

MEMORANDUM

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DFID MINISTER ANNOUNCES A CHALLENGE FUND FOR SMALL CHARITIES AND CALLS UK A 'GLOBAL LEADER' IN DEVELOPMENT

The head of the U.K.'s aid agency announced the first ever challenge fund exclusively for small charities, as well as a new capacity building initiative to help boost public trust in the third sector during a wide-ranging speech to civil society groups.

Speaking at the annual Bond conference in London on Monday, international development secretary Priti Patel also emphasized Britain's role as a global leader in development and said the country should exert its influence to encourage other governments not to "turn your back on the world."

The minister said the [small charities challenge fund](#) would be launched this summer to provide financing to U.K.-registered civil society groups operating overseas with an annual income of less than 250,000 pounds. These groups have traditionally missed out on opportunities to work with the [Department for International Development](#), she said. Charities can apply for grants of up to 50,000 pounds and the fund will have a total budget of 4 million pounds over next two years.

This is to be coupled with a new DfID partnership with the [Charity Commission](#) to help charities manage projects and handle government money more effectively in a bid to win public approval for their work amid increased scrutiny and hostility from [U.K. newspapers](#) about the foreign aid budget. This capacity building is in response to what Patel described as the need for the British development sector to renew its "license to operate."

"Britain boasts an extraordinary number of small grassroots charities and organizations who, quite frankly, do an amazing and often highly innovative work in some of the poorest places in the world," she said. "This fund is there to help the best of our smaller charities, to expand and to deliver even more effectively for the world's poorest."

Patel's speech was welcomed by charity bosses, who described it as a clear indication of her support and commitment to the sector and her department. Patel previously has been [outspoken in her criticism](#) of aid spending and was quoted in 2013 suggesting DfID should be closed.

However, when asked about the future of Britain's development policy on Monday, Patel was reassuringly robust in her defense of the sector, describing the U.K. as playing a "global leadership" role in development and saying that it should set an example for other governments to follow.

"We should be doing more of ... using our voice internationally to call upon others in the world and say to them, don't retreat, don't move away or turn your back on the world, we need to work collectively together and be united if we are going to solve some of these big issues such as poverty," she said.

She also confirmed some of the international development department's focus areas moving forward, including women and girls, tuberculosis, noncommunicable diseases, family planning, and disability — which she referred to as "the most under prioritised and under resourced areas in development."

Alex Thier, executive director of the London-based think tank, the [Overseas Development Institute](#), said he was pleased to hear such a strong commitment to U.K. aid from the minister.

"This was the strongest, most full throated endorsement of aid for the U.K.," he said. "I think what we heard her say today is that: I am taking responsibility for U.K. aid spending as part of our national objectives and that it's fundamentally important to leave no one behind and support our allies around the world."

Thier's sentiments were supported by Tamsyn Barton, chief executive of [Bond](#), who said it was clear Patel "sees Britain playing a strong role in development," and that Bond welcomes her "commitment to robustly defend the rights of civil society and to work closely with the sector."

Sir Ciarán Devane, executive director of the [British Council](#), called DfID's new challenge fund for small civil society groups "an enlightened move" as it will help foster the next generation of larger organizations.

"Every civil society organization or charity was founded at some point by somebody and was tiny, we didn't magically appear out of nowhere as a fully funded brilliantly effective organization, so I think it's really good because out of that will come the next Oxfam, the next Water Aid," he said.

An organization that could stand to benefit from the new small charities challenge fund is

[Hand in Hand](#), a U.K.- registered, women's economic empowerment organization in Kabul, Afghanistan. Founder [Seema Ghani](#) said that while she supports any initiative that helps smaller organizations like her own, she believes development interventions will only work when government is also supported. "I always advise projects should be ... working with small, medium, and large — and large could be the government. Just focusing on one will not answer the problem. For example NGOs like us, we can reach certain places, but at the same time the government needs support. How long are the NGOs going to be able to run the operations?" she asked.

