MEMORANDUM

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11 YEARS OF UNINTERRUPTED PUBLICATION

African Rail, see page 18

SUMMARY

WORLD BANK LOWERS GROWTH OUTLOOK FOR SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Downgrades after President Jacob Zuma's shock reshuffle 'a significant setback to business and investor confidence in SA', says World Bank
The World Bank cut its growth projection for sub-Saharan Africa this year because of weak expansion in the region's three biggest economies, with low investor confidence in SA an issue.
The region's gross domestic product (GDP) will expand 2.6% in 2017, the bank said in its Africa Pulse report on Wednesday. That compares with a January projection of 2.9% and matches the International Monetary Fund's prediction released this week.
"The region's three largest economies — Angola, Nigeria, and SA — are projected to post only a modest growth following a sharp slowdown in 2016," it said. "Investment growth will recover only gradually amid tight foreign-exchange liquidity conditions in major oil exporters and low investor confidence in SA."
The economy of SA, which vies with Nigeria's to be the region's biggest, expanded 0.3% last year, the slowest pace since a 2009 recession, due to a slump in commodity prices, weak demand for the country's exports and a continuation of the worst drought since records started more than a century ago. Nigeria suffered its first economic contraction in 25 years in 2016 due to a drop in oil exports and foreign-currency shortages that raised inflation to a decade high.
Growth this year would be "better than the 1.3% in 2016, the lowest in two decades, but we are not out of the woods yet", World Bank Africa chief economist Albert Zeufack said in Washington on Wednesday. "Africa is still growing at negative per-capita rates." (WB 19-04-2017)

World Bank Africa Pulse

POLICY ADVISERS URGE TRUMP TO KEEP U.S. IN PARIS ACCORD

President Trump's most influential policy advisers are urging him to keep the United States in the landmark Paris climate accord of 2015, a move that would break one of his signature campaign promises and further downgrade the counsel of his senior strategist, Stephen K. Bannon.

Mr. Trump plans to make a final decision on the fate of the Paris agreement before a meeting of the Group of 7 leading economies at the end of May, according to Sean Spicer, the White House press secretary. A team of Mr. Trump's principal advisers was scheduled to meet Tuesday afternoon at the White House to discuss the decision with the aim of recommending a path forward, but the meeting was canceled after some of the planned attendees flew with Mr. Trump to an event in Wisconsin, according to a White House spokeswoman.

The spokeswoman, Kelly Love, said the meeting was still expected to take place, although the exact timing was unclear.

On the campaign trail, Mr. Trump vowed to "cancel" the climate deal, and his most politically conservative advisers, including Mr. Bannon, have pushed him to follow through. But Mr. Bannon's influence has waned in recent weeks, while authority has risen for Mr. Trump's daughter Ivanka and son-in-law, Jared Kushner, who advocate staying in the accord.

Secretary of State Rex W. Tillerson, the former chief executive of Exxon Mobil, has also spoken in favor of "keeping a seat at the table" in the climate pact, and in recent days, major corporations have stepped forward to embrace that position.

While no decision has been made, experts tracking it say that view is gaining traction.

“We do not currently believe the Trump administration plans to withdraw from either Paris agreement,” wrote Kevin Book, an analyst at ClearView Energy Partners, a Washington firm, in a memo to clients on Monday.

While Mr. Trump does not have the power to undo a multilateral United Nations accord, he could withdraw the world’s largest economy from the pact, weakening it substantially. Such a move would win cheers from the nation’s most powerful conservative political advocates, and give Mr. Trump bragging rights in coal country.

But withdrawing from the landmark accord that committed nearly every nation to take action against planet-warming emissions could create diplomatic blowback, while weakening American leadership in arenas far afield from energy and the environment.

Besides, keeping the United States’ name on the accord does not obligate the Trump administration to abide by the ambitious emissions-control pledges of Mr. Trump’s predecessor, Barack Obama. At least one senior White House climate policy adviser, George David Banks, has advocated staying in the agreement while replacing the Obama plan with a weaker, more industry-friendly pledge.

Over recent weeks, Mr. Banks has asked top officials at several major corporations, including Exxon Mobil, who have similar views, to submit letters to the White House confirming their support for staying in the Paris deal, even if in a modified form.

In response, Peter Trelenberg, the manager of environmental policy and planning at Exxon Mobil, wrote to Mr. Banks, “Exxon Mobil supports the Paris agreement as an effective framework for addressing the risks of climate change.”

Royal Dutch Shell and BP, European companies with significant investments in the United States, have also endorsed the accord.

Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, spoke last week to coal miners in Sycamore, Pa. He has emerged as a leading voice for withdrawal from the Paris accord. Credit Justin Merriman/Getty Images

Last month, Representative Kevin Cramer, a Republican from oil-, gas- and coal-rich North Dakota, wrote, “The U.S. should present a new pledge that does no harm to our economy.” Mr. Cramer, an early supporter of Donald J. Trump, advised Mr. Trump on energy issues during his presidential campaign.

Colin Marshall, the chief executive of Cloud Peak, a major coal producer in Wyoming, the nation’s largest coal-mining state, also wrote to Mr. Trump: “By remaining in the Paris agreement, albeit with a much different pledge on emissions, you can help shape a more rational international approach to climate policy.”

Regardless of his decision, Mr. Trump has already undermined the United States’ ability to meet its Paris pledge. Mr. Obama declared that the United States would reduce its planet-warming carbon pollution about 26 percent from 2005 levels by 2025. Its primary policy for meeting that target would be the Clean Power Plan, a set of Environmental Protection Agency regulations designed to shutter hundreds of heavily polluting coal-fired power plants, the nation’s chief source of greenhouse emissions.

.Last month, Mr. Trump directed Scott Pruitt, the head of the Environmental Protection Agency, to begin the legal process of dismantling the Clean Power Plan. Whether or not the United States remains in the Paris pact, it almost certainly will not be able to meet its pledged pollution-reduction targets.

