MEMORANDUM

N° 76/2017 | 25/04/2017

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SUMMARY

MULTILATERAL BANKS TO DEEPEN COLLABORATION WITH PRIVATE SECTOR TO BOOST INCLUSIVE, SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE

Leaders of the top multilateral development banks (MDBs) have agreed to deepen their collaboration to encourage private sector investment in vital infrastructure needed to support sustainable and inclusive economic growth throughout the world.

Under the theme of "Delivering Inclusive, Sustainable Infrastructure," the Global Infrastructure Forum 2017 provided a venue to discuss how MDBs can best work with countries and the private sector to create markets for infrastructure projects. The forum brought together potential investors, representatives of the United Nations and the G20 with the heads of the African Development Bank, Asian Development Bank, Asian Infrastructure Investment Bank, European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, European Investment Bank, Inter-American Development Bank, Inter-American Investment Corporation, International Finance Corporation, Islamic Development Bank, New Development Bank and the World Bank.

Basic infrastructure services – like roads, water and sewage lines, and electrical power – are scarce in many developing countries. Over one billion people live without electricity, more than 660 million people don't have access to clean drinking water, and one in three people lack access to flushing toilets and sewerage infrastructure. In addition, countries face the urgent need to invest in climate-resilient infrastructure and renewable, efficient energy sources.

With trillions of dollars in capital sitting on the sidelines earning low or even negative returns, deeper engagement with the private sector can create win-win scenarios where investors earn better returns on long-term investments and developing countries get much needed investment and expertise.

In order to fulfill commitments that countries throughout the world made to meet the ambitious Sustainable Development Goals, the MDBs pledged not only to leverage their resources by joining forces to co-finance projects, but also to help generate interest among private sector investors in Public-Private Partnerships and the development of infrastructure as an asset class for institutional investors.

These pledges are included in the MDBs' Outcome Statement, issued today at the Forum, which will be accessible at https://pppknowledgelab.org/2017giforum.

Among the speakers at the day-long event were Amina Mohammed, Deputy Secretary General of the United Nations, and Wolfgang Schäuble, Finance Minister of Germany, which currently chairs the G20.

Eight parallel sessions explored a variety of subjects:

- How to ensure that infrastructure meets environmental and climate change standards;
- How to help cities meet their infrastructure needs and climate objectives;
- The role of national development banks in implementing renewable energy and energy efficiency programs;
- Mobilization of private and concessional resources;
- Special challenges faced by least developed countries, small island developing states and landlocked developing countries;
- Risk mitigation for emerging market infrastructure;
- Infrastructure as an asset class for institutional investors;
- How to prepare projects with an eye on costs and quality control; and constraints and opportunities for energy and economic development in Africa.

The full agenda of the Global Infrastructure Forum 2017 is available on the Forum's website, along with a reference guide on Public-Private Partnerships (PPPs), country data, information on specific infrastructure sectors, key databases and other tools.(EIB 22-04-2017)

ANGOLA HAS ANOTHER COMMERCIAL BANK, NATRABANK

The headquarters of Natrabank, considered to be Africa's first natural resources bank, was inaugurated on Friday in Luanda, in a ceremony attended by the Minister of Geology and Mines, Francisco Queiroz.

The institution, which is the latest bank authorised to operate in Angola, has as it chair, Celeste de Brito and will act in the areas of infrastructure, energy and water, as well as agriculture, according to Angolan state news agency Angop.

The Bank’s website said that the creation of this project for Africa is a road map to the continent’s self-sufficiency, by applying global strategic management to its natural resources.

“We will demonstrate how gold and other natural resources can be used as collateral to generate lines of credit and sovereign funds to create programmes for financing infrastructure projects without increasing public debt,” the website says noting that, “Africa has long been neglected by mining companies and their investors.”

Minister Francisco Queiroz said on the occasion that investments in natural resources would boost and guarantee the financing of mining activity in Angola, for the creation of wealth through tax and exchange revenues and stressed that the country was in need of a financial instrument to support the national private sector to invest in mining.

A list dated 16 September 2016 issued by the National Bank of Angola showed there were 30 authorised commercial banks in the country, two of which – Banco Postal and Banco da China – Sucursal em Luanda – were still awaiting registration and start-up. (24-04-2017)

CREDIT RATING DOWNGRADE IS ‘BAD NEWS’ FOR SOUTH AFRICA, EBRAHIM PATEL SAYS

The economic development minister says domestic savings will have to increase so SA can finance more of its growth efforts from its internal resources

Economic Development Minister Ebrahim Patel has distanced himself from his Cabinet colleagues who pooh-poohed the credit ratings downgrade of SA to junk status, saying on Monday that it was "bad news".

Water and Sanitation Minister Nomvula Mokonyane was among Cabinet ministers who joked about the ratings downgrade, saying it provided the ANC and the government with the opportunity to do things their own way.

But in a written reply to a parliamentary question by DA spokesperson on economic development Michael Cardo, Patel said the "ratings downgrade was bad news for our efforts to grow the economy at a faster and more inclusive level". He added: "Thus we need to take steps to ensure that we regain investment-grade status from lenders and pursue a credible, bold inclusive growth strategy in the interest our people."

Cardo also asked Patel to elaborate on his understanding of the term radical economic transformation.

