MEMORANDUM

N° 70/2015 | 30/04/2015

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SUMMARY

AFRICAN ECONOMIES PANIC OVER CHINA'S SLOWED GROWTH

African economies are now jittery over slowing growth in China.

The fear really spans from the fact that the region could lose huge aids and trading partnership (in terms of commodity export) from the second largest global economy.

China is currently the largest trading partner of Africa and also boasts of huge commitments in development assistance to the region.

China spent over half of its foreign aids in 51 African countries, and authorities there say they sent more than $80 billion in "pledged, initiated, and completed projects" between 2000 and 2012.

But figures last week revealed that growth has slowed sharply and deflation set in, as the economy is weighed down by a property slump and factory production at its weakest since the global financial crisis.

In the first three months of 2015, China's GDP grew at "only" 7% year-on-year and is expected to stay at that level for the year from more than 14% growth it did in 2007, possibly the weakest seen in 25 years.

Abdalla Kadne Assane, minister of finance, Central African Republic, said in Washington at the weekend that China's downward trend is not good for Africa because of the possibility of dovetailing into slowed assistance and trade relationship.

"The slowdown is a concern for us because we fear it may lead to their cutting down the assistance for us. The slowdown in China may also lead to slow commodity demand from Africa," Assane told a press conference on Africa at the IMF/World Bank Spring Meetings.

Assane, who addressed the media alongside Amara Konneh, Liberian finance minister and Goodall Gondwe, finance minister, Madagascar, said African economies are now hoping and praying that China's slowdown will not drag for too long.

"We are closely monitoring the indicators of this country that is quite important to us, and we pray that their recovery is fast," he added.

Christine Lagarde, managing director, International Monetary Fund (IMF), said weekend in Washington that there is strong confidence in the growth of China but not as high as it used to be. "That level of growth is satisfactory given the level that China has reached," she said.(BD 25-04-2015)

MANGO AND TOMATO PROCESSING PLANT GOES INTO OPERATION IN JUNE IN GUINEA-BISSAU

A factory for the processing of mango and tomato into jam and paste should start operating next June in Guinea-Bissau, said Malam Djudju Mané, the director indicated by the Guinean government to manage the unit.
The factory's construction, which occupies a 1 hectare area and is located in the town of Safi, 15 kilometres from Bissau, were financed by a credit line from an Indian bank.
Malam Djudju Mané said the factory, to be built by an Indian company, will have the capacity to produce 3,000 tons of tomato paste and eight tons of mango jam per day.
Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, who visited the factory worksite this weekend, said the credit line opened by the Indian bank had an amortisation period of 25 years. (27-04-2015)

WESGRO INTENT ON HELPING CAPE TOWN TAKE ADVANTAGE OF OPPORTUNITIES IN ANGOLA

The Western Cape’s official trade and investment promotion agency, Wesgro, says it is committed to helping businesses in Cape Town and the province take advantage of the business opportunities in the Angolan market and the potential for increased tourist arrivals from the oil-rich country.

Wesgro will be leading a delegation to Angola next week, which will include business leaders, Western Cape Premier Helen Zille and Economic Opportunities MEC Alan Winde. The purpose of the visit will be to grow tourism, trade and investment as part of a new focus on the Angolan market.

Angola has become one of the world’s fastest-growing economies since the end of its civil war in 2002. Its growth has largely been driven by rising oil production, but the Angolan government recently prioritised the diversification of its economy to reduce reliance on oil.

Wesgro said the Western Cape was well connected to Angola. There are three direct flights a week between Cape Town and Angola’s capital, Luanda, on a Boeing 777, which takes less than four hours, and road freight reaches Luanda in about 10 days.

"Wesgro is committed to helping businesses in Cape Town and the Western Cape take advantage of the extraordinary business opportunities in the Angolan market and the potential for increased tourist arrivals from Angola," said Wesgro CE Tim Harris.

Cape Town mayor Patricia de Lille said on Wednesday that Angola had experienced phenomenal growth thanks to their oil industry, but the recent decline in the oil price has led to a new focus on diversification.

"Fortunately for our region, their priority sectors are agriprocessing, tourism and medical services — three areas where Cape companies are the regional champions."