Mr. Pruitt has emerged as a leading voice for withdrawal from the Paris deal. Last week, he told Fox News, “It’s something we need to exit.”

That reflects the views of powerful conservative political advocacy groups such as Americans for Prosperity, which is funded by the influential libertarian brothers Charles G. and David H. Koch.

“What we say to the White House is that it’s clearly a terrible agreement for the American people,” said Tim Phillips, the president of Americans for Prosperity.

That view is also backed by economists at the Heritage Foundation, the conservative think tank that has supplied the Trump administration with many of its policy proposals.

Harold G. Hamm, the chief executive of Continental Resources and a Trump campaign adviser, has also condemned the pact. “Cancel the Paris climate treaty and any other agreements entered into unilaterally and without the consent of Congress,” Mr. Hamm wrote in a letter to Mr. Trump before his inauguration.

Bob Murray, the chief executive of the coal company Murray Energy, who is personally close with the president, has also strongly criticized the deal.

Mr. Book, the analyst, noted that the risks of withdrawing from the Paris deal include not only diplomatic ill will, but also the possibility of trade reprisals. Countries that tax emissions of carbon dioxide pollution could place a carbon tariff on imports of American-made goods. The European Union currently charges polluters fees for carbon emissions, while China, Mexico and Canada are in the process of carrying out such programs.

“If the U.S. were to pull out, it would do so in the context that would invite trade reprisals,” Mr. Book said. “It could lead to a carbon tariff trade war.”

Daniel M. Bodansky, an expert in international environmental agreements at Arizona State University, said that remaining in the Paris deal but weakening the United States’ commitment could still have the effect of generating some ill will — but without the repercussions of trade sanctions.

“They could just submit a new plan,” he said. “People internationally would not be happy, but they’d be a lot less unhappy than if the U.S. actually pulled out.”(Dev 18-07-2017)

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN: ACTIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY

Today the European Commission launches a new initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the Western Mediterranean region.

The region covers economic hubs like Barcelona, Marseille, Naples and Tunis. It also includes tourist destinations like the Balearic Islands, Sicily and Corsica.

The sea's biodiversity is under severe pressure with a recent report by scientists from the Joint Research Centre indicating that 50% has been lost in the last 50 years. In addition to this are recent security and safety concerns from the increase in migration from the South to the North.

This initiative will allow EU and neighbouring countries to work together to increase maritime safety and security, promote sustainable blue growth and jobs, and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity.

Karmenu **Vella,** Commissioner for Environment, Maritime Affairs and Fisheries said: "*Millions of holiday makers have a happy association with the Western Mediterranean. Like the millions more who live across the region, they understand the fragile link between conserving national habitats and traditions and ensuring economic viability. Blue economy is important for each of the countries involved and they have recognised the strength of working together.*"

Johannes **Hahn**, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations, said: *"This new regional initiative recognises and taps into the economic potential of the Mediterranean Sea and its coast lines to further enhance economic growth, contribute to job creation and eventually the stabilisation of the region. It is an important step towards closer coordination and cooperation among participating countries."*

The initiative is the fruit of years' of dialogue between ten countries of the Western Mediterranean region who are ready and willing to work together on these shared interests for the region: five EU Member States (France, Italy, Portugal, Spain and Malta), and five Southern partner countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). It follows up on the Ministerial Declaration on Blue Economy endorsed by the Union for Mediterranean (UfM) on 17 November 2015.

The goals of the initiative

By fostering cooperation between the ten countries concerned, this initiative has three main goals:

1. A safer and more secure maritime space
2. A smart and resilient blue economy
3. Better governance of the sea.

Gaps and challenges have been identified and a number of priorities and targeted actions have been set for each goal.

For **Goal 1** priorities include cooperation between national coast guards and the response to accidents and oil spills. Specific actions will focus on the upgrade of traffic monitoring infrastructure, data sharing and capacity building. For **Goal 2** priorities include new data sourcing, biotechnology and coastal tourism. For **Goal 3**, priority is given to spatial planning, marine knowledge, habitat conservation and sustainable fisheries.

The initiative will be funded by existing international, EU, national and regional funds and financial instruments, which will be coordinated and complementary. This should create leverage and attract funding from other public and private investors

This "Initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy of the Western Mediterranean" is another example of the EU's successful neighbourhood policy. Barely three weeks ago, the EU secured a 10-year pledge to save Mediterranean fish stocks. The MedFish4Ever Declaration, signed by Mediterranean ministerial representatives from both Northern and Southern coastlines on 30 March, involves 8 Member States (Spain, France, Italy, Malta, Slovenia, Croatia, Greece, and Cyprus) and 7 third countries (Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Turkey, Albania, Montenegro). The two projects will enhance each other in protecting the region's ecological and economic wealth.

Background

The initiative is based on the Commission's long-standing experience with sea basin and macro-regional strategies (such as the Atlantic Strategy, the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region). It is also based on over two decades of work within the 5+5 Dialogue, which has created strong ties between the participating countries. Furthermore, the initiative builds on other EU policies linked to the region, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy Review priorities and the recent Communication on International Ocean Governance.

The initiative is presented in two documents. A Communication outlines the main challenges, shortcomings and the possible solutions. A Framework for Action presents the identified priorities, actions and projects in detail, with quantitative targets and deadlines to monitor progress over time. Some of the actions could extend well beyond the countries in question and even beyond the sub-basin. (EC 19-04-2017)

Framework for Action

Ocean governance

Blue Growth

GOVERNMENT OF MOZAMBIQUE APPROVES NEW MINIMUM WAGES

The new minimum wage in force in Mozambique now varies between 3,642 meticais (US$51) for the agriculture sector, hunting, forests and forestry and 10,400 meticais (US$145.5) for banking, financial and insurance activities, according to a government decision.

The new table, which includes the new minimum wages for the Civil Service and for eight other sectors, was approved during a cabinet meeting on Tuesday in Maputo.