Discussing the new partnership with the Charity Commission, Chairman William Shawcross said: "Helping small and medium sized charities deal with today's huge risks is crucial. This work will be key in building capacity to ensure these charities can operate to the highest standards." (Dev 21-03-2017)

ENI GROUP TO PAY US\$350 MILLION IN CAPITAL GAINS TO MOZAMBIQUE



The recently concluded deal between Italian group ENI and US group ExxonMobil will provide Mozambique with capital gains taxes of about US\$350 million, said on Tuesday in Maputo a senior executive of the Mozambican Tax Authority (AT).

Aníbal Mbalango, the Deputy Director General of Planning and Studies and International Cooperation at the AT, said that the figure results from application of the current capital gains tax of 32% on about half of the amount raised by ENI in the sale.

The Italian group sold an indirect 25% stake in the Area 4 block of the Rovuma basin, in Cabo Delgado province, northern Mozambique, to ExxonMobil for US\$2.8 billion.

The reduction by half of the amount to which the tax is levied is due to the fact that the ENI group is a non-tax resident and the additional reduction to US \$ 1.1 billion derives from investments already made. Anibal Mbalango added that the tax will have to be paid only after the business has been completed and that the Italian group has, under the terms of the law, to appoint a natural or legal person domiciled, residing or effectively managing in Mozambique to serve as its representative before AT In order to comply with tax obligations. (22-03-2017)

EAST AFRICA SUMMIT TO FOCUS ON REFUGEES, FOOD CONCERNS

East African leaders attending the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD) in Kenya this week are expected to talk about Somali refugees and regional security. However, there are doubts that IGAD has what it takes to ease the crisis in the region.

The Kenya State House spokesperson, Manoah Esipisu, said the repatriation of Somali refugees will be the main agenda item at the summit.

"It will focus largely on the questions of Somali refugees and creating a conducive environment in their own country so that they can feel safe to go back and to contribute to their country's development as well

as their country's growth," he said.

Kenya plans to shut the Dadaab refugee camp by the end of May. Dadaab is home to more than 300,000 refugees, most of them Somalis. Tens of thousands have already returned to Somalia.

Humanitarian agencies are currently struggling to save lives in Somalia, where more than 6 million people need assistance because of drought and insurgent attacks. The aid agencies warn if nothing is done, the crisis in Somalia may become worse than the 2011 famine.

The United Nations estimates more than 17 million people need humanitarian assistance in East Africa.

The region also faces security challenges. South Sudan is struggling with civil conflict and famine and Burundi has been stuck in a political crisis for two years.

Esipisu said the leaders at the summit will discuss the situation in those countries and the political uncertainty in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

"Regional security is a matter that world leaders have expressed concern in and want Kenya to remain in the pivotal role in terms of tackling these matters," he said.

IGAD has been criticized for being unable to end the South Sudan conflict. The leaders in East Africa also have failed to bring Burundi's political rivals to the negotiating table.

George Musamali, director of the Center for Risk Management in Africa, said the meeting will achieve little.

"These meetings have been going on for quite some time," he said, "and nothing has come much of them because at the end of the day they will talk, and the solutions will always be looking for funding from donor countries. IGAD does not have the capacity to deal with these internal conflicts within the region."

As the region copes with drought, food insecurity and political instability, many eastern Africans will be watching to see if their leaders have solutions to end their suffering (VoA 23-03-2013)

HUNDREDS OF PUBLIC WORKS HAVE BEEN ABANDONED OR SUSPENDED IN MOZAMBIQUE

Fifty-two public works projects have been completed, 50 are in progress, 140 have been abandoned by contractors and 117 were suspended by the government out of a total of 359, according to a survey of all public works paid for by the Mozambican state budget.

The 359 projects, which mainly involve the Ministries of Health, Education and State and Civil Administration have a total cost of about five billion meticaïs (US\$70 million), of which about 1.5 billion meticaïs have already been paid out, according to Mozambican state news agency AIM.

The Minister of Public Works, Housing and Water Resources, Carlos Bonete, speaking after the meeting of the Council of Ministers, pointed to financial and technical incapacity of some of the contractors to whom public works contracts were awarded, as well as defaulting on contracts by others, resulting in criminal proceedings.