Due to investment by Cape Town companies such as Shoprite — who have invested about R2bn in Angola since 1998 — Western Cape exports to Angola have increased to R2.5bn a year.

Meanwhile, Mr. Harris said the recent wave of xenophobic attacks was a major concern for business in the province.

"It’s obviously something we are concerned about. The future of our region is (as) an economic hub for Africa ... connectivity with the rest of the continent, having open arms to investors and business people from the rest of the continent is right at the top of our agenda.

"So clearly when you have these incidents around the country it affects that offer, which is a serious problem". (BD 23-04-2015)

PEACE IN GUINEA-BISSAU ATTRACTS GERMAN INVESTORS

German businesspeople are interested in investing in agriculture, fisheries and construction materials in Guinea-Bissau, the German ambassador said at the end of an audience granted by the President of the Republic, José Mario Vaz.

Bernard Kapman also said that some German economic agents feel encouraged by the peaceful political and economic climate seen today in Guinea-Bissau and announced that a trade mission to Bissau would take place soon to establish contacts and identify possible projects in which to invest.

“Everyone knows that the Germans have sufficient capital to invest in Guinea-Bissau. Therefore, as one of my tasks, I will help in the mobilisation of German businessmen to come and apply their funds here,” promised the German diplomat.

He said that during the hearing the President expressed his preference for agriculture as an area that needs urgent investment, which Kapman said was an opinion he shared.

Bernard Kapman expressed the German authorities’ confidence in the Guinean government because “in the first year of its rule it is implementing many projects with determination.” (27-04-2015)

PRIVATE SECTOR FORUM ON FOOD SECURITY IN THE SEMED, 5-6 MAY 2015, BARCELONA, SPAIN

FAO, EBRD and the UfM Secretariat are convening high-level policymakers, financing institutions and CEOs from leading agribusiness companies, to deepen relationships between the public and private sector and develop initiatives to increase agricultural investment in this region.

The Forum will address challenging policy and investments dilemmas: from self-sufficiency to trade liberalization; from traditional value chains to innovative food quality paradigms.

The Forum on 5-6 May will explore:

- best practices for advancing regional integration;
- developing strategies for financing food import bills;
- improving the efficiency of import supply chains through private sector engagement;
- focussing on advantageous agricultural exports;
- achieving more efficient use of resources in production processes; and
- supporting local producers to create higher value products through quality.

The event will contribute to a sustainable regional approach for agriculture and food security, capitalizing on the experience of each of the countries in the region and maximizing opportunities for the public and private sectors alike. For more information and the agenda, please visit the Forum's portal (UfM 02-04-2015)

GUINEA-BISSAU HAS ACCESS TO UNDERSEA TELECOMMUNICATIONS CABLE WITHIN 2 YEARS

Guinea-Bissau could have access to an undersea telecommunications cable within a maximum period of two years, said in Washington the Minister of Economy and Finance, Geraldo Martins.

The minister said that access to the new ACE ("Africa Coast to Europe") undersea cable system will be possible through a subsidised loan to be granted by the World Bank.

Estimated at about US$35 million, this amount will be approved by the World Bank Board of Directors by December this year.

The creation of this ACE undersea cable system, a consortium of 16 companies, had an initial investment of US$700 million and extends from France to South Africa, and has been in operation since 2012

With this connection, Guinea-Bissau will increase its network capacity, as well as communications exchange capacity, mainly through broadband Internet.

According to information from the company, the ACE system has a potential capacity of 5.12 Tbps (terabits per second) supported by WDM technology ("Wavelength-division multiplexing") with wavelengths at 40 Gbps (gigabits per second). (27-04-2015)

NIGERIA: CHINA PLANS NEW INVESTMENT IN AGRICULTURE, INFRASTRUCTURE

As Nigeria continues to reap from the whirlwind of international goodwill over the successful conduct of the 2015 general elections, the People's Republic of China has pledged to invest more in agriculture and infrastructural projects.

Addressing reporters after a brief meeting with the President- elect, General Muhammadu Buhari, the Chinese Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Gu Xiaojie said he had fruitful discussions with Buhari on new areas of engagement and investment in Nigeria.

"Like I said China and Nigeria are going to further our cooperation. As part of our desire for collaboration with Nigeria I discussed with the President- elect.

