



[La famille du premier Premier ministre congolais Patrice Emery Lumumba, assassiné en 1961, souhaite que le gouvernement de Kinshasa l'appuie dans le procès qui pourrait avoir lieu en Belgique, a affirmé jeudi l'un de ses fils, Roland Lumumba, à la radio onusienne Okapi. Plus de cinquante ans après les faits, la justice belge a annoncé mercredi qu'elle allait lancer une enquête sur l'assassinat de M. Lumumba, un des héros des indépendances africaines toujours populaire aujourd'hui et dont la famille met en cause dans sa mort d'ex-responsables belges, estimant que l'ex-Congo belge était alors plongé dans un conflit armé et que la mort de M. Lumumba pouvait dès lors être considérée comme un crime de guerre.]

BURUNDI :

Burundi : Le recrutement dans l'armée respecte la parité ethnique

Xinhua/Jeu di 13 décembre 2012

BUJUMBURA (Xinhua) - Le recrutement dans les rangs de la Force de la Défense Nationale (FDN) respecte la parité ethnique hutu-tutsi prévue dans les clauses de l'Accord d'Arusha pour la Paix et la Réconciliation au Burundi (AAPRB) du 28 août 2000, a rassuré jeudi à Bujumbura le colonel Gaspard Baratuza, Porte-parole du ministère de la Défense.

Il a fait cette déclaration au cours d'un point de presse pour réagir notamment aux inquiétudes déjà exprimées par le porte-parole du courant de réhabilitation du parti UPRONA, Tatien Sibomana, qui a émis des doutes sur le respect de cette parité au niveau du processus de recrutement en cours à l'armée depuis le début de ce mois. Il a précisé que les recrutements effectués jusqu'ici à l'armée burundaise depuis la création de la FDN en 2004, respectent les équilibres ethniques paritaires tels que stipulés dans la Constitution de la république du Burundi, laquelle est l'émanation du protocole 3 de l'AAPRB.

"Le recrutement effectif se fera en toute transparence et ceux qui tentent de tricher en se cachant derrière le trafic d'influence des partis politiques, n'ont aucune chance de tromper la vigilance des professionnels de la FDN qui sont déterminés à enrayer toute manœuvre de spéculation", a-t-il insisté. Il a demandé aux cadres et agents de l'administration territoriale à tous les niveaux d'être très coopératifs dans ce processus de recrutement des candidats hommes de troupes, sous-officiers et officiers afin que l'opération se déroule sans aucune faille.

Burundi : L'Allemagne apporte 845.000 euros au Fonds commun pour les fertilisants et Amendements

Xinhua/Jeu di 13 décembre 2012

BUJUMBURA (Xinhua) - Le Burundi et l'Allemagne ont signé jeudi un contrat de 845.000 euros

dans le cadre de la mise en place du Fonds commun pour les fertilisants et amendements (FCFA) constitué du Burundi, de l'Allemagne et les Pays-Bas.

Le ministre burundais des Finances et de la Planification du Développement Economique, Tabou Abdallah Manirakiza a affirmé qu'il s'agit de la première contribution des partenaires techniques et financiers au FCFA.

Il a indiqué que ce montant permettra de créer un système de subvention des engrais minéraux qui garantit leur disponibilité pour toutes les cultures à travers tout le pays de la manière la plus simple et la plus transparente, de couvrir les coûts administratifs de la gestion des fonds et de payer les services de consultants pour assurer la délivrance d'engrais de qualité aux agriculteurs. "Ce fonds aura un impact non seulement sur les rendements agricoles, la conservation des sols et la sécurité alimentaire, mais aussi et surtout sur l'économie locale", a indiqué de sa part Dr Petra Wagner, directrice résidente de l'agence de coopération technique allemande pour le développement "GIZ".

Elle a ajouté que cette subvention va motiver les producteurs à utiliser des engrais minéraux, augmenter l'enthousiasme et l'aptitude des producteurs à payer graduellement la partie subventionnée des engrais et par là, permettre la diminution dégressive de la subvention dans le temps.

Lundi dernier, le Burundi, l'Allemagne et les Pays-Bas ont signé une lettre d'entente mettant en place le fonds FCFA.

