally just the beginning. It (Africa) is still relatively under-penetrated."

Chesky said the company had 77,000 homes across Africa – out of its 3 million globally – but that it could easily have "hundreds of thousands" in a continent that's home to over a billion people.

The 77,000 homes represented an increase of 95 percent from 2015 to 2016, the company said.

South Africa, which was an early adopter of Airbnb, is the top-ranked country in Africa in terms of listings and visitors, who mainly come from the U.S., Germany, Britain and the Netherlands.

The top five cities in Africa are Cape Town, Marrakesh, Johannesburg, Nairobi and Casablanca, although listings are found in diverse locations from St. Helena island in the South Atlantic Ocean to Freetown in Sierra Leone, and even a smattering in Somalia.

Chesky, who described Africa as “an incredibly exciting emerging market for travel”, was speaking to Reuters in Langa, Cape Town’s oldest township where he put in an appearance to surprise graduates from an Airbnb training program. (Reuters 18-03-2017)

ISRAEL KEEN ON ECONOMIC TIES WITH G/BISSAU

The Israeli government has expressed keen interest in establishing viable trade and economic relations with Guinea-Bissau.

The announcement was made by Israel’s Ambassador to Bissau, Paul Hirschson, in an exclusive interview with APA.

Hirschson is accredited to five West African countries namely Senegal, Guinea-Bissau, The Gambia, Sierra Leone and Cape Verde.

The Ambassador said he was in Bissau as part of a working visit to the authorities, holding several meetings, especially with the Foreign Affairs, Natural Resources Ministers, the Prime Minister and President José Mário Vaz.

Hirschson took advantage of his stay in Bissau to invite the government of Guinea-Bissau, particularly the Minister of Natural Resources, to participate in an International Conference on Water Technologies in Israel in September this year.

The Israeli diplomat also said he had asked the Guinea-Bissau authorities to open a diplomatic mission in Tel Aviv to facilitate stronger relations between the two countries.

“I came here to also seek the opportunity to allow Israeli investors to engage in trade and economic activity alongside Guinea-Bissau businesspeople. We have investors who are interested in investing in this country, but there must be stability and peace that allows them to gain the confidence to invest in a country,” he noted.

Paul Hirschson acknowledged that Guinea-Bissau has great economic potential to become one of the most prosperous countries in the region.

During his meeting with President José Mario Vaz, Hirschson said he was asked to comment on the plundering of Guinea-Bissau fisheries resources and expressed his country’s readiness to help find a solution to this problem.

“Israel is a country, which has made great strides in the field of technology and security. The pattern can be used to monitor the sea in Bissau-Guinea” he said.

“We are well equipped in water technology, agriculture, medicine and security. Israeli businesspeople are interested in establishing partnerships with their counterparts in Guinea-Bissau" he added.

The Israeli diplomat said he had asked President José Mário Vaz for his country's support to allow Israel to become an "observer member" of the African Union.

The Israeli diplomat said President Vaz assured him of Guinea-Bissau's support to the Israeli government in this regard. (APA 23-03-2017)

GOVERNMENT, FRENCH FIRMS IN COMBINE HARVESTERS DEAL

The government has engaged some France companies to supply combine harvesters, grain driers and shelling equipment as efforts to boost Command Agriculture continue to gather momentum.

Agriculture, Mechanisation and Irrigation Development Minister Dr Joseph Made told ZBC News on his return from France that several French companies will enter into partnerships with Zimbabwe to supply combine harvesters.

The country will start receiving the combines harvesters and grain driers to boost Command Agriculture Programme starting next year if all goes as per plan

Turning to the current maize crop, Dr Made says a technical sub-committee team for Command Agriculture has already identified combine harvesters which are functional and those which require quick fix ahead of the anticipated bumper harvest.

The government is also finalising deals to secure agriculture equipment from China and India with expectations high that the irrigation equipment secured under the Zimbabwe-Brazil More Food for Africa programme will continue to benefit the small scale farmers. .(Zimbabwe Consolidated News 10-03-2017)

CONGO: AUSTRALIA-BASED FIRM LICENSED TO EXPLOIT POTASH

The Republic of Congo has issued a license to Sintoukola Potash.SA to run a potash mine in Kouilou department in the west of the country, a senior government official confirmed in Brazzaville on Thursday.

Communications minister Thierry Lezin Moungalla who also doubles as government spokesman said the decision granting the Australia-based firm a license was made during a weekly cabinet meeting.

Sintoukola Potash S.A is a Congolese subsidiary of Australian company Elemental Minerals Limited.

The mine in question known as Dougou with a depth of 600 meters, has deposits of potash estimated at 1.07 billion tonnes and is being projected to produce five million tonnes of the mineral annually.

Referring to the exploitation of this resource, Moungalla pointed out, quoting his Mining and Geology colleague, Pierre Oba, that the opening of the mine with an estimated $4 billion investment over the next 20 years, will catapult Congo into becoming Africa's biggest potash producer, with a projected output of 6 percent for the world market.

Sintoukola Potash S.A were granted a license in August 2009 to conduct a research on potash salts and related salts in the north of the Kouilou plains. (APA 23-03-2017)

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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), ELO,HTTC ,NABA,NABC (by posting selected news) and SwissCham-Africa to their Members.

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