The government spokesman, Mouzinho Saide, said the minimum wage for civil servants increased by 21% to 3,996 meticais and the percentage changes recorded in other sectors ranged from 9.4% for non-financial activities (5,525 meticais) and 20.97% for industrial and semi-industrial fishing (4,615 meticais).

The Minister of Labour, Employment and Social Security, Vitória Diogo also noted that the salaries are for reference only, and most of the existing companies in the country already pay more than this. (19-04-2017)

WESTERN MEDITERRANEAN: ACTIONS FOR THE SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BLUE ECONOMY

Q&A on the EU initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean

Why do we need an initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy in the western Mediterranean?

The western Mediterranean Sea has enormous wealth in terms of natural resources, cultural assets and diversity of people and places. The various sectors of the maritime economy have vast potential for development. But despite the major assets, the region faces a number of challenges which give rise to geopolitical instability: a prolonged economic and financial crisis with high youth unemployment in several countries, growing coastal urbanisation, the overexploitation of fish stocks, marine pollution and last but not least the refugee crisis. In addition climate change greatly affects the region and the rise in sea level is a major threat to coastal ecosystems and economies. Other factors such as population growth and ageing, migration and deepening globalisation are bound to magnify these pressures.

How has the initiative for western Mediterranean come about?

This Initiative for the Western Mediterranean follows up on Ministerial Declaration on the Blue Economy endorsed by the Union for Mediterranean on 17 November 2015, which invited the participating countries to explore the added value and the feasibility of appropriate maritime strategies at sub-regional level, and build on the experience of the 5+5 Dialogue. In October 2016, the Foreign Affairs Ministers of Algeria, France, Italy, Libya, Malta, Mauritania, Morocco, Portugal, Spain and Tunisia encouraged further work on an initiative for the sustainable development of the blue economy, together with the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) Secretariat.

The Initiative results from close cooperation between the European Commission and the national governments, the UfM Secretariat, the region's stakeholders and regional organisations such as General Fisheries Commission for the Mediterranean, the UN Environmental Programme, the Mediterranean Action Plan and the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions. The process started in February 2016 and culminated a year later with a Stakeholder Conference in Barcelona.

Which countries are involved?

The geographical scope of this strategy is based on the western Mediterranean sub-basin and concerns ten countries: five EU Member States (France, Italy Portugal, Spain and Malta) and five non-EU countries (Algeria, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco and Tunisia). As it concerns both EU and partner countries, it will have to be politically endorsed both in the EU and in the Union for the Mediterranean.

Will it be open to other countries?

The scope of action and the potential benefits of this initiative could easily extend beyond the western Mediterranean sub-basin. Marine and coastal areas are interconnected systems, so depending on the needs to be addressed, actions may involve partners in the central Mediterranean and north-east Atlantic and will remain open to other partners.

What are the main objectives and goals of the Initiative?

By fostering coordination and cooperation among the ten countries, the Initiative aims to increase safety and security; promote sustainable blue growth and jobs; and preserve ecosystems and biodiversity in the western Mediterranean region. It therefore focusses on three main goals (a safer and more secure maritime space, a smart and resilient blue economy and a better governance of the sea) and proposes a number of priority actions to reach those goals. A Framework for Actionidentifies the gaps that need to be filled and the potential added value of the actions proposed.

How is this initiative linked to EU policies? What areas will it cover?

Rather than creating new legislation, this Initiative aims to achieve the Commission's priorities ('A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment', 'A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy', 'Towards a New Policy on Migration' and 'A stronger global actor') by strengthening cross-border cooperation in the region and fostering compliance with EU law. Special emphasis is laid on better synergy between existing funds and on an integrated approach that ties together different policy strands and strongly interconnects EU policies and initiatives.

The Initiative complements the MedFish4Ever Declaration (Malta, 30 March 2017), which sets out a detailed work programme for the next 10 year to save the Mediterranean fish stocks and protect the region's ecological and economic wealth.

Who will benefit from the Initiative?

All stakeholders in the region will benefit from the Initiative, including local, regional and national administrations, universities, maritime clusters, training institutions, businesses, SMEs, fishermen, civil society organisations and investors. And last but not least the people living in the region.

How will the Initiative be funded?

The Initiative will be funded through the existing international, EU, national and regional funds and financial instruments. As per a conservative estimate, the funds available for implementing this Initiative amount to at least € 4 billion. In addition the EU is envisaging creating a dedicated assistance mechanism for the western Mediterranean and launching focused calls to promote maritime clusters, Maritime Spatial Planning and cooperation between maritime training institutes and between coastal communities on small scale fisheries in the region amounting to about €10 million.

What are the next steps?

The Commission invites the European Parliament and the Council to endorse this Communication. The Commission also invites the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee to provide opinions on this Initiative.

The participating countries will also need to take ownership and define a governance structure to lead and implement this Initiative. Based on their reports, the Commission will in turn report on the implementation to the Council and the European Parliament by 2022. (EC 19-07-2017)

CHINA WILL SUPPORT SAO TOME AND PRINCIPE WITH "LARGE SUMS"

The People's Republic of China will provide Sao Tome and Principe with "significant funds" over the next five years, said the prime minister of Sao Tome, Patrice Trovoada, in an interview with the national television station, TVS.

Trovoada stressed it was "a very important amount that demonstrates China's willingness to cooperate" in the archipelago development process and added that the aid can be broken down into donations, support for the State Budget and pardons for "old debts that we had with China."

The prime minister, quoted by news agency STP-Press, said that in addition to infrastructure, such as the deep water port, airport, roads, administrative city and tourism, cooperation with China will also cover the areas of agriculture, fisheries, environmental issues, maritime security and staff training.

In addition to the General Cooperation Agreement signed last Wednesday in Beijing, Trovoada also referred to the Chinese government's pledges of support to Sao Tome and Principe's government and private enterprises for securing loans from Chinese financial institutions.