In addition to the termination of contracts and the cancellation of licenses of some of the contractors, the minister said the government has already submitted 138 criminal cases to the Attorney General's Office. Bonete said Mozambican contractors were the most problematic, and most of the stoppages and abandoned projects outside the big cities. (22-03-2017)

DANGOTE DIVERSIFIES TO OIL WITH MEGA REFINERY IN NIGERIA

Multi-billion dollar conglomerate [Dangote Group](#) has diversified to with US\$12 billion [oil](#) Refinery which is expected to be the largest in the world. To be located in Lagos, the refinery is expected to be fully operation in 2019 with a capacity of 650, 000 barrel of oil per day.

The oil plant will also have the largest sub-sea pipeline infrastructure in the world with the capacity to handle 3 billion cubic metres of oil.

Once the refinery commences full operations it is set to benefit a lot of countries including Zambia in the imports of the commodity. The CEO Mr. Putta said that the project, which is located in Likke Free Trade Zone in Lagos was in three phases with the first to be ready by the end of this year.

The second phase in which will entail actual construction will end in 2018 and the commencement of operation of the refinery in 2019.

The project is expected to create 60 000 jobs for local Nigerians and 24 000 staff will be accommodated by the company.

The plant is also expected to increase Nigeria is foreign exchange by \$5.5m and reduce imports of oil by \$7.5m per year. The plant that stands on more than 2000Ha of land would be environmentally friendly.

Mr. Putta said the land has been claimed from the swampy area after they spread sand obtained from the Atlantic Ocean using a huge ship from Brazil that ferried the sand to the mainland. He further explained that the company was adhering to strict safety standards and guidelines and that no accident was so far recorded.

Furthermore, most of the equipment to be used by the plant are currently under construction in different countries, with 70 % of the cranes to be used have been procured. The fertilizer plants, which will the largest in the region, would have a production of three million tonnes per annum.(CRO 17-03-2017)

NEW RAILWAY LINKS ADDIS ABABA WITH DJIBOUTI

The recent opening of the Addis Ababa – Djibouti modern electric railway by Ethiopian Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn and President Ismaïl Omar Guelleh of Djibouti, which links the capital of landlocked Ethiopia with the port of Djibouti on the Gulf of Aden, is expected to transform connections across the region and to global trade routes.

The 752 kilometre track, Africa's first standard – gauge international railway, will more than half journey times. When commercial services start using the line, the transport time of a container from Addis Ababa to Djibouti should reduce from three days to twelve hours, with costs coming down by a third. More than 95 percent of Ethiopia's foreign trade passes through Djibouti.

The new line was built between 2011 and 2016 by the China Railway Group and the China Civil Engineering Construction Corporation. Financing for the new line was provided by the Exim Bank of China. A total of US \$4 billion was invested in the railway with the objective of facilitating mobility and trade and transforming Djibouti into an East African gateway to the world.

The new railway is linked with the US \$15 billion infrastructure expansion programme, led by the Djibouti Ports and Free Zones Authority (DPFZA), which will expand Djibouti's port facilities while constructing new highways and airports as a major boost to the country's economy. (Djibuti Ports & Free Zones Authority 13-03-2017)

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POLISH STATE BANK OPENS CREDIT LINE TO ANGOLA

Polish state development bank, Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego (BGK) has opened a credit line of US\$100 million for Angola to finance projects in the sectors of fisheries, agriculture and transport, among others, under an agreement signed on Tuesday in Luanda.

To achieve this financing, the Angolan Ministry of Finance and the BGK signed a memorandum of understanding, which aims to expand relations between the two economies, according to Angolan state news agency Angop.

The document sets out the general terms and conditions governing each individual financing facility, and the specific and inherent conditions of each agreement will be subject to approval by BGK, the Polish Credit Export Agency and Angola, said the Polish ambassador in Angola, Piotr Mysliwiec.

The ambassador said that implementation of public investment projects will be the responsibility of companies of Polish origin as contractors or subcontractors, while the choice of areas for funding will be Angola's responsibility.