On some of the potential areas of investment. We plan to invest in such areas like Agriculture, infrastructure and other projects that is tailored to impact positively on the lives of the people of Nigeria," he said.

He said his main mission was to extend greeting and congratulatory messages to Buhari and the people of Nigeria.

"We came to present the best wishes and regards from our President and people of China to the President- elect.

"I have also came to convey a message from the Chinese government that is ready to work with the incoming APC administration headed by Buhari to further improve on the existing strategic partnership between both countries. We want elevate our relations to a new height and develop it in a mutually beneficial manner base on what we have achieved in the past decades," he said.

Similarly, Morocco has waved aside the diplomatic spat it had with the Nigerian government and offered a hand of fellowship to the incoming government of the President- elect, General Muhammadu Buhari.

Speaking to journalists shortly after a congratulatory visit to Buhari, the Moroccan Ambassador to Nigeria, Mr. Mostafa Bouh, said his country is very ready to open a new page in its relations with Nigeria.

"The new relations is for the good of both Morocco and Nigeria. I am here to give the President- elect a message from the King of Morocco. The message is for greetings and best wishes from Moroccan people," he said.

On the diplomatic row that led to the withdrawal of Moroccan Head of Miss from Nigeria, the Ambassador said: I believe that was in the past now, we are looking forward to the future now."

Also the Equatorial Guinea Ambassador who also paid a congratulatory visit to Buhari praised Nigerians for their exemplary during the just concluded general election.(This Day Live 22-04-2015)

HEINEKEN, CFAO TO BUILD $164 MLN BREWERY IN IVORY COAST

Heineken NV, the world's third largest brewer, and Africa-focused trading firm CFAO will invest 100 billion CFA francs ($163.52 million) to build a brewery in Ivory Coast, a Heineken company official said on Wednesday.

"We'll be operational in a year and a half and I hope that we'll be able to taste a good beer around Christmas, in December 2016," Siep Hiemstra, Heineken's president for Africa and the Middle East, told journalists in the commercial capital Abidjan.(Reuters Africa 23-04-2015)

MOZAMBIQUE’S PARLIAMENT GIVES GENERAL APPROVAL FOR 2015 STATE BUDGET

The Mozambican parliament Monday gave general approval for the 2015 state budget proposal, which includes expenses amounting to 226 billion meticais (US$6billion), the Mozambican press reported.

This state budget is in line with the government’s financial policy and the objectives of the Economic and Social Plan (PES) for 2015 and puts in place the Five-Year Government Programme (PQG) for 2014-2019.

Discussion of the specifics of the budget is due to begin Tuesday following general approval by 135 members of parliament of the ruling party and 95 votes against from the two opposition parties.

Addressing the members of parliament, Prime Minister Carlos Agostinho do Rosario said that both the Economic and Social Plan and the Budget for 2015 were prepared “cautiously” to address the concerns of the population but taking into account the financial capacity of the country .

The Prime Minister gave assurances that public works currently underway would not stop for lack of funds and guaranteed that basic social services would be maintained throughout the country. (28-04-2015)

EUROPEAN COUNTRIES FOCUS AID ON EX-COLONIES

Until the 20th century, they were Europe's biggest imperial powers. Today, France, the UK, Belgium, Spain, Germany and Portugal are spending the bulk of their Official Development Assistance (ODA) budgets on their former colonies. The EurActiv network reports.
For France, the world's fourth biggest donor, Overseas Development Assistance (ODA) is aimed at its former colonies in Africa.

According to the latest data from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the top seven countries French receiving ODA are Morocco, China, Vietnam, the Cote d'Ivoire, Colombia, Senegal and Kenya. Of those, only China, Colombia and Kenya were not part of France's former empire.

It is unclear why China is a relatively large recipient of French aid. The Asian giant is also an important provider of aid to poorer countries, especially in Africa.

Francophonie an official criterion for aid

"France always had a colonial and linguistic focus on ODA," explained Christian Reboul of Oxfam France. "But it's legitimate, because the former French colonies in Africa are *de facto* the poorest countries in the world. There is a consistency in that decision," he added.

Since 2014, Francophonie is the official goal of French development policy. First, after the last cabinet reshuffle in April 2014, the portfolios of development and Francophonie were merged into one, led by the new secretary of state, Annick Girardin.