"This new era of cooperation with China aims to transform Sao Tome and Principe and the commitment between the parties is that at least one major project can begin later this year," he concluded.

Sao Tome and Principe and the Republic of China re-established diplomatic relations in December 2016 after the archipelago cut its diplomatic ties to Taiwan. (19-04-2017)

IN UNCERTAIN TIMES, A CLEARER WORLD BANK STRATEGY EMERGES

The 2017 World Bank Spring Meetings — which begin today and continue through the weekend — will be subject to the same whispered undercurrents we've heard at other global gatherings these past few months: Trump, Brexit, populism, protectionism, and nationalism. And there's no doubt that these political trends are gale-force headwinds for organizations, such as the World Bank, seeking a more prosperous, globalized, connected world — but requiring taxpayer funds from the likes of the United States and United Kingdom to operate.

These challenging times may crystalize a new era for the World Bank, an organization many in the global development community worry is losing purpose as ballooning private capital flows and rising powers such as China, India and Brazil have challenged its existence over the past two decades. These existential questions pre-date President Jim Kim, and he used his first term to try to refashion the world's largest multilateral development bank into something more attuned to global challenges such as pandemics, refugees and climate change.

Internally at the World Bank, important initiatives in those areas were overshadowed by organizational reforms that sparked a prolonged and vocal backlash. Recent staff surveys suggest that there remains as recently as last summer confusion over the strategic direction of the massive institution, which boasts more than 15,000 employees. And World Bank veterans with whom I've spoken worry that Kim's interest in global public goods is neglecting the core focus of the bank's work in developing projects and making loans.

Now, facing the external challenge of rising skepticism about global development institutions like the World Bank and headed into his second term, President Kim is using these meetings in Washington, D.C., to communicate a clearer, more comprehensive strategy for the institution — one that leverages all the core assets of the World Bank Group and could set it up for a new era of relevance even amid political turmoil in donor nations.

The strategy, simply put, calls for the World Bank to become the key leverage point that moves trillions of dollars in private capital into fragile and emerging economies to create jobs and stability and stem migration, climate change, and terrorism. If it sounds tailor-made to appeal to the occupants of 10 Downing Street and the White House, that's a feature, not a bug. But more than any fleeting political message, this is a strategy that recognizes the World Bank's project-based approach of old is no longer as relevant when what's required is trillions, not billions, of dollars of investment in global development. It's a radical notion that positions the bank more as a modern financial engineer than a lender of old. But it has the benefit of addressing reality: Needs for investment, especially in areas such as infrastructure, far exceed the amounts of concessional finance available. Private capital is the essential ingredient, and if the World Bank can mobilize it and ensure projects safeguard people and the environment, it stands to gain new stature as a critical global player.

An important piece of this strategic puzzle is Kim's creation of a new CEO role for the two major lending institutions in the World Bank Group — the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development, and the International Development Association — and the appointment of the widely respected Kristalina Georgieva to the role. With contentious internal reforms behind him and a new CEO working to make the core World Bank institutions more nimble and modern, this could be not just the start of a new term, but a new beginning for the World Bank.

Many key questions remain to be answered, of course. In particular, how a transformation this dramatic can be executed in an institution that’s been doing business the same way for decades and how that impact will be measured. Will safeguards be diminished to entice private capital? Will new types of staff and consultants be required? Will old business opportunities for implementers be lost and new ones created? How much private capital does the World Bank Group mobilize today and how much could that increase given the urgency of the issues it needs to tackle? Kim has made clear this is not about “returning to the bad old days of privatization,” anticipating skepticism from civil society groups. But for a global development community eager to see its largest institution succeed, this is a vital moment.
As we kick-off our in-depth coverage of the World Bank Spring Meetings, Devex will be asking these and other questions of the many stakeholders in attendance. You can follow our reporting and a round-up of all World Bank media coverage and tune in for a series of Facebook live interviews Devex and the World Bank will be conducting over the course of the week. What do you think of this new strategy and what questions do you think Devex reporters should be asking? Follow our reporting team on Twitter and share your insights and ideas to help inform our coverage for this week’s meetings, a critical moment for the World Bank and for global development. (Dev 18-04-2017)

REFORESTATION OF TWO PROVINCES OF MOZAMBIQUE COSTS US$47 MILLION

The reforestation programme in the provinces of Zambezia and Cabo Delgado, located in the central and northern regions of Mozambique, respectively, will cost US$47 million, the Mozambican government spokesman said on Tuesday.

Mouzinho Saide said after a cabinet meeting that the reforestation programme of those two provinces is part of the National Sustainable Development Programme and the “Floresta em Paz” (Standing Forest), the largest forestry project in Mozambique.

The Floresta em PÃ© project is the main programme of the National Forestry Directorate, an organization under the Ministry of Land, Environment and Rural Development, and is based on five key ideas: conservation and enhancement of forests, financial sustainability of forestry activities, training, transparency and access to information and mitigation of climate change.

Forest covers about 70% of the total area of â€‹â€‹Mozambique, about 40.1 million hectares, with 26.9 million hectares of timber-producing forests and 13.2 million hectares of conservation areas. (19-07-2017)

MOST MAJOR WESTERN LEADERS SKIPPING CHINA'S NEW SILK ROAD SUMMIT IN MAY

Only one leader of a big Western country is attending China's most important diplomatic event of the year, a summit next month on President Xi Jinping's New Silk Road strategy, as China's foreign minister denied it had been snubbed.
Xi has championed what China formally calls the "One Belt, One Road" or OBOR initiative to build a new Silk Road linking Asia, Africa and Europe, a landmark programme to invest billions of dollars in infrastructure projects including railways, ports and power grids.
China has dedicated US$40 billion (S$56 billion) to a Silk Road Fund and the idea was the driving force behind the establishment of the US$50 billion China-backed Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank (AIIB).
Diplomatic sources in Beijing said China had hoped for at least some senior Western leaders to attend the summit, including British Prime Minister Theresa May, to burnish the plan's international credentials and make it less China-centric.