The memorandum was signed by the director of the Debt Management Unit of the Finance Ministry, Osvaldo João and the director of BGK, Arkadiusz Zablotonski, and this is the first credit line opened by BGK in favour of Angola. (22-03-2017)

SWITCHMED BRINGS OPPORTUNITIES OF EU ECO INNOVATIVE APPLICATIONS TO MANUFACTURERS IN EGYPT



Some 300 stakeholders from the Egyptian industry took part on 27 February in the B2B networking event organised by the EU-funded SwitchMed programme in Cairo, to present [EU eco innovative business](#) solutions that could boost the transition of their businesses into circular business models. The event uncovered the potential of 8 EU-funded eco innovative solutions that had been carefully selected to match the needs of Egypt's production sectors and challenges. With over 110 business consultations between 66 Egyptian businesses and the 8 eco innovation providers, the event is set to have a meaningful contribution to new cooperation agreements between the knowledge competences of the latest EU on eco innovative applications and Egypt's industry.

Recognising that SMEs in Egypt are facing difficulties in realising their potential impact on sustainability, the application of EU eco-innovation solutions could contribute to lower the production costs and increase the environmental performance of their business operations. [Multiplexed Laser Surface Enhancement \(MLSE\)](#), one of the eco innovations presented in Cairo, could for instance assist the important textile industry in Egypt to save up 99% percent of energy costs in their textile finishing. Eco-innovation can become a key driver of industry efforts to tackle climate change and realise "green growth" calling for faster introduction of breakthrough technologies and for a more systemic application of available solutions. The SwitchMed B2B Networking events for EU eco innovations, held so far in Lebanon, Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt, have gathered more than 1000 stakeholders from the industry sector and created 320 B2B consultations between local businesses and European eco innovators. The SwitchMed sustainable consumption and production programme aims to promote a switch by the Mediterranean economies towards sustainable consumption and production patterns and green economy, including low-emission development, through demonstration and dissemination of methods that improve resource and energy efficiency. It also seeks to minimise the environmental impacts associated with the life cycle of products and services and, where possible, to promote renewable energy. (SwitchMed 06-03-2017)

[SwitchMed - Switching to more sustainable consumption and production in the Mediterranean](#)

OIL PRICES CONTINUE TO DRIVE BUDGET DEFICITS IN ANGOLA

Low oil prices on international markets will lead Angola's state budget to continue to show significant deficits between 2017 and 2021, although 5.7% of GDP projected for this year is expected to fall to 4.3% in 2021, according to the Economist Intelligence Unit (EIU).

The EIU said in its the latest report on Angola that, given the low diversification of the economy, the growth of gross domestic product (GDP) will continue to be driven by the oil sector and record an average rate of 2.8% in the 2017-2021 period, compared with 4.1% recorded in the 2012-2016 period. The inflation rate will remain high, despite the reduction in public fuel subsidies and continued devaluation of the national currency and, after standing at 22% this year, will slow to a single figure in 2021 with 7.7%.

The devaluation of the national currency, the kwanza, will tend to slow down compared to the values achieved in 2015/2016 but the lack of dollars on the official market will make the gap in relation to prices on the black market remain relatively high.

The EIU said in the report that controlling inflation will continue to be a major objective of the National Bank of Angola. Between January 2015 and June 2016 the BNA increased the benchmark interest rate by 700 basis points to 16%.

"Further increases in the benchmark interest rate should occur in the first half of the 2017/2021 period, taking into account the effects on inflation of a weak currency, although it will be moderated by government pressure to adopt a less restrictive monetary policy," said the report, to which Macauhub had access.

GDP growth is expected to reach the highest point of this period in 2018, with a rate of 3.5%, after which it should range between 2.8% in 2018 and 2021 and 2.5% in 2020, according to the EIU forecasts. (20-03-2017)

EU MEDMEDIA PROJECT LAUNCHES WOMEN EXPERTS DATABASE TO MARK INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY



The EU-funded MedMedia programme launched this week an innovative online database aimed at enhancing the representation of women in news programming across the Southern Mediterranean Region. Launched in the run-up to International Women's Day on 8 March, Khabirat is an online Arabic-language directory of women experts designed for use by editorial teams at national media outlets. The initiative is based on strong national partnerships with institutions such as public broadcasters, journalists' unions, publishers, regulatory authorities and women rights' groups. It aims to promote consistent national policies which improve women's contribution to media outputs on a national and regional level.