That same year, France adopted its first legislation on development aid. It focused ODA on priority regions; sub-Saharan Africa and the southern Mediterranean get 85% of French development aid. Francophonie, as a goal of development policy, is part of the law.

"It's politically easier to target Francophonie, than a former colonial empire, but at the end it's exactly the same," observed Reboul.

Within this region, the French government has identified 16 poor countries: Benin, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Djibouti, Comoros, Ghana, Guinea, Madagascar, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Chad, Togo and Senegal.

These 16 countries, identified as priorities because of their poverty, will receive at least 50% of available aid grants.

Among these 16 priority countries, only Ghana and Mauritania do not have French as an official language. But all of them are part of the International Organisation of the Francophonie

More importantly, only three of them were not French territories. Congo and Burundi were colonised by Belgium, and Ghana was ruled by the United Kingdom.

"Actually, Ghana is maybe the only example in that list [that] doesn't have anything to do with Francophonie, and has a level of development far above the rest," says Reboul.

Middle income countries in Asia, Latin America, and the Caribbean are also supported by French development policy, but through loans, or economic partnership more than grants.

But the figures can be confusing. In 2012, within the top ten recipients of French ODA, none were targeted as priorities, and most of them were fast-developing, like the Cote d'Ivoire, Brazil, China, Morocco and Vietnam.

“This gap can be explained by France having very strong volumes of loans and very weak volumes of grants in its ODA,” explained Christian Reboul.

The share of grants in the overall French ODA is modest. In 2013, out of the €9.8 billion for public development aid, only €312 million were grants for bilateral projects, or 3.2% of the French budget.

The UK is Europe's leading donor

The UK is Europe’s leading donor for ODA. Last year, Britain gave $19.4 billion (€18 billion), making it the second largest aid donor in the world, after the US. The UK is also one of only five member states to have met the UN target of 0.7% for ODA.

However, a 49-page report on UK’s ODA makes no mention of under what guidelines decision makers favour certain recipient countries and not others.

According to latest data of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the top seven countries where UK ODA goes to are Pakistan, Ethiopia, India, Bangladesh, Nigeria, Afghanistan and Tanzania. Of UK aid recipients, only Afghanistan and Ethiopia have not been British colonies.

Speaking to EurActiv, the Department for International Aid (DFID) recognised that of the 20 countries that received most UK aid in 2013 seven are former British colonies and one is currently a British Overseas Territory.

A spokesperson explained that it was up to the next government to define priorities for ODA in the same way as the outgoing cabinet did in 2011. At that time, it was mentioned that “as a result of the Review [the UK government has] decided to focus aid more tightly on the countries where the UK is well placed to have a significant long-term impact on poverty”.

Belgium: Love/hate relationship

Belgium, a relatively small country of 11 million, is the 14th biggest aid donor in the world, according to latest OECD data.

The top seven countries where Belgian aid goes to are the Congo, Burundi, Rwanda, the Palestinian territories, Mali, Mozambique and Vietnam. The first three countries, which receive the vast majority of Belgian aid, are former Belgian colonies.

The Belgian authorities stress that the country’s ODA has increased by 3.3% compared to 2013, and has stayed at 0.45%, which is slightly above the EU average of 0.42%.

According to Minister of Development Cooperation Alexander De Croo, the Belgian aid effort should concentrate more on the least developed countries, as well as on Sub-Saharan Africa. However, Belgium's relationship with its former colonies is far from being an easy one.

With the DRC, a 2008 visit by Karel De Gucht, Belgium's former foreign minister, exposed the lack of transparency in the exploitation of the country’s mineral resources, calling it “a country where the state is absent". De Gucht was subsequently declared persona non grata, and it took a long time before fences were mended.

With Rwanda, relations are even worse. In January 2015, De Croo announced his intention to place stricter conditions on assistance to developing countries, following his government's decision to suspend part of its aid to Rwanda.

Belgium decided to withhold €40 million in aid, after deciding that the Rwandan government had failed to meet commitments to increasing transparency, good governance and freedom of the press.