But a list of attendees announced by Foreign Minister Wang Yi on Tuesday (April 18) included only one leader from the Group of Seven (G-7) industrialised nations, Italian Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni, who took over in December after his predecessor quit following a crushing defeat in a reform referendum.

Wang confirmed the presence of the presidents of Russia and the Philippines as among 28 leaders coming, along with the Spanish, Greek, Hungarian, Serb and Polish prime ministers and Swiss and Czech presidents.

"This is a positive, cooperative agreement, and we don't want to politicise it," Wang told reporters when asked if China was upset at the absence of most major Western leaders.

"This is an economic cooperation forum, an international cooperation platform that everyone is paying attention to, supports and hopes to participate in," he said, adding representatives of 110 countries would come.

British Finance Minister Philip Hammond will come as May's representative, while Germany and France are having elections at the time and will send high-level representatives, Wang said.

"They have explained to us many times, France has elections in May, as does Germany about then, so their leaders originally were really willing to attend. This is not a platitude, it's the real information we got."

China is sensitive to any suggestion that what it sees as its benign intentions do not have a receptive global audience, especially in Western capitals.

China was privately upset in 2015 after most Western leaders rebuffed invitations to attend a big military parade through Beijing marking 70 years since the end of World War Two. Western leaders were unhappy that the guest list that included Russian President Vladimir Putin and wary of the message China would send with the show of strength.

GLOBAL FRIEND

While China has portrayed the New Silk Road as a genuine effort to share the bounty of China's economic development and to fund infrastructure gaps, many Western countries are concerned about a lack of detail and transparency in the project and are suspicious about China's broader political intents.

Diplomatic sources said the presence of Putin and other leaders from countries with dubious human rights records, like the Philippines and Central Asian states, had contributed to a reluctance among Western leaders to attend.

"What Western leader wants to sit on the same stage as Putin?" said one senior Beijing-based Western diplomat who is familiar with the planning for the summit, speaking on condition of anonymity.

Still, at a time of uncertainty about the US place in the world following President Donald Trump's pledges to put America first, China sees an opportunity to become more of a global leader and has found a receptive audience for its New Silk Road.

Leaders from countries that would appear to have little, if any, connection to the plan are coming to the summit, including Chile and Argentina.

"Everyone wants to be China's friend now with Trump in office," said a senior Asian diplomat in Beijing.

While China says the New Silk Road is not political, it has run into opposition from India due to a section of it in Pakistan, known as the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor, where some projects run through the disputed Kashmir region.

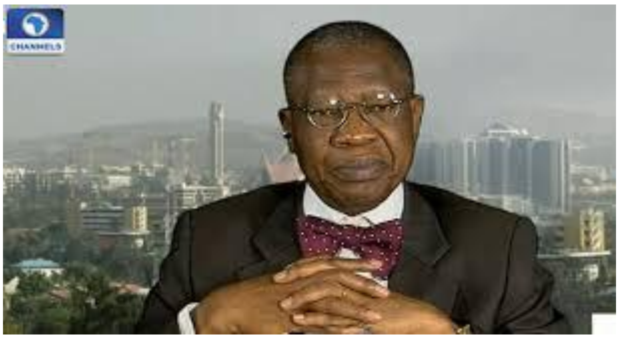
Wang dismissed those concerns, saying the Pakistan project had nothing to do with the dispute and India was welcome to participate in the New Silk Road.

A senior Indonesian government official said China was aiming for a "spectacular" summit.

"The Chinese are gunning for ... global leadership so I think this OBOR summit is going to be huge," the official said.(The Straits Times 18-04-2017)

MINISTER HAILS EARLY COMPLETION OF WORK AT ABUJA AIRPORT RUNWAY

Nigeria's Minister of Information and Culture Lai Mohammed has said that the timely completion of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport, Abuja, runway that paved the way for the re-opening of the airport, after a six-week closure, has shown the ability of the government to rise up to any occasion, irrespective of how daunting the challenge may be.



In a statement issued on Wednesday, the minister described as a remarkable achievement the ability of the government to complete the total reconstruction of the runway within the stipulated time, despite doomsday predictions.

He noted that the clock-work precision with which everything concerning the closure of the Nnamdi Azikiwe International Airport and the temporary relocation to the Kaduna Airport was handled by the relevant ministries and the security agencies is the clearest indication yet that Nigeria can tackle any challenge.

According to him, the rehabilitation of the Abuja-Kaduna road by the Ministry of Power, Works and Housing, the provision of non-invasive but effective security along the highway by the security agencies and the perfect handling, by the Ministry of Transportation, of the massive logistics involved in ensuring that the Kaduna Airport was able to handle such a large number of flights, all showed that Nigerians have what it takes to make the country a proud member of the comity of nations.

He added that there was no known security scare while accidents on the road were kept at the barest minimum, despite the increased vehicular traffic.

Mohammed thanked Nigerians for enduring the inconveniences that came with the relocation of Abuja flights to Kaduna, the Ethiopian Airline that operated its scheduled Abuja flights to Kaduna when other international carriers turned their back, and the Julius Berger construction company that worked day and night to deliver the project before schedule.

The success recorded in the timely reconstruction of the Abuja airport runway can only rank next to the determined effort with which the Federal Government contained the Boko Haram insurgency. (APA 19-04-2017)

RAND WEAKENS AS LOCAL CURRENCY SEEKS DIRECTION FROM COMMODITIES

But the rand has benefited from generally positive emerging-market sentiment over the past week, analysts say

The rand was weaker against the dollar at midday on Tuesday, as the market mulled weaker commodity prices and the dollar stabilised at about $1.065 to the euro.

The rand traded flat at its previous closing level of R13.3171 for most of the morning before weakening, despite commodity prices ticking up.