The minister said the ratings downgrade meant that in the medium-to-long term, the levels of domestic savings would have to be increased so that SA could finance more of its growth efforts from its internal resources.

"Foreign investment will remain an important source of innovation, new technology and market access and must be encouraged, particularly in sectors where domestic capabilities are limited," he added.

Patel emphasised that radical economic transformation should not be "used as a smokescreen to pursue narrow agendas including the empowerment of a favourite few. If we want to ensure real transformation, then the resources of the state and commitments by private capital must be applied with integrity and be free of corruption".

Corruption, maladministration by public institutions and "state capture by narrow vested interests" would undermine economic transformation "profoundly".

To be radical, economic transformation had to be "bold, extensive and implemented expeditiously", he said. This would require a new, bolder approach by the business community, working in partnership with the state and labour. (BD 24-04-2017)

AFDB REVEALS $12 BILLION POWER PROGRAMME FOR AFRICA

The African Development Bank (AfDB) has revealed its new power programme for Africa, under which it will invest $12bn in the next five years.
These finances will support its New Deal on Energy for Africa, which plans to achieve global access to electricity in Africa by 2025. The idea was born out of the Energy Week conference held in Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire at the end of March, which brought shareholders together to talk about methods of improving energy access.
Until quite recently, the AfDB and other organizations considered off-grid power provision as a temporary solution measure, intended to provide electricity to people until their homes were linked to the grid. However, the universal boom in renewable energy technologies and the mounting appeal of energy self sufficiency in the West has altered the way the concept is seen. The process is prone to pick up the pace when battery storage becomes cheaper and more competent.
AfDB president Akinwumi Adesina said: "Africa's energy potential is as huge as its electricity shortage. We must move rapidly to release this energy potential. We must be smart, efficient, sustainable and quick in our actions…even though we can use a mix of approaches, off-grid solutions must be at the center of our approach to attain the motivated electricity access goals that we have put."
The AfDB is eager to see decentralized solar PV take off in the rest of the continent, beyond East Africa, and is eager to utilize its fiscal muscle to support lasting integrated planning and hedging tools to alleviate foreign exchange risks. It can also play a role in motivating skills development and in the longer period perhaps also component manufacturing within Africa.
The huge question is whether this process will be centered on national grids or far more localized mini-grids, possibly covering just only villages. This matter was discussed in meetings on the sidelines of Energy Week but will certainly become a more fundamental concern in the future.
The latter seems more probable in the short term, but in the long term the former may become more significant, turning power utilities into infrastructure operators and power trading platforms more than generators in their own right.(CRO 18-04-2017)

GOVERNMENT OF ANGOLA WAIVES FUNDING FROM THE INTERNATIONAL MONETARY FUND

Taking on financing from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) "is outside the government's plans," Angolan Finance Minister Archer Mangueira said on Sunday in Washington.

The minister, who is in the United States capital to attend the Spring meetings of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank and for meetings with several international investors, also told Portuguese news agency Lusa, "the Angolan state's debt plan was approved and disclosed, and that is publicly known."

Mangueira said the plan, which foresees gross financing needs of 4.667 trillion kwanzas (US$28 billion), "is going very well," allowing funding to be made available to finance the public investment programme for 2017.

The minister added that he had already reached an agreement with the two institutions to extend the technical assistance programme to Angola, "in a number of areas where we recognise that we need to strengthen our technical and policy-making capacities, "such as in the National Statistics Institute.

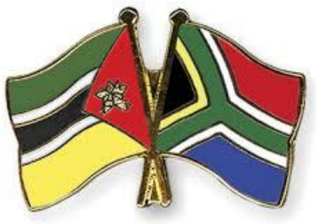
The Finance Minister added that Angola's economy registered growth of between 0.1% and 0.6% in 2016, the final value of which should be known soon, with the budget deficit ranging from 3.6% to 4%.

Mangueira attributed weak growth to the absence of public investment due to the fall in oil prices and consequent reduction of tax revenue.

The Angolan government expects a sharp increase in economic growth this year, with Mangueira noting that in the last quarter of 2016 a number of public works were already underway and will continue to be implemented during 2017.

“These are very significant investments, in nominal and real terms, that will boost development,” the minister said. (24-04-2017)

MOZAMBIQUE, S/AFRICA EXTEND VISA ARRANGEMENT TO 90 DAYS



The Mozambican and South African governments have agreed to extend the visa validity period to 90 from 30 days previously, APA learnt here on Thursday.