But the real issue appears to be that President Paul Kagame accused Belgium, along with France, of "direct involvement" in the 1994 genocide. Some 800,000 minority Tutsis and moderate Hutus were killed in a four-month killing spree triggered by the assassination of Rwanda's then-president, the Hutu Juvenal Habyarimana.

Spain: Strategic interest

The first seven beneficiaries of Spanish aid are Peru, Morocco, Colombia, Salvador, Nicaragua, Ecuador and Bolivia. Only Morocco wasn't a Spanish colony. However, Spain has interests in the Western Sahara, a disputed territory bordering Morocco, which it ruled between 1884 and 1963.

Asked if Spain was giving priority to former Spanish colonies in Latin America, an official declined to answer, and referred instead to documents from the country's Agency for International Cooperation (AECID), a government department subordinate to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Among the criteria for disbursing Spanish aid is the need to contribute where international effort is deemed insufficient, and where the Spanish impact could be greater.

Due to the economic crisis, Spain has dramatically reduced its ODA. Consequently, the concept of "geographical concentration" has been introduced, in order to focus on specific regions and on a smaller number of countries.

Instead of the 50 countries in the so-called Third Master Plan of Spanish development aid for 2009-2012, there was only 23 countries in the Fourth Master Plan (2013-2016).

"This is why we shall concentrate in geographic areas where Spain has more strategic interest: Latin America, Northern Africa, Western and sub-Saharan Africa," wrote José Manuel García Margallo in the introduction to the Fourth Master Plan.

Portugal: Almost all aid goes to former colonies

But the most striking example is Portugal, where almost all the country's aid goes to former colonies. The first seven are Cabo Verde, Mozambique, Angola, East Timor, Sao Tome and Principe and Guinea Bissau, all of them former Portuguese colonies.

On the other extreme, Germany, a country which has had fewers colonies than any of the other colonial empires, does not prioritise its former territories.

Germany transferred €10.6 billion development assistance to third countries in 2013. The top recipient is Afghanistan with €459.7 million, followed by India (€450.4 million), China (€315.0 million), and Syria (€257.1 million).

Far lower amounts go to former German colonies. Tanzania receives €139.2 million, Cameroon €89.4 million, and Namibia €27.5 million. The amount paid to Togo makes up €23.2 million, to Samoa €3.8 million.

NGOs criticise the German government for paying development assistance to the wrong countries. Instead it should focus on the fight against extreme poverty in its budget allocation, the campaigning organisation ONE said. 50% of funds should be given to Least Developed Countries (LDCs), referring to the 48 poorest countries in the world.

“To this day, many top receivers of German development aid continue to be G20 countries and newly industrialised countries,” Andreas Hübers, a political advisor at ONE told EurActiv (EurActiv 20-04-2015)

ETHIOPIANS TALK OF VIOLENT INTIMIDATION, AS THEIR LAND IS EARMARKED FOR FOREIGN INVESTORS

Ethiopia has long faced criticism for forcibly relocating tens of thousands of people from their ancestral homes. [Reuters]

The human cost of Ethiopia’s “villagisation” programme is laid bare by damning first person testimony published on Tuesday (14 April).

The east African country has long faced criticism for forcibly relocating tens of thousands of people from their ancestral homes to make way for large scale commercial agriculture, often benefiting foreign investors. Those moved to purpose-built communes are allegedly no longer able to farm or access education, healthcare and other basic services.

The victims of land grabbing and displacement are given a rare voice in We Say the Land is Not Yours: Breaking the Silence against Forced Displacement in Ethiopia, a report from the California-based thinktank the Oakland Institute.

Some of the interviewees still live in Ethiopia, while others have sought political asylum abroad, and all remain anonymous for their own safety.

‘My village refused to move so they forced us with gunshots’

“My village refused to move,” says one, from the community of Gambella. “So they forced us with gunshots. Even though they intimidated us, we did not move – this is our land, how do we move? They wanted our land because our land is the most fertile and has access to water. So the land was promised to a national investor.

“Last year, we had to move. The promises of food and other social services made by the government have not been fulfilled. The government gets money from donors but it is not transferred to the communities.”

The land grab is not only for agriculture, the interviewee claims, but the community has also seen minerals and gold being mined and exported. “We have no power to resist. We need support. In the villages, they promised us tractors to help us cultivate. If money is given to the government for this purpose, we don’t know how it is used.