Platinum rose 0.35% to $982.86 an ounce and gold added 0.18% to $1,286 an ounce. Iron prices remained at five-month lows.

The rand is generally regarded as a commodity currency that benefits from higher commodity prices.

Analysts said the rand had benefited from generally positive emerging-market sentiment over the past week.

"Emerging markets across the board have gained ground as the geopolitics in the US, along with the comments by President Donald Trump that he is looking for a weaker dollar, had led to a risk-on perspective in the markets," TreasuryOne currency dealer Andre Botha said.

At 11.43am, the rand was at R13.4031 to the dollar from R13.3171.

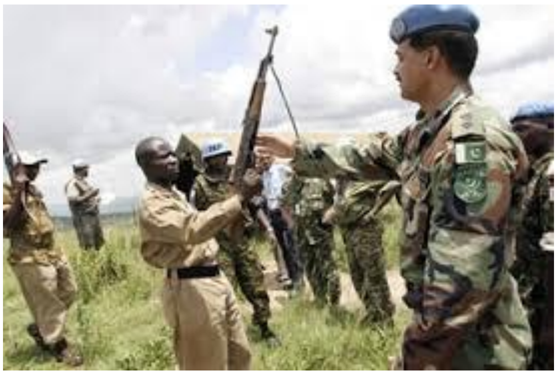
The rand was at R14.2848 against the euro from R14.1717 and at R16.802 against the pound from R16.7268.

The euro was at $1.0657 from $1.0641.

The rand was expected to remain range bound for most of the day as there was little scheduled news to move the local currency.

Analysts at Nedbank's corporate and investment banking division earlier said in a note that despite the uncertainty, the rand had prospered. After slumping to R13.9575 it had steadily firmed, and had made an attempt on the technically significant level of R13.30. (BD 19-04-2017)

W/B DONATES CAR $30M FOR INTEGRATION OF EX-FIGHTERS



The World Bank has donated 30 million U.S. dollars to the Central African Republic to enable the government carry through the social integration of ex-fighters, APA learned Wednesday in Bangui.

A representative of the World Bank in CAR, Jean Christophe Carre, said the monies will be used for expediting development projects in the areas receiving the ex-fighters, and in the process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration (DDR).

All armed groups have accepted to integrate under the DDR process launched by the Central African government, which has been lagging due to lack of funding.

This donation from the World Bank is a breath of fresh air for the process.

The advisory and monitoring committee of the national DDR programme, formed by representatives of the various armed groups, the authorities, international community and civil society, is to meet under the supervision of the head of state, Faustin Touadera, on Thursday in Bangui. (APA 19-04-2017)

ZIMBABWE'S MUGABE IMPATIENT OVER PACE OF MINING REFORM

Zimbabwe's mining industry needs to be "reorganised" so that it contributes more towards the country's economy, President Robert Mugabe said on Tuesday. Although Mugabe did not give details on what form the transformation would take, his government has, in recent years, pressured mining firms to transfer majority stakes to black ownership under a 2008 law, and to cede some claims.

"There is a lot of work going on in that sector, not least the reorganisation whose completion we impatiently await," Mugabe, Zimbabwe's sole ruler since independence in 1980, told thousands at a rally to mark the country's 37th independence anniversary in a Harare stadium.

Zimbabwe, where mining generates more than 50% of export earnings, holds significant mineral deposits and the world's top two platinum producers, Impala Platinum and Anglo American Platinum, have operations there. Mining has also overtaken agriculture as the leading provider of employment, after the Mugabe government started seizing white-owned farms to resettle landless blacks in 2000.

The government has leaned on producers to invest in local refinery facilities. Platinum miners currently ship their matte to SA for processing.

While Mugabe's government has signalled plans to relax the ownership rules for existing mines, it has shifted its focus to seizing land owned by foreign mines, which it claims to be idle. "Much is expected from this important sector," Mugabe said. "It must play its part towards this overall development vision we have." (Reuters 18-04-2017)

S/AFRICAN FIRM INVESTS $3M IN AGRICULTURE IN MOZAMBIQUE

South Africa agriculture firm Agroset Ltd is investing $3 million in largescale rice, banana and other cash crop production, in the Lower Limpopo Regiment (RBL) in Mozambique's southern Gaza province.

APA can report on Sunday that the chairman of RBL, Armando Ussivane, said the project integrates four components namely, the installation of irrigation infrastructure in an area of 1,000 hectares, agricultural production, transfer of technologies to local producers, as well as assistance in identifying better markets.

'In the context of technology transfer, the goal is to turn peasants into commercial producers.'

Agroset Ltd undertakes to support local producers to access credit from local banks through tripartite commitments, 'in which our partner guarantees the purchase of all production, provides basic inputs, such as improved seed and fertilizers, against the initial payment Of 50 percent,' Ussivane was quoted as saying Sunday by the state-controlled radio Mozambique.

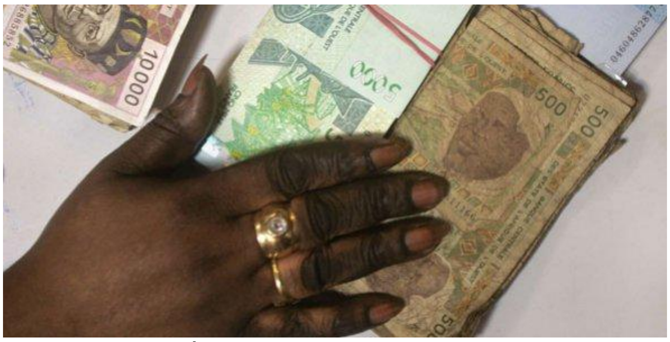
Ussivane's company has signed a memorandum of understanding with Agroset's managing director Cornelis Johannes Erasmus.

One of the commitments of his institution, under the terms of the contract, is to coordinate the selection of producers interested in the communities for technical assistance, through extension agents assigned to the project.