Mozambique's National Migration Service (SENAMI), an institution under the Ministry of the Interior, said in a statement that the extension comes under the visa waiver agreement that has been in force since 2005 between the two countries.
"In addition to extending the stay period from 30 to 90 days, the agreement will cover the following situations: Tourism, family visits, medical consultations, business, conferences, seminars, workshops, student and sports exchanges," SENAMI said on Thursday.
According to the statement, the extension took effect on 19 April. (APA 20-04-2017)

GLOBAL WATER ACCESS ACHIEVABLE THROUGH TRIPLING INFRASTRUCTURE INVESTMENT

A new report published by World Health Organization (WHO) shows lack of timely investments on infrastructure to meet Global water access under the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by most countries.
The report stressed that countries would not meet global goals of universal access to safe drinking water and sanitation unless steps are taken to use financial resources more efficiently and increase efforts to identify new sources of funding.
According to the UN-Water Global Analysis and Assessment of Sanitation and Drinking Water (GLAAS) 2017 report, countries have increased their budgets for water, sanitation and hygiene at an annual average rate of 4.9% over the last three years. However, 80% of countries report that water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH) financing is still insufficient to meet nationally defined targets for WASH services.
The report showed that in many developing countries, current national coverage targets are based on achievement of access to basic infrastructure. Unfortunately, these same services may not always provide continuously safe and reliable services.
In order to meet the SDG global targets, the World Bank has estimated that investments in infrastructure need to triple to $114 Bn per year – a figure which excludes operating and maintenance costs.
While the infrastructure funding gap remains vast, 147 countries have already showed their ability to mobilize the resources required to meet the Millennium Development Goal target of halving the proportion of people without an improved source of water, while 95 countries met the corresponding target for sanitation.

However, the WHO said that much more ambitious SDG targets will require collective, coordinated and innovative efforts to mobilize even higher levels of funding from all sources. These include taxes, tariffs (payments and labor from households), and transfers from donors.

Guy Ryder, UN-Water chair said that the challenge can be tackled, as increased investments in water and sanitation can yield substantial benefits for human health and development, generate employment and make sure no one is left behind.(CRO 19-04-2017)

GHANA: IMF PREDICTS POSITIVE ECONOMIC OUTLOOK FOR 2017

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has predicted a positive economic growth for Ghana this year.

A press conference in Accra published by the Ghanaian Times says the Assistant Director of the African Department of the IMF, Annalisa Fedelino, said after a fourth review of Ghana's programme under the IMF Extended Credit Facility, indication are that the country's economic growth be partly influence by the declining inflation.

"Economic prospects for 2017 are encouraging, as economic growth is expected to pick up, inflation is declining and prospects for a significant increase in international reserves, boosted by recent sizable foreign exchange inflows.

The press conference was held after a two week review of the IMF programme Ghana signed on to three years ago.

Ms. Fedelino said Ghana has a unique opportunity to turn around the economy.

She however noted that the positive economic growth could be achieved only through disciplined fiscal management in state-owned enterprises, particularly in the utility sector. (APA 20-04-2017)

REBUILDING SYRIA: 3 LESSONS FOR THE RESURRECTION OF HOMS

As the conflict in Syria enters its seventh year, the toll it has taken on my home town of Homs continues to grow.

Much of the city’s built environment has been damaged or destroyed: as of 2014, 50% of Homs’s neighbourhoods had been heavily damaged, and 22% had been partially damaged.

This has affected every aspect of daily life for the Homsians who remain.

Prior to the war, Homs had approximately 800,000 residents, the third-largest city in Syria in terms of population. The city is renowned for its rich history, multicultural communities and unique historical architectural style – namely the Ablaq architecture, which involves alternating rows of light and dark brickwork. For this reason, Homs is fondly known as the “city of black and white stones”.

Over the centuries, Homs has attracted many different civilisations including Greeks, Romans and Ottomans which have all had an impact on the city's cultural, religious, architectural and political landscapes. Each of these transformations has helped to make Homs a massive museum, full of ancient treasures. For instance, the Great Mosque of al-Nuri in the heart of Homs was originally a temple of worship for the Syro-Roman sun god El-Gabal. Later, it was converted into the Church of St John the Baptist, then transformed into a mosque.

Destruction in the Bab Dreeb area of Homs

But over the past six years the eyes of the world have been forced to witness the savage destruction of Homs. Many have fled from the fighting, lives and livelihoods have been lost and some of the city's most treasured architecture has been reduced to rubble. Observing the destruction from afar, the only way to avoid feeling powerless is to believe that Homs can be resurrected.

Scholars Lawrence Vale and Thomas Campanella have written about how traumatised and wounded cities can recover after disasters. They point out that for as long as cities have existed they have been destroyed – and in almost every case they have risen again like the mythical phoenix. "Cities such as Baghdad, Moscow, Aleppo, Mexico City, and Budapest lost between 60% and 90% of their populations due to wars, yet they were rebuilt and eventually rebounded," they say.

Similarly, I believe Homs can regenerate itself. But there are some important lessons to consider when reweaving its damaged urban fabric.

Lesson 1: Engage the community

The local communities of Homs should be involved in the rebuilding process to ensure that all members of society are accounted for in the new designs. Regeneration programmes should include a deep and detailed understanding of local priorities and careful consideration for the people affected.

Destruction in the Bab Dreeb area of Homs

This can be achieved by bridging the gaps between local authorities, designers, planners, researchers and – most importantly – the local community. Local people should be consulted through workshops, conferences and research to record their thoughts and understand their needs. This way, regeneration projects will unite Homsians from all walks of life and give them a voice and a sense of belonging.

Lesson 2: Respect local traditions

In many post-war reconstructions, the urban memory of cities has been replaced with new, forgetful landscapes. After the civil war in Beirut, Lebanon (1975 to 1990), the city centre was completely reshaped and replaced with a post-modern construction. Scholars reckoned that the original fabric was completely cleared on around 80% of the area. In the end, far more buildings were demolished during the reconstruction than had been destroyed during the civil war.