“The government receives money from donors, but they fill their pockets and farmers die of hunger.”

Opposition will not be tolerated

Opposition to the scheme is not tolerated, according to the witness. “People are intimidated – we are forced to say positive things about villagisation, but really we refuse to accept the programme. If you challenge, the government calls you the mastermind of conflict.

"One of the government officials was opposed to the government. They wanted to put him in prison. He escaped and is now in Kenya, living as a political refugee."

Agriculture makes up nearly half the GDP of Ethiopia, where four in five people live in rural areas. But since the mid-2000s, the government has awarded millions of hectares of land to foreign investors. The commune development programme, which aims to move 1.5 million rural families from their land to new "model" villages across the country, has faced allegations of violent evictions, political coercion, intimidation, imprisonment, rapes, beatings and disappearances.

A witness from Benishangul laments: "This is not development. Investors are destroying our lands and environment. There is no school, [no] food security, and they destroy wild fruits. Bamboo is the life of people. It is used for food, for cattle, for our beds, homes, firewood, everything. But the investors destroy it. They destroy our forests.

"This is not the way for development. They do not cultivate the land for the people. They grow sorghum, maize, sesame, but all is exported, leaving none for the people."

In response to the report's allegations, a spokesperson for the Ethiopian embassy in London has denied that the country engages in land-grabbing, saying: "As our economic track record clearly shows, the vast majority of Ethiopians have benefitted from the growth and sustainable development programme under implementation."

'The government dictates'

Another interviewee, from South Omo, says mandatory resettlement has stoked conflict among different ethnic groups. "There was no open consultation between the community and the government. If there was a common agreement based on joint consultations, perhaps the community might accept. But, the government dictates.

"We are scared that the highlanders will come and destroy our way of life, culture, and pasture land. What will we do? The government says we can keep two to three cattle, but this is a challenge. Our life is based on cattle, and we cannot change overnight. I keep cows, oxen, sheep, goats – where do we go?

"The investors take land in the Omo Valley. They clear all land, choose the best place where trees are, leaving the area open. They say it is for development, but they are clearing the forests. I wonder how to reconcile development with forest destruction."

Such accounts threaten to dent the image of Ethiopia, a darling of the development community that has enjoyed double digit economic growth for the best part of a decade. The government has been criticised for brooking little opposition, clamping down on civil society activism and jailing more journalists than any country in Africa, except its neighbour Eritrea.

'Basic human rights are not being upheld'

A government employee told the researchers: "I want the world to know that the government system at the federal level does not give attention to the local community.

"There are three dynamics that linger in my mind that explain today's Ethiopia: villagisation, violent conflict, and investment. They are intertwined and interrelated. It is hard for outsiders to know what leads to what. When people are free, they talk. When they are afraid of repercussion, they stop."

Critics have claimed that British aid to Ethiopia's promotion of basic services programme were being used by the Ethiopian government to help fund the villagisation programme. But last month the Department for International Development announced that it was ending the contributions because of Ethiopia's "growing success".

Anuradha Mittal, executive director of the Oakland Institute, who conducted the interviews in 2014 and 2015, said: “The context in which we release this report is one of torture, oppression, and silencing. A development strategy without ensuring its citizens freedom of speech and expression is not a development strategy but a scheme to benefit the ruling elites.

“Those basic human rights are not being upheld in Ethiopia. It is therefore urgent to make voices of those impacted heard.” (The Guardian 15-04-2015)

ZIMBABWE SANCTIONS CALL REJECTED

A top European Union (EU) court on Wednesday dismissed an appeal by Zimbabwe’s attorney-general and more than 100 other figures linked to the Harare government to have EU sanctions removed.

The 28-nation bloc began easing visa ban and asset freeze sanctions against Zimbabwe’s ruling elite early last year in the hope of encouraging reforms but left top officials including President Robert Mugabe on the black list.

Zimbabwe Attorney-General Johannes Tomana, as well as 109 people including police and army officers, plus 11 companies, had called on the General Court of the EU to annul the sanctions order.

However, the court, second only to the European Court of Justice, said they were correctly identified as close to Mr. Mugabe’s government and its "serious infringement of human rights".