The Khabirat directories, being developed across the region, will debut in Tunisia, Morocco, Jordan and Palestine, where special events are scheduled to showcase their content and resources.

Recruitment campaigns and other forms of participatory engagement will help to expand the directories, which are hosted on independent websites and managed locally by national consortia.

The EU-funded MedMedia project aims to create an enabling environment for media reforms in the Southern Mediterranean region. It is part of the €17 million EU programme "Media and culture for

development in the Southern Mediterranean” which aims at supporting the media and culture reform processes in the region.

MedMedia focuses on media legislation, regulation, programming, strategy and leadership with a view to helping state media fulfil their public service mandate and compete with the commercial sector. It will also work to build public trust by strengthening the media’s role as an independent watchdog and a forum for democratic debate. (MedMedia 07-03-2017)

ANGOLA WILL FACILITATE GRANTING OF TOURIST VISA

Excessive bureaucracy in the granting of entry visas to Angola has contributed to a decrease in occupancy rates in hotels, making many foreigners give up because of the delay, said on Friday in Luanda the chairman of the Angolan Association of Hotels and Resorts (AHRA).

Armindo César, who was speaking at the Forum on the Business Environment in the hotel and tourism sector, pointed to the existence of bad debts, resulting from the inability of hotels to honour the commitments to banks due to the sharp drop in revenues and high interest rates indexed to the dollar, as factors that have disrupted the development of tourism in the country.

The excessive strictness of the tax authorities in punishing with fines and high interest on delayed payments along with weak technical training of hotel staff are also factors that prevent the development of the hotel sector, according to Armindo César quoted by Angolan state news agency Angop.

Against this backdrop, he said, AHRA outlined strategies to mitigate the effects of the constraints mentioned, and the Ministry of Hotels and Tourism agreed that from now on hotel establishments will have access to foreign exchange to import the goods they need.

The president of AHRA said a consensus had been reached that will soon allow the introduction of a new, and less bureaucratic, legal framework for issuing visas, where the biggest novelty will be granting tourist visas at the airport and land borders, as well as at consulates in the required time. (20-03-2017)

MOGHERINI ANNOUNCES SYRIA CONFERENCE ON 5 APRIL, EGYPT AND MIDDLE EAST DISCUSSED AT FOREIGN AFFAIRS COUNCIL



The European Union will host a major international conference on Syria on 5 April, entitled 'Syria and the region: supporting the future of Syria and the region', co-chairing the event with the United Nation, Germany, Kuwait, Norway, Qatar and the United Kingdom, EU High Representative Federica Mogherini announced on Monday.

"This is part of the efforts, the work that the European Union is doing on Syria, with our regional initiative, our round of talks with eight of the regional players. And we hope that the Brussels conference on 5 April can support strongly the UN work on the political track, but also try to establish a regional and international framework for that support, for the humanitarian work, but also for looking at the future, how we can, together, support the future of Syria and the region," said Mogherini after chairing the monthly meeting of EU foreign ministers.

The EU foreign affairs Council hosted the Foreign Minister of Egypt, Sameh Shoukry, for an informal exchange of views on the economic and social reform agenda of the country, the rule of law and human rights, bilateral cooperation on counter-terrorism, security and migration, as well as the main regional issues - the Middle East Peace Process, Syria and Libya.

Mogherini updated ministers on the most recent work on migration ahead of the Summit of EU leaders later this week.

Ministers also reaffirmed their consolidated, common, united position on the Middle East peace process. The EEAS is preparing for an Association Council with Israel, as well as for high level meetings with the Palestinian Authority. (EEAS 07-03-2017)

LIST OF BAD SERVICE PROVIDERS WILL BE DRAWN UP IN ANGOLA

A list identifying the companies and institutions that provide poor services to citizens will be published starting this year by the National Institute of Consumer Protection (Inadec) of Angola, the head of the Department of Training, Publications and Press recently announced in Luanda.