Post-disaster reconstruction should not bury the scars of the war by creating a completely new face for the city. Instead, a faithful reconstruction should preserve and respect the pre-war memories, values and traditions of Homs. Developers should consider the varied architectural styles of the city, while avoiding previous planning problems such as poor public transportation systems, impractical architectural styles that do not fit the lifestyle in Homs and neglect of the old city of Homs and its legacy.

Lesson 3: Remember the war

Though it is difficult, a post-war Homs should not try to revive the pre-war era. Memories of war will no doubt be recounted by families, artists and writers. Likewise, the destruction of the city should be memorialised in its architecture, to serve as a powerful warning to future generations about the cost of conflict.

Many post-war cities have done this very effectively. In Berlin, the wall that divided the city into East and West still stands, but has been colourfully painted by artists, residents and tourists. In England, Coventry Cathedral was left without a roof after being bombed in World War II, creating a garden of remembrance. And the ruins of an exhibition hall in Hiroshima were transformed into the Genbaku Dome Peace Memorial, to remember the tens of thousands of people who were instantly killed by the first atom bomb ever used in war.

The next generations of Homsians should have sites like this, which they can explore, and hopefully avoid repeating history – and its mistakes.

Most of all, the reconstruction of Homs must not generate new divisions. Instead, more public spaces should be created to bring people together, where formerly architecture has separated them into different spaces for living, working and socialising based on social class, income and religion.

In this way, new sites can address problems such as inequality and segregation, while helping to heal the wounds of the city and create a united civic society. It will take a lot of imagination. But Homs is a resilient city, precisely because of the power, faith and patience of its resilient inhabitants.(GCR 18-04-2017)

BURKINA FASO EXPECTS 45 TONS OF GOLD PRODUCTION IN 2017

Burkina Faso has projected a total production of 45 tons of gold for the year 2017, APA learned on Thursday from the ministry of Mines.

The ministry bases its forecast on the entry into production of two new gold mines bringing to ten the number of industrial mines in service.

Zinc production is expected to remain at its historical level of 130,000 tons, the same source said, pointing out that in the year 2016, mining revenues amounted to CFA 189.9 billion francs, an increase of 12.8 percent in comparison to 2015.

Burkina Faso, through its mining reforms, plans to increase the sector's contribution to the country’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) from 7.9 percent in 2015 to 10.2 percent in 2020.

Mining activity in Burkina Faso has been booming since 2003, making gold the country’s first export product ahead of cotton (since 2009).

Burkina Faso is considered Africa’s fourth largest producer of gold behind South Africa, Ghana and Mali.

With more than CFA 916 billion francs in direct contributions to the State budget between 2008 and 2015 and close to 600 mining licenses granted at the end of 2016, the mining sector in Burkina Faso is doing well with a new mining code adopted in 2015. (APA 20-04-2017)

AFTER THREE MONTHS WITHOUT INTERNET, CAMEROON RECONNECTS ENGLISH AREAS

Cameroon President Paul Biya ordered the restoration of internet services in English-speaking regions three months after shutting them down. This followed protests and social-media campaigns against the dominance of the French language in those areas’ courts and schools.

The decision, announced on Friday on state radio, came a week after the UN special envoy to Central Africa, Francois Louceny Fall, called the internet shutdown "a deplorable situation", at a media conference in the capital, Yaounde. He urged the government to restore it and release those detained during the crisis in the Southwest and Northwest regions.

Communications minister Issa Tchiroma Bakari said the shutdown was no longer necessary. He urged Cameroonians to ignore "extremists, secessionists and enemies of the state" inciting protests on Facebook, WhatsApp and Twitter.

"The internet will be disconnected again if the extremists calling for secession use it again to call for violent demonstrations," he said in a statement on Friday.

At least six people died in the protests, according to the government. Rights group Amnesty International accused the authorities of using excessive force against demonstrators.

It was the worst unrest in Cameroon in almost a decade as Biya appears intent on trying to extend his 35-year rule, the fourth-longest on the continent, in elections in 2018.

The internet shutdown had severe effect on businesses in areas such Buea, the capital of Cameroon’s English-speaking Southwest region, where dozens of technology startups have earned the city the nickname of Silicon Valley.

It cost companies, including banks and telecommunications providers, as much as €4m, Julie Owono, a lawyer for France-based Internet Without Borders, said in an e-mail on Friday.

Wireless operators in the country include MTN, with almost 10-million subscribers, and Orange of France. (Bloomberg 21-04-2017)

SUDAN READY TO WORK WITH US OIL COMPANIES

The Sudanese Ministry of Oil and Gas confirmed on Wednesday night its readiness to cooperate with US companies working in the field in conjunction with the announcement of the arrival of a high-level delegation from the American company Leuk Oil to discuss investment opportunities in Sudan, mid-May.

Oil Minister Mohammed Awad Zayed said in a press statement released Wednesday night his country welcomed the desire of the US side to discuss opportunities for investment in the Sudanese oil sector.

The Minister stressed the importance of exchanging benefits between the two countries and benefiting from the American technology and expertise in the field of oil and gas and the potential and wealth of Sudan in the field of oil industry.