Mr. Tomana had been put on the sanctions list because he had "engaged in activities that seriously undermine democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law", the court said. The inclusion of the other individuals and companies were broadly comparable, it said.

There was an adequate legal basis for the sanctions since the positions they held "are such that it is legitimate to characterise them as leaders of Zimbabwe or as associates of those leaders and thereby to justify, on that ground alone, their being listed", the court said.

Mr. Mugabe said earlier this year as African Union chairman he cared little for what the West might say. "If Europe comes in the spirit to co-operate and not the spirit to control us and control our ways, they will be very welcome." *(*AFP 23-04-2015)

103 NIGERIAN PRODUCTS FAIL TO MEET INT’L STANDARDS

Nigeria’s Minister of Industry, Trade and Investment, Mr. Olusegun Aganga, has lamented that over 103 Nigerian products, which were exported to other countries, have been rejected within the last five years, for not meeting acceptable international quality standards.

Unveiling the new office complex of the Standards Organisation of Nigeria (SON) on Thursday, Aganga said the high volume of rejected products was not acceptable.

According to the report by Nigeria’s Punch newspaper on Friday, the minister attributed the development to lack of accredited laboratories in the country, where the products could be tested before being shipped abroad.

According to him, while the rate of rejected products exported from Nigeria was over 103, countries like South Africa and Ghana had just six and seven rejected products.

The minister, however, said with the reforms that had been carried out by the current administration within the last four years, Nigeria now had an internationally-accredited laboratory in Lagos, which would help to check the drift.

He explained that since the laboratory in Lagos meets international standard, any product tested there would be acceptable anywhere outside the country, thus saving the huge revenue being lost to manufacturers and countries wherever there was product reject.

"We all say we want to diversify the economy with a view to increasing our income from non oil products. But there is no way we can achieve this without having quality infrastructure such as the laboratory.

"For instance, we could not export yam to the United Kingdom because we do not have a laboratory to test it here. Those who export products in Nigeria take them to Ghana to test them and the credit goes to Ghana.

"In the last five years, Nigeria has more than 103 rejects. If you compare that to other African countries like South African and Ghana, who only have between six to seven rejects, our is unacceptable.

"We are having this rejects because we did not have accredited laboratory in the country. However, we can confidently say we have addressed that challenge now,'' he added. (APA 24-04-2015)

MEMBER STATES RELUCTANT TO MAKE FURTHER TRITON COMMITMENTS

EurActiv has obtained the list of EU countries pledging to strengthen joint naval operations in the Mediterranean, put together during yesterday's (23 April) extraordinary summit.
According to the list, twelve member states, specifically Greece, Croatia, Cyprus, Spain, Slovenia, Romania, Austria, Bulgaria, Estonia, Malta, Slovakia and the Netherlands made no commitments to contribute to the maritime force.

It appears that some countries desisted from making contributions, because they consider their current efforts to be sufficient, while other member states believe that they should receive aid to deal with illegal migration, rather than providing assistance using their own resources.

Responding to the disparity in participating countries, Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte commented yesterday, "The Netherlands is already doing a lot. The question is what other countries are going to do."

For his part, Bulgarian Prime Minister Boyko Borissov said: "Our situation is more difficult than Italy's. If the others will be complaining, I will complain too."

British Prime Minister David Cameron added: "Today I'm offering the Royal Navy flagship, three helicopters and two border control ships. But we need the right conditions. This includes that people are taken to the nearest safe country, probably Italy." (EurActiv 24-04-2015)

THE PROCESS TO DEVELOP THE SCP ACTION PLAN FOR EGYPT HAS STARTED!

Agriculture, Water, Energy, and Municipal Solid Waste will be the sectors addressed by the Egyptian SCP action plan.
The **"Launching workshop of Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Action Plan for Egypt"** took place on the 5th March in El Cairo (Egypt). The workshop was the stepping stone of the consultation process adopted to design and producing the Egyptian SCP action plan.
We are partnering with the Egyptian Ministry of Environment and the Centre for Environment and Development for the Arab Region and Europe (CEDARE) to develop the **Sustainable Consumption and Production (SCP) National Action Plan for Egypt**.
To do so, we have designed together with our partners a clearly **Roadmap establishing an expert and stakeholder consultation process** to insure credibility, validity and successful implementation of the action plan. The process will count with the support of a project steering committee and sectorial working groups.