Joana Tomás told Angolan state news agency Angop that by publishing the list Inadec wants to encourage companies and public institutions to provide better services to citizens and prevent situations where people stop seeking them out.

The list will be drawn up based on complaints made in official complaint books that companies and institutions will have and on complaints sent to Inadec on its website and through letters from consumers.

Inadec is a public institute to promote and safeguard consumer rights, and to coordinate and implement measures for their protection, information and education and provide support for consumer organisations. (20-03-2017)

REINFORCING INDEPENDENCE OF ARAB ELECTORAL MANAGEMENT BODIES: TUNISIA HOLDS REGIONAL MEETING WITH SUPPORT OF EU PROJECT



Within the framework of the EU-funded South Programme II, the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe jointly with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Independent High Electoral Commission of Tunisia supported the holding of the 2nd Annual General Assembly of the Organisation of Arab Electoral Management Bodies (ArabEMBs) in Tunis last month.

The Assembly, which was structured around a workshop on the theme of 'Strengthening the Independence of Electoral Management Bodies', was attended by about 80 participants from ministries, electoral authorities, human rights institutions as well as international organisations. The workshop allowed the EMBs of Arab States to network, share experience and exchange on the tenets of EMB independence, international and regional standards, as well as the best practices for securing the impartiality of EMBs. A prominent part of the discussions was also dedicated to identifying main

independence challenges that face the Arab Electoral Management Bodies in a bid to encourage mutual support in overcoming hindrances to nonpartisan and transparent elections.

The EU-CoE Joint Programme “Towards strengthened democratic governance in the South Mediterranean” – South Programme II, 2015-2017 – funded with a budget of €7.4 million - aims to contribute to the reinforcement of democratic governance in the Southern Mediterranean region by supporting the development of new constitutional and legal frameworks; contributing to the creation and expansion of a common legal space between Europe and the Southern Mediterranean and fostering regional co-operation in the field of human rights, Rule of law and democracy.

Co-operation activities under the South Programme are primarily directed to Morocco, Tunisia and Jordan and open to other countries from the Southern Mediterranean, through regional activities or targeted bilateral activities. (EEAS 17-03-2017)

CHINESE FISHING FIRM CAUGHT ILLEGALLY PROCESSING MOZAMBIQUE'S PROTECTED PRAWNS



Fishing authorities in Mozambique’s Sofala province have seized almost a tonne of prawns that were being clandestinely processed by an illegal Chinese company, APA learnt here on Wednesday.

According to private television station STv, 800 kilogrammes of tiger and queen prawns were being packed with a label of non-existent company. Also seized were 80kg of processed crabs that were ready for export.

The Maputo-based broadcaster said the seizure occurred over the weekend at an area known as Nova Praia or New Beach in the port city of Beira and the Sofala fishing authorities said the 800 kilogrammes of prawns were being packaged by Chinese citizens in a fridge, ready for export.

To make things worse, according to Sofala provincial director of fisheries, Carlos Sindela, the illegal Chinese company used, in its processing lines, names of former fisheries companies, which used to exploit prawn production in Sofala, but they are now bankrupt.

“When we suspected that something illegal was happening, we went close to see, what in fact was happening. We noted that the processing of the fisheries products was a clandestine activity. They were branded with bankrupt and no-longer existent companies. We learnt that the fisheries products were meant for export, but in an illegal way,” the official told STv.

He said the owners of the fake Chinese company had no documentation.

According to STv, the accused to make any statements allegedly because the owner of the business, who is authorized to talk, is away in China.

The Mozambican government says it loses US\$57 million annually to illegal fishing and environmental damage resulting from the absence of effective maritime surveillance along the approximately 2,800 km of coastline. (APA 15-03-2017)

CAPE TOWN NAMED ONE OF THE WORLD’S TOP TECH CITIES IN SAVILLS REPORT



Cape Town ranked 22nd in the Tech Cities 2017 report, which said the Mother City is a 'magnet for talent in the region' with the potential to become a global player

Cape Town has been named among the leading cities in the global technology industry, according to a report by international real estate company Savills. The Mother City ranked 22nd in the Tech Cities 2017 report, which looked at cities with a presence of home-grown start-ups and incubators.