The statement confirmed that "Peter Watson, general manager of Capital Partner Treading, said a high-level US delegation from Leuk Oil will visit Sudan from May 16 to 17 to discuss investment opportunities."

Adding that "his visit to Sudan aims to discuss the investment opportunities available in the field of oil and gas industry and development at all stages."

He explained that the stages of exploration and production of oil and the introduction of modern technology, pipelines and refineries, and all related to the work of the oil industry in various aspects in the upstream and downstream.

As well as to find the information required to establish economic feasibility of projects and create partnerships within Sudan, and the company is working in the field of economic development and create investment opportunities for US companies.

Chevron was the first to start oil exploration in Sudan in 1975, and emerged from the market in 1984 because of security conditions during the outbreak of civil war in the south of the country, and emerged a number of international companies working in the field of oil from Sudan because of pressure from the US administration, Schlumberger and TeleSman of Canada.

Sudan currently produces 115,000 barrels per day after the secession of southern Sudan in 2011, the transfer of ownership of 75% of oil wells to Juba, and estimated oil reserves by about 24.5 billion barrels, according to government statistics. (APA 20-04-2017)

MUGABE’S RULING PARTY FRACTURES AS ZIMBABWEAN OPPOSITION UNITES

With livestock used as collateral for bank loans and a ‘zombie currency’, opposition forces in Zimbabwe are finally amassing to oust the 93-year-old Mugabe

As Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe’s ruling party is increasingly gripped by faction fighting, a once-splintered opposition is pledging to mount a united challenge to the 93-year-old leader in elections next year.

At the centre of the infighting in the Zanu-PF is its political commissar, Saviour Kasukuwere, a leading figure in the Generation 40 (G40) faction that backs Mugabe’s wife, Grace, as his successor. Party executive councils in seven of 10 provinces have publicly called for the ouster of 46-year-old Kasukuwere, whose aggressive approach to opponents earned him the nickname "Tyson". They accuse him of corruption and undermining Mugabe’s government.

The pressure on Kasukuwere, who is also minister of local government, and his G40 faction, is coming from party officials loyal to vice-president Emmerson Mnangagwa, a 70-year-old former spy chief, as Zanu-PF struggles to find a leader who can eventually replace Mugabe.

Street brawls between party members erupted on April 15 in the capital, Harare, with both sides attacking police officers who tried to stop the violence.

"This is clearly a co-ordinated effort designed not only to remove him, but to cause a mortal wound upon the G40 faction," said Alex Magaisa, a UK-based law lecturer and one of the authors of Zimbabwe's 2013 constitution. "The only person who can save Kasukuwere now is Mugabe himself, but with almost the whole country calling for his expulsion, it'll be hard for him."

Kasukuwere's phone was switched off and his office said he wasn't in when called to seek comment.

While the party insists that Mugabe will stand for re-election next year, extending his 37-year rule of the country, key opposition politicians have announced they will form a coalition to challenge him. They're making their unity bid at a time of deepening unrest because of widespread poverty, massive unemployment and the collapse of basic services.

Food shortages

Zimbabwe has been gripped by food shortages and a cash crunch that has delayed payment of salaries and prompted the central bank to introduce dollar-pegged bond notes that Zimbabweans have dubbed "zombie currency".

The situation is so bad that education minister Lazarus Dokora suggested that parents who can't afford school fees can pay with goats or their labour. A draft law before parliament would force commercial banks to accept cattle and other livestock as collateral for loans.

On Wednesday, Morgan Tsvangirai, a one-time union leader and head of the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC), announced plans to form an alliance with former vice-president Joice Mujuru's Zimbabwe People First party. A day later, Tsvangirai signed an accord to re-unite with an MDC faction led by Welshman Ncube.

Tsvangirai, 65, has fought successive elections against Mugabe since 2000, posing the biggest threat to the former guerrilla leader. Mujuru, who served in Mugabe's first cabinet and later became vice-president, is the 62-year-old wife of the late Solomon Mujuru, who led the main guerrilla army against the then white-minority breakaway British colony of Rhodesia. (Bloomberg 21-04-2017)

AFREXIMBANK PICKS NIGERIA TO HOST HEALTHCARE CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE

AFREXIMBANK

The African Export-Import Bank (Afreximbank) has selected Nigeria as the preferred country to host the first of its Centres of Excellence for Healthcare Services in Africa.

Following a strategic alliance they formed in 2014, Afreximbank and King's College Hospital, London (KCH), are establishing a network of centres of excellence in tertiary healthcare across Africa to deliver a range of specialist healthcare services for patients.

A statement by Afreximbank on Thursday noted that by supporting the development of first class health and medical care facilities across the value chain, they hope to promote trade in health and medical services within Africa.

It stated that Nigeria had been shortlisted, along with Ghana, Kenya and Tanzania, for consideration as potential host countries for the first Centre of Excellence.

According to the statement, a joint Afreximbank and KCH team subsequently engaged their ministries of health to confirm their willingness and readiness to host the first centre in a process that also involved consideration of macro-economic and sectoral information.

"The Centre of Excellence initiative will make a significant contribution to the continent by helping meet the growing healthcare needs of Africans," said Dr. Benedict Oramah, President of Afreximbank, who noted that it would also enhance service exports, promote employment and conserve foreign exchange.