The workshop served to launch and to present the **process of developing and drafting the SCP National Action Plan for Egypt** and to highlight potential **opportunities and challenges for promoting SCP policies** in the 4 target sectors of the action plan: **Agriculture, Water, Energy and Municipal Solid Waste**.

"The objective of the action plan is to mainstream the SCP concept and policies into overall sustainable development policies, programmes and strategies of Egypt" said Mr. Hossam Allam from CEDARE.

60 people attended the meeting, including specialized experts in the targeted sectors, Government officials and guests from different Ministries, Research Institutions, Associations, International Organizations, the Private Sector and Civil Society. The workshop was organised within the 15th African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN).

In the first session participants were provided with an overview to the regional and international experiences regarding SCP related initiatives and programmes, including the SwitchMed Programme, the 10YFP, the Mediterranean SCP Action Plan, and Switch Africa Green Project.

After introducing the Egypt SCP Action Plan, the second session was devoted to **present highlights from Agriculture, Water, Energy and Municipal Solid Waste sectors**. Specialized experts exposed the **current status** and the **strategies** to follow for each of them. According to Dr. Hossal Allam, *"the 4 sectors have been identified on the basis of the extent of their significance to Egyptian economic development and human welfare".*

"The SCP action plan for Egypt project is not starting from scratch" highlighted Luc Reuter, from SwitchMed team. Build on the study "Green Economy Scoping Study for Egypt" conducted in 2013 together by the Egyptian Ministry of Environment, CEDARE and UNEP, the current project partners have drafted a detailed SCP assessment. That study explored recent updates relevant to Green Economy and SCP related to the four priority sectors.

Next operational objectives include holding the meetings of the working groups and the Steering Committee so to later have a first and a second final draft of the action plan that will be later validated in a second workshop.

To read the report of the workshop click here(Switchmed 22-04-2015)

S/AFRICAN XENOPHOBIC ATTACKS HIT BOTSWANA TRANSPORTERS

The on-going xenophobic attacks in South Africa have negatively affected Public Transport operators ferrying passengers from Botswana, Gabz FM radio station reported here on Friday.

Spokesperson of Taxi Cross-Border Association, Eddie Gabasiane said that very few people have been using their minibuses to various destinations in South Africa.

Meanwhile, the Botswana government said updates through the country's embassy in South Africa showed that no Batswana nationals have been affected, including about 120 students studying in Durban, one of the hardest-hit cities.

However, Gabasiane said although fewer people are travelling to South Africa, they have not scaled down on the number of buses and kombis travelling to South Africa. (APA 24-04-2015)

EAST AFRICA'S ECONOMIC COOPERATION NOW INCLUDES ELECTRICITY

Regional integration has been a significant driver of East Africa's economic boom in the past decade. Keen to extend this synergy, Ethiopia and Rwanda have announced plans to trade electricity between themselves.

The two east African nations will extend the 1,068-kilometre transmission line to Rwanda for electricity export. This development comes on the heels of a recently erected transmission highway that connects Ethiopia and southern neighbour Kenya. "Ethiopia will share its hydro-electric power to Rwanda as soon as the transmission highway currently under construction from Wolayta to the East Africa Power Pool in Kenya is completed," Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam remarked.

The 500 KV power transmission utility has a line transfer capacity of 2,000MW. Its completion date has been set at November 2017 at an estimated cost of about $1.2 billion. The current power sharing deal, signed by Ethiopia and Kenya in 2011, is such that Kenya will import 200 MW at 6 cents per kilowatt per hour in the first phase of the project and an additional 200 MW when all of Ethiopia's power generation projects are completed.

Rwanda has a lot to gain from this deal. At present, the country only has about 153 MW of installed power generating capacity with some 16 percent of households connected to the country's electricity grid. Although plans are in motion to increase its power generation capacity to 563MW by 2018, about 450MW will be purchased from neighbouring countries. "It is very simple to share Ethiopia's electric power to Rwanda once we are connected to Kenya," Hailemariam said.

The project will be partly financed by the African Development Bank (AfDB), which is a co-sponsor of the project.(Ventures Africa 24-04-2015)

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