Mozambique produced a significant amount of food crops in 2016, despite a severe drought caused by the El' Nino-induced phenomenon.

The two companies, RBL and Agroset Ltd, should be able to produce a combined 200,000 tonnes in the next two years, according to Erasmus. (APA 16-04-2017)

DESINTOX : NON, LE FRANC CFA NE SERA PAS FABRIQUE AU CAMEROUN



Un employé de banque comptant des francs CFA

La Banque centrale des États de l'Afrique centrale tord le cou à la rumeur qui court depuis une semaine selon laquelle elle imprimerait désormais sa propre monnaie.

Les billets de francs CFA émis par la Banque des États de l’Afrique centrale (BEAC) continueront d’être imprimés à Chamalières, à côté de Clermont-Ferrand, en France, contrairement à une fausse information relayée par plusieurs sites internet africains.

« Cette fausse information resurgit une fois de plus ? », s’agace-t-on à Yaoundé, au siège de la banque commune au Cameroun, au Gabon, à la Guinée équatoriale, au Congo, au Tchad et à la Centrafrique. L’information avait surgi l’année dernière, à la suite de la publication d’un appel d’offres de la BEAC. La banque cherchait à acquérir « 600 rouleaux de feuillards synthétiques siglés « BEAC » et 54 machines à cercler les billets de banque », à la suite de quoi plusieurs médias en ligne en avaient conclu que l’institut d’émission allait désormais fabriquer lui-même sa monnaie.

Simple mesure de sécurité

« Les rouleaux de feuillards synthétiques sont utilisés par la machine à cercler pour attacher les billets, rappelle-t-on à la BEAC. L’opération de cerclage consiste simplement à attacher les billets, par lot de mille, avec un fil très résistant, pour éviter qu’un billet soit soutiré lors des manipulations. Il s’agit donc d’un dispositif de sécurité. »

Une activité à laquelle s’est toujours livré la Banque centrale. Le changement tient au fait que le nouveau code des marchés de l’institution lui impose désormais de lancer des appels d’offres pour l’acquisition de ce matériel, en faisant jouer la concurrence. Cette publicité a débuté l’année dernière.

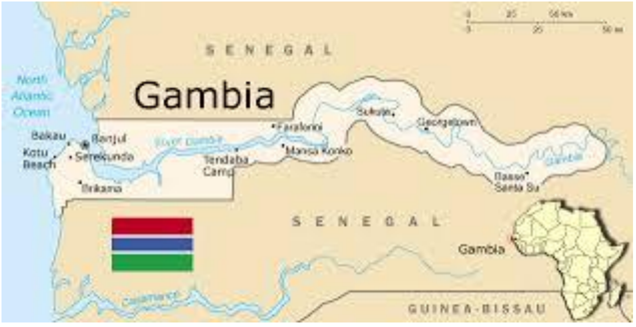
Cette année, alors que la BEAC n’a pas relancé l’appel d’offres, la même interprétation erronée resurgit. Le sujet du franc CFA est très sensible auprès des opinions africaines et il suffit d’un rien pour embraser les débats… et diffuser les fausses informations.

La BEAC fait par ailleurs observer que la fabrication de la monnaie exige une compétence pointue. Par conséquent, très peu de banques centrales impriment leurs propres billets.(JA 14-04-2017)

GAMBIAN POULTRY FARMERS LAMENT MARKETING CHALLENGES

The Gambian farmers, who are engaged in poultry production, have said the importation of chicken meat into the country is greatly

affecting the marketability of the local poultry products and that it poses serious loss to local farmers.



In an exclusive interview with APA during the first congress of The Gambia Poultry Farmers' Cooperative Society held in Genoi, Lower River Region of the country on Saturday, different poultry workers complained of marketing challenges and high cost of feeding of chickens as serious bottlenecks affecting their business.

''Poultry is a good business, but in The Gambia most of the people buy imported chicken, that is why we find it difficult to market ours,'' Sarjo Ngum, a poultry farmer said.

Isatou Badjie, another poultry farmer, said that there was no better business than poultry, she also reiterated the marketing problems of locally produced poultry product in the country, and the transportation challenges in the marketing process.

''Gambian women are engaged in the poultry business and they really work hard, but the government needs to support us,'' Mrs. Badjie added.

The President of the Poultry Farmers Association, Amadou Demba, challenged the Gambian Government to look into the poultry business and empower the sector rather than focusing only on other aspects of agriculture.

He said there was need to provide the enabling environment for marketing of local poultry product, which is dominated by the imported ones and bring about sustainability and economic growth.

Chicken has been one of the major sources of meat consumed in many Gambian households and during festivities, thus encouraging the importation of tonnes of frozen chicken into the The Gambia.

However, the Gambian farmers are calling for a reversal of this trend and promote local products. (APA 17-04-2017)

MO IBRAHIM FOUNDATION CANVASSES ECONOMIC OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOUNG AFRICANS

Creating economic opportunities for young Africans is the most urgent challenge facing the continent, threatening to undermine recent progress and create widespread instability, according to Mo Ibrahim.
Mo Ibrahim, Chairman of the Mo Ibrahim Foundation, said: "Young people in Africa are becoming disillusioned. What will happen if we do not provide jobs when the tsunami of young people currently in education starts looking for work? We will see further migration out of Africa and an increased threat of extremism. African governments and businesses must come together, as a matter of urgency, to ensure that we are equipping our young people with the skills they need take control of their futures."
Mo Ibrahim spoke at the 2017 Ibrahim Governance Weekend, a three-day series of special events hosted by the Foundation in Marrakech, Morocco. The Ibrahim Forum brought together leaders from across Africa, and around the world to discuss the Continent at a Tipping Point, new research from the Foundation revealed a "defining moment in Africa's progress".

The report, launched earlier this month, called on African nations to harness the energy, and meet the expectations, of their young people to ensure that the progress of recent years is maintained. The Ibrahim Forum explored three areas of particular concern for young people in Africa.