"The initiative supports Afreximbank's mandate and the Bank's strategic plan, IMPACT 2021, which seeks to promote the diversification of Africa's exports and to support the development of world-class health facilities in Africa," Oramah added.

Dr. Anwar Alhaq, Centenary Project Director at King's College Hospital, said: "We are delighted that the location of the first Centre of Excellence has been confirmed. We look forward to sharing our healthcare knowledge to benefit the people of Nigeria and beyond."

The new Centre of Excellence is expected to reduce the outflow of patients from Nigeria and other Africa countries seeking medical treatment aboard and to ensure inflow of patients from within and outside Africa for treatment while, at the same time, conserving the foreign currency spent by Nigerians on medical tourism.

It will also reduce the exodus of doctors going abroad to seek better pay.

Afreximbank and KCH plan to engage the Nigerian Ministry of Health to formalize roles and responsibilities ahead of the implementation of the new Centre of Excellence. (APA 20-04-2017)

MALAWI CRACKS DOWN ON FOOD SMUGGLERS SEEKING MORE PROFIT

Soldiers are sealing the country's borders as much-needed maize is smuggled to neighbouring countries where it fetches far higher prices

Malawi has tightened its border controls to stop profiteers smuggling much-needed maize out of the country in search of higher prices. Months of drought have left more than a third of the population reliant on food aid, and last month the government invoked the Special Crops Act, which bans the export of some crops.

The government deployed soldiers to seal its porous borders with Tanzania and Zambia, and impounded trucks that are smuggling out the staple crop in pursuit of more profit. Malawi police have also been searching vehicles on roads that lead to the borders.

The size of the trucks stopped by the police suggests that large-scale traders may be involved. "Over a period of two days, we impounded 26 trucks loaded with white maize as they were heading to Chitipa [a district bordering Zambia and Tanzania]," said Enock Livasoni, a police spokesman in Karonga district which borders Tanzania. Police in Chitipa detained at least 17 similar trucks carrying white maize last month, he told the Thomson Reuters Foundation.

Severe floods in 2015, followed by major drought in 2016, left 6.7-million of the 17-million Malawians in need of food aid, according to UN agencies. This year's harvest recently began and has eased the situation, although the World Food Programme says updated hunger figures are not yet available. Its emergency food-aid operations ended last month, as planned.

Chasing the money

International aid agencies in Malawi say maize smuggling has increased as traders seek the higher prices paid in Kenya and the Democratic Republic of Congo. Severe drought in Kenya has left some 2.6-million people in need of food aid, and a protracted crisis in war-torn Congo means about 6.7-million rely on food aid there.

Local groups question whether corrupt police officers have been involved in the smuggling, particularly in Chitipa and Karonga districts. "The way things are happening is as though the police are complicit in this act," said Grecian Mbewe, district co-ordinator for Chitipa and Karonga at the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation, a non-governmental organisation.

Deputy spokesman for the northern region police headquarters, Maurice Chapola, denied the corruption claims. "If those making the allegations have evidence, let them come forward with names of the corrupt officers and we shall forthwith investigate and prosecute these officers," he said in a phone interview.

Dwindling supplies

Malawian farmers are required to sell their surplus to local vendors and traders. Traders resell it across the country or to the National Food Reserve Agency, which stores maize and releases it mainly in response to humanitarian crises. Traders can only export maize, the country's main staple crop, if they have special clearance from the government. Such clearance has not been granted since 2008 when Malawi started experiencing a downturn in its harvests.

Maize smuggled to Zambia and Tanzania — from where it can be sold to other countries — fetches higher prices than at home.

A 50kg bag of white maize sells on average for 11,000 Malawian kwacha ($15) in towns and cities in Malawi. Journalists in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania say the same amount fetches the equivalent of 17,000 kwacha ($23). "If such smuggling continues, local [maize] supplies will continue to dwindle," said Mbewe. "As a result, the poor will not be able to afford the price of [maize], which will rise with any increase in demand." (Reuters/Thomson Reuters Foundation 20-04-2017)

EGYPT TO ESTABLISH MILITARY BASE IN ERITREA

Officials from opposition group quoting "reliable" sources in Eritrea claimed Asmara has allowed Cairo to acquire a military base in Nora locality at dahlak Island for an indefinite period of time.

The agreement comes in the wake of last week's high-level visit of an Egyptian delegation to Eritrea.

An estimated 20,000 to 30,000nEgyptian naval forces will be deployed at the planned base, officials from the group hinted.

As it had long been anticipated and if true, Egypt will be Africa's first and third Arab country to build a military facility in the reclusive East African nation , currently under United Nations sanctions for arming and financing Al-Shabab, an Islamist group allied with al-Qaeda.

According to previous U.N reports, Eritrea has already leased its port town of ASSab to Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates (UAE) to establish military bases to ease their coalition battle against Houthi rebels in Yemen.

Redda Mulgeta, a member of Ethiopian's ruling People Republican Democratic Front (EPRDF), says Cairo's motive to have military presence in Eritrea was clear.

"Egyptian leaders' motive to have a military base in Eritrea is to sabotage construction of Ethiopia's mega dam project by supporting Eritrea sponsored anti-Ethiopian elements and al-Qaeda allied Somali militant group," Mulgeta told Sudan Tribune.