According to the report, tech centres, such as Cape Town and Argentina's Santiago, "are magnets for talent in their regions and have the potential to become global players".

American city Austin, Texas, earned the top tech city accolade after attaining the best combined score across five categories, including business environment, tech environment, city buzz and wellness, talent pool and property costs.

The report coincided with the release of a pitch-deck (a brief presentation, often created using PowerPoint, Keynote or Prezi, used to provide a quick overview of a business plan) outlining Cape Town's tech ecosystem, created to "ensure Cape Town is recognised as a growing economic centre for tech start-ups and enabled businesses".

The pitch-deck was compiled by the City of Cape Town, its trade promotion agency Wesgro, Silicon Cape and the Cape Innovation Technology Initiative.

The infographic states that Cape Town has the fastest growing economy in SA, among the best internet networks in Africa, and an average 12% growth in property values year-on-year. Furthermore, more than half of all venture capital funds are located in Cape Town and the city is home to 60% of all South African start-ups.

Wesgro CEO Tim Harris said Cape Town's unparalleled infrastructure base, world-class universities and vibrant environment gave the region "a competitive edge and reach beyond other hubs on the continent".

Harris also said that a number of initiatives had been undertaken to promote local start-ups and help them secure investment, partnerships and skills exchanges, adding that policies at local and provincial government levels had reduced red tape and in turn some start-up costs. (TMG Digital 15-03-2017)

KENYA BANS USE OF PLASTIC BAGS



The Kenyan government has announced a ban on plastic bags used for commercialization and household packaging.

In a gazette notice on Wednesday, the Cabinet Secretary for Environment and Natural Resources, Judi Wakhungu said that the ban comes into effect from six months and covers the use, manufacture and importation of all plastic bags used for commercial and household packaging.

"With effect from six months from the date of this notice, the government has banned the use, manufacture and importation of all plastic bags used for commercial and household packaging," the gazette noted.

The plastic bags are categorized under carrier bags constructed with handles and with or without gussets and also flat bags of the same make.

Kenya followed in the footsteps of several African countries such as Guinea Bissau and The Gambia where plastic bags are banned over environmental issues. (APA 15-03-2017)

GAMBIA'S RULING COALITION BREAKS UP AHEAD OF APRIL POLL



Adama Barrow

Nine political parties will run separately in the April 6 election, seven of which had united to oust veteran leader Yahya Jammeh

The Gambia's ruling coalition has broken apart ahead of a parliamentary poll next month, dealing a blow to new President Adama Barrow as he overhauls the country's political system following his shock election victory.

Nine political parties will run separately in the April 6 election, seven of which had united last December to oust veteran leader Yahya Jammeh, who ruled the tiny west African nation with an iron fist for 22 years.

Barrow had promised in January following his surprise defeat of Jammeh that the coalition would "continue as a family".

But documents issued by the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) on Monday showed that 239 candidates will stand in April, representing nine separate organisations, with some running as independents.

The national assembly was long seen as a rubber stamp for Jammeh's executive decrees, but the new president has promised to work in tandem with legislators, notably on constitutional reform in the former British colony.

The coalition split is likely to embolden Jammeh's Alliance for Patriotic Reorientation and Construction (APRC), which remains a major force in Gambian politics although the former president is now in exile in Equatorial Guinea.

The APRC took 43 of the 48 seats contested during the last parliamentary election in 2012, which was boycotted by the vast majority of opposition parties. Five seats are also appointed by the president to give an overall 53 seats.

Barrow had barely finished putting his cabinet together before disagreements broke out last week over the poll, with one senior government source warning at the time that talks for an ongoing alliance were close to collapse.

Disagreements over representation and allocation of seats had caused tensions, the source said.

Barrow was formerly a member of the United Democratic Party, the largest opposition grouping in the Jammeh era, but resigned to run as the coalition candidate. Campaign for the poll begins on Wednesday and ends on April 4. (AFP 14-03-2017)

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.

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