The first session focused on the link between governance and terrorism, highlighting how the vacuum created through weak governance can create fertile ground for violent extremism.

Stressing the need for early intervention in areas of failing governance, President and CEO of the International Crisis Group, Jean-Marie Guéhenno, said: “Over time, chaos begins to set in and then terrorism prospers on chaos. Terrorism comes after a long period of neglect, and it is that neglect that prevention must address.”

Special Representative/Head, United Nations (UN) Support Mission in Libya, Martin Kobler, said: “In mediation, we talk mostly to men above the age of 70. Youth is often totally detached from this process, but they are the majority of the population. They are not only the future of the country; they’re the present of the country.”

Founding Chair, African Youth Movement, Aya Chebbi, a Mo Ibrahim Foundation Fellow, said: “It’s not being jobless that drives youth to terrorism. It’s the perception of injustice.”

The second panel explored the risk of a democratic recession in Africa, with UN Deputy Secretary-General, Amina J Mohammed, calling on young people to become more involved in the democratic process. “We need an inter-generational transition. I don’t think people over a certain age should be at the helm of affairs looking at the future for people who are 60 years younger.”

Founder, Graça Machel Trust, Graça Machel, called for more diverse institutions: “Democracy is about the voice of the majority. But our majorities in Africa – the rural people, the women, and the youth, have very little say in what is happening. We need serious thought on how to build institutional capacity at different levels to take into account all voices.”

The third panel addressed the challenge of inclusive economic growth and employment, in which the Moroccan Minister of Industry, Trade, Investment and Digital Economy, Moulay Hafid El Alamy, said: “Africa can take control of its own destiny. We have men and women of great quality.”

The Chair, Board of the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation, Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, highlighted Africa’s vast potential: “If you look at the evidence, what we do not lack on the continent is aspiration. We are always about potential. What we need to do is make that aspiration real for our youth.”

President/Chief Executive, Dangote Group, Aliko Dangote, stressed the importance of policy stability for investment and growth, and in creating jobs for young people. “In business, unless you plan, there’s no way you’re going to execute. Nobody will go into a country where there is no stability and invest their money there.”

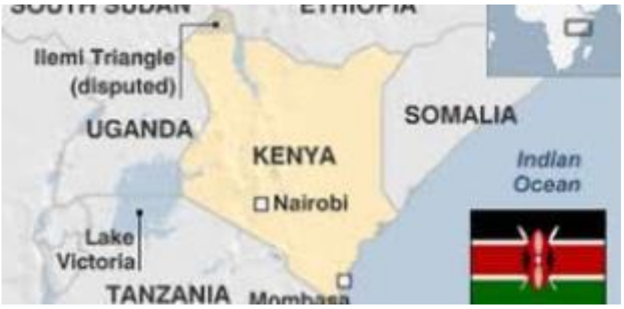
President, African Development Bank, Akinwumi Adesina, highlighted the importance of empowering women. “A bird can only fly on two wings. Africa is going nowhere if it is only flying on one wing. We have got to enable women.” Concluding the forum, Mo Ibrahim said: “We need to fight for a much better Africa. Africa is huge – to move it forward we need everyone to come together.”

Delivering a message from His Majesty King Mohammed VI of Morocco, Andre Azoulay, Advisor to the King, congratulated Mo Ibrahim on his efforts towards improved governance in Africa, and for preserving citizens’ security, fundamental rights, as well as in human and sustainable development in Africa.”

Speaking on the challenge of leadership in today’s world, former President of Germany, Horst Köhler, said: “We have become used to the cynical idea that truthfulness is detrimental to successful political leadership…The erosion of trust in institutions and public leaders is, in my view, one of the major causes for the political and economic problems in Europe, the United States, and in Africa.”(The Guardian 17-04-2017)

NAIROBI NAMED FAVORITE DESTINATION FOR CONSUMER GOODS COMPANIES

Kenya’s capital, Nairobi has been named as the leading destination for the fast moving consumer goods companies looking to service Eastern Africa region, Infomineo- a global business research company specialising in Africa and the Middle East said on Tuesday.



The capital was named as the top choice for organisations looking to service East Africa and has seen a 12 per cent increase in Fortune 500 investment since 2015.

The report further pointed out that the Middle East Africa (MEA) region has become increasingly important for the majority of global Fortune 500 companies.

“Dubai and Johannesburg are the most popular hubs overall, but both Casablanca and Nairobi are rapidly gaining traction and international awareness,” noted the report issued in Nairobi.

The Infomineo analysis pointed out that Egypt remains behind the leaders due to political instability, however, it has seen a 250 percent increase in Fortune 500 investment since 2015.

The report pointed out that Dubai and Johannesburg are the most popular hubs overall, but both Casablanca and Nairobi are rapidly gaining traction and international awareness.

“Casablanca has the highest growth rate overall, while Dubai has the highest count,” noted the report

In 2016, 196 Fortune 500 companies had established a dedicated regional headquarters in the MEA region, noted the report. (APA 18-04-2017)

The Memorandum is supported by the ACP-African, Caribbean, Pacific Secretariat, Chamber of Commerce Tenerife, AHEAD-GLOBAL, Business Council for Africa, Corporate Council on Africa, ELO - Portuguese Association for Economic Development and Cooperation, Hellenic-African Chamber of Commerce and Development, HTTC - Hungarian Trade & Cultural Centre, NABA - Norwegian-African Business Association, NABC- Netherlands Africa Business Council, SwissCham-Africa and other organisations.

The Memorandum is also made available by AHEAD-GLOBAL, BCA, Chamber of Tenerife (by posting it at the Africa Info Market), CCA - Canadian Council on Africa, CCA - Corporate Council on Africa (USA), ELO,HTTC ,NABA,NABC (by posting selected news) and SwissCham-Africa to their Members.

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