"Egypt is conspiring with Eritrea to subject Ethiopia engage in proxy war with its enemy Eritrea, local armed opposition groups and further with al-Shabab", he added.

Meanwhile, despite the various U.N reports, Eritrea has previously dismissed revelations that it has leased land to foreign countries.

Relations between Ethiopia and Eritrea has remained odd after 1998-2000 border war, which killed an estimated over 70,000 people. (APA 20-04-2017)

MAKING AFRICA GREAT AGAIN: REDUCING AID DEPENDENCY

As a region, Africa accounts for around 20 percent of U.S. aid, with Egypt, Kenya, and South Sudan being the biggest beneficiaries. Although critics argue that lowered public international spending will adversely affect development projects, this reduction should also be seen as an opportunity for the continent to rise and for the relationship between the U.S. and Africa to evolve.

Africans must identify priorities, define, and implement them—not be reactionary to the politics of the West.

Reducing foreign assistance: A blessing or a curse?

African countries have been recipients of foreign assistance since their independence. It is undeniable that some U.S. development assistance programs, especially the people- and country-centered ones such as the Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) and the Africa Development Foundation (ADF), have shown lasting results in programs that stimulate local economies and reduce aid dependency (such as sustainable agriculture, youth entrepreneurship, and improved access to power). Despite these successes, many experts argue that the provision of foreign assistance has, at times, developed a culture of dependency in Africa and fostered paternalism—as opposed to partnership—by the U.S. and elsewhere.

Thus, African governments need to take this opportunity to scale up policies that spur democracy, creating the enabling environment to build prosperity in Africa through concrete priorities such as job creation, regional integration, and economic engagement.

Priority number 1: Job creation

Africa has the youngest population in the world, with 200 million aged between 15 and 24 (doubling by 2045 according to African Development Bank). Given that the continent will have a shortfall of 74 million jobs that need to be created by 2020, governments need to create policies and implementation plans that will allow for a more competitive private sector that favors business growth, job creation, and the stimulation of African economies—such as sound fiscal and monetary policies; good governance, transparency, and strengthened judiciary systems; an improved investment climate, and reduced corruption. In particular, long-term investment in the private sector, the infrastructure and manufacturing industries, and agriculture will address food insecurity and create the necessary employment opportunities for African youth. Boosting incentives to improve the quality of education will also be key to producing a skilled workforce.

Priority number 2: Regional integration

In moving away from a reliance on Western assistance, African governments should seek to improve regional integration initiatives, which are key to sustaining development and encouraging long-term prosperity for the entire region. Increasing intra-African trade will be a key component to accelerating economic growth, as it will increase industry competition, improve productivity, and develop local infrastructure.

Africa’s Continental Free Trade Area (CFTA) will establish free trade among all 54 states on the continent by 2017 (though the region is behind its timeline) and a continental union by 2019. This will be a pivotal moment for development in Africa. The current level of trade between African states is only 12 percent compared to 60 percent for Europe, 40 percent for North America, and 30 percent for the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), according to the World Trade Organization (WTO). The CFTA, though, would establish the world’s largest single market and effectively boost trade between African states by 50 percent. When combined with good governance and political stability, intra-Africa trade and deepening market integration will significantly increase economic growth, job creation, employment, poverty reduction, inflow of foreign direct investment, industrial development, and better integration of the continent into the global economy. It will also decrease the continent's current heavy reliance on the outside world for its growth.

Priority number 3: Commercial engagement and trade

The future of the African trade regime depends more on what Africa will negotiate and not on what Africa deserves, so leaders must actively seek commercial and trade engagement. The recent Trump administration trade report to Congress clearly reflects that the U.S. will unequivocally protect America first in future trade regimes.

Africa is not a U.S trade competitor, especially when it comes to claims of unfair practices that are costing American jobs. The African Growth and Opportunity Act (AGOA) has not stolen American jobs. It has actually created around 120,000 jobs in the U.S., and 350,000 direct and 1 million indirect jobs in Africa. Now, though, some experts speculate that the Trump administration will attempt to make U.S.-Africa trade agreements more reciprocal and envision negotiating bilateral agreements that parallel the Economic Partnership Agreements between African countries and the European Union to give American exports comparative advantages. Morocco already presents an example of a successful free trade agreement with the U.S. According to the International Trade Administration (ITA), average U.S. exports to Morocco have more than tripled since the U.S.-Morocco Free Trade Agreement (FTA): U.S. exports to Morocco increased from $482 million in 2005 to $2.1 billion in 2015. Morocco export goods totaled $977 million in 2013, a 119% increase since 2005.

Consequently, Morocco's ambitious economic reforms positioned the kingdom as a gateway for U.S. companies to African and European markets, becoming the prime destination for foreign direct investment in Africa. Its successful completion the COP22 last year, its return to the African Union, and its massive investment in the continent (the second largest investor after South Africa) will bear even more dividends.

Then again, after U.S. trade negotiations with SACU and Egypt were suspended several years ago, the readiness of African countries to engage in these negotiations remains premature. Nevertheless, it is important that African nations prioritize greater dialogue between members of regional economic communities to implement necessary policies reform and with the U.S. in order to accelerate such reform and increase trade and investment between both continents.

As outgoing Assistant Secretary for Africa Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield emphasized, "The African continent has made enormous democratic and economic progress in recent years and now holds a growing place on the global stage." African policymakers must work to continue this trend, largely through the promotion of African trade.

The future of U.S.-Africa engagement: Trade, not aid?

Though aid to Africa looks like it will get cut, it doesn't mean that U.S. engagement will too. Trump must continue to engage Africa: The region is of paramount importance because of Western reliance on natural resources, trade, economic opportunities, and long-term security issues. In fact, American engagement in Africa largely serves American interests. For example, creating African jobs is not just important for economic growth; it affects national and global security. In particular, youth unemployment often serves as a powerful recruitment tool for insurgency and terrorist organizations.

Similarly, former President Obama's Power Africa initiative aiming at addressing the much-needed power poverty in Africa created more jobs in the U.S. because of the opportunities given to U.S. companies. Additionally, the program will save American taxpayers $86 million over five years. The U.S. Trade and Development Agency (USTDA), whose budget is also in jeopardy, had increased its energy portfolio for feasibility studies by 800 percent, creating U.S. export avenue for energy companies. Encouraging a mutually beneficial pro-business approach that will create jobs in the U.S. and Africa could be a very successful strategy. Greater private sector engagement will boost local economies and reduce long-term dependency on aid.

Trump continues to pursue policy that he believes would have the greatest return for the American people. In the same way, African leaders should not be dismayed by possible cuts in foreign aid, instead, they should actively seek to create the enabling environment necessary to boost local economies, attract foreign investment, negotiate transfer of technology, encourage private sector growth/competitiveness, and increase regional integration.

Whether the Trump administration slashes the aid budget or not, African governments must come to the realization that the continent's prosperity is not primarily in the hands of White House officials. Africa holds the keys to its own development. It is our hope that U.S.-African engagement will remain nonpartisan, strong, and continue to make mutually beneficial partnership more palpable. As Mandela said, "It is always impossible until it is done." (Brookings 20-04-2017)

SIERRA LEONE: INTERNET SERVICE REGULATOR LAMENTS POOR DATA SERVICE

The Sierra Leone Cable Limited (SALCAB), which manages the fiber optic cable in the country, has blamed lack of investment by Internet Service Providers (ISPs) for the poor nature of internet connectivity.

SALCAB said on Wednesday that its services were underutilized and that mobile phone companies were shying away from it, making their cost of service provision high and translating to expensive charges on the end user.

SALCAB was established by an Act of Parliament in 2012 with the support of the World Bank, which is funding the fiber optic project that links several African countries to the submarine cable that runs from France to South Africa, under the Africa Coast to Europe (ACE) project.

With this initiative, the cost of internet service has reduced from US$2, 000 via satellite, to US$200 via fiber by ISPs. But SALCAB says in its statement that ISPs in Sierra Leone still preferred accessing their bandwidth from satellite.

"With the creation of SALCAB, it was expected that mobile phone companies and other internet service providers should have upgraded their systems with the new technology and equipment to be able to make maximum use of the information super highway," the company said.

"Therefore, MNOs and ISPs are encouraged to invest in new technology to link up with the fiber for cheaper voice and data calls because it creates opportunities for learning, businesses and agricultural productivity," it added. (APA 20-04-2017)

AFRICA'S ECONOMIC GROWTH ON UPSWING-WORLD BANK

Economic growth in Sub-Saharan Africa is rebounding in 2017 after registering the worst decline in more than two decades in 2016, according to the new Africa's Pulse, a bi-annual analysis of the state of African economies conducted by the World Bank.

The report released on Wednesday pointed out that the region is showing signs of recovery, and regional growth is projected to reach 2.6 percent in 2017.

However, the recovery remains weak, with growth expected to rise only slightly above population growth, a pace that hampers efforts to boost employment and reduce poverty, noted the report.

"Nigeria, South Africa, and Angola, the continent's largest economies, are seeing a rebound from the sharpslowdown in 2016, but the recovery has been slow due to insufficient adjustment to low commodity prices and policy uncertainty," added the report issued in Nairobi.

The World Bank further noted that several oil exporters in the Central African Economic and Monetary Community (CEMAC) are facing economic difficulties.

“The latest data reveal that seven countries (Côte d’Ivoire, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mali, Rwanda, Senegal, and Tanzania) continue to exhibit economic resilience, supported by domestic demand, posting annual growthrates above 5.4 percent in 2015-2017.These countries house nearly 27 percent of the region’s population and account for 13 percent of the region’s total GDP,” noted the report.

Africa’s Pulse noted that the continent’s aggregate growth is expected to rise to 3.2 percent in 2018 and 3.5 percent in 2019, reflecting a recovery in the largest economies.

It further added that growth will however remain subdued for oil exporters, while metal exporters are projected to see a moderate uptick.

“GDP growth in countries whose economies depend less on extractive commodities should remain robust, underpinned by infrastructure investments, resilient services sectors, and the recovery of agricultural production. This is especially the case for Ethiopia, Senegal, and Tanzania,” added the report.

The report warned that a stronger-than-expected tightening of global financing conditions, weaker improvements in commodity prices, and a rise in protectionist sentiment represent downside external risks to the outlook. (APA 20-04-2017)

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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Fernando Matos Rosa

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