RWANDA :

Rwandan Community in North America Petition to President Obama Over the Eastern Congo Crisis
13 December 2012/News Of Rwanda/allafrica.com

Members of the Rwandan Community in North America have petitioned the Unites States President Barack Obama over the Eastern DRC crisis.

In a letter dated December 11, 2012, they explain to Obama the origin of the Congo crisis and accuse the international community including the United Nations of orchestrating a propaganda campaign against Rwanda.

"We, the undersigned, being members of the Rwandan Community in North America have been following with keen interest the ongoing crisis in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and its impact on the Great Lakes region.

The deeply rooted, and well-orchestrated propaganda campaign against Rwanda obliges us, as concerned citizens of Rwanda and legal residents of the United States of America and Canada, to faithfully defend our country by adding our voice to many others that strive to bring the truth out in a quest to restore the image of Rwanda and to pursue justice, peace and security in DRC and the Great Lakes region," reads the letter in part.

They explained to Obama that since March 2012, Rwanda has been accused of supporting M23, a group of mutineers that has been at war with the Congolese army (FARDC) in the Eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (EDRC).

It all started in June this year when the United Nations Group of Experts (UN GoE) on DRC submitted its interim annual report and an addendum to the UN Security Council Sanctions Committee.

The Addendum contained a set of allegations to support the narrative of active involvement by the Government of Rwanda (GoR) in the current armed conflict between the FARDC and M23 in violation of the United Nations Arms Embargo and Sanctions Regime that applies to the DRC.

In response, Rwanda submitted a comprehensive rebuttal on GoE's allegations and invited the GoE to go to Rwanda for cross checking investigations. The GoE ignored Rwanda's willingness to cooperate and went on to publish another set of allegations against Rwanda in August, which the GoR refuted in its rebuttal submitted in October 2012.

So far the international community has shown no interest in investigating further to fully understand the ongoing crisis in DRC. Instead, Rwanda was rendered guilty without trial.

In the letter the members are irked by some donor countries withholding the disbursement of aid or freezing the budget support to Rwanda, because of the verdict rendered by GoE on their country.

They are quoted as saying: "We would like to remind you that Rwanda has been consistently praised for its proficient utilization of foreign aid as well as its overall efficient fiscal management, which have resulted in successful reconstructive efforts in the last 18 years.

In fact, numerous independent reports indicate that in the last five years, Rwanda has lifted over one million people out of poverty. Cutting or freezing aid at this moment will not resolve the crisis in the DRC," they say.

They also explained that roots of the ongoing cycle of violence in the EDRC lay in the original ethno-nationalist conflict that has plagued the entire region since colonial occupation.

It is a continuation of the anti-Tutsi propaganda campaign that led to the genocide against Tutsis in 1994 that claimed the lives of more than one million victims in the most inhuman ways while the International community stood by.

The letter which is also copied to the Secretary of State Hilary Clinton concluded by calling on the United States government join in the cry for justice by thoroughly evaluating the current conflict in the DRC, within the context of its roots in ethno-nationalist conflict, including the divisive governance of DRC which for the last several decades has provided safe haven to genocidaires and their sympathizers.

RDC CONGO :

UGANDA :

Uganda calls on western powers to stop interfering in its oil industry
presstv.ir/2012/12/14

President Yoweri Museveni's address to the country's parliament comes after weeks of the Executive struggling to have a contentious clause in the proposed Petroleum Exploration, Production and Development Bill 2012 pass through the floor of parliament.

Lawmakers who opposed the bill according to President Yoweri Museveni did so in the interest of external western powers whose interests are to work against the success of his government.

Before the country's lawmakers, Museveni stressed that common sense demands that no foreigner or agents of foreign powers should ever involve himself or herself in Uganda's politics.

He pointed out that if foreign interference and domination were a source of prosperity, then Africa should not have been under development in this age of globalization.

Museveni re-iterated before the country's lawmakers that Africa has through the years gone through all forms of foreign domination ranging from looting, slave trade, genocide to colonialism.

The tough talking Museveni says his government has evidence on some of Uganda's lawmakers being used by foreign NGO's to sabotage the country's oil development

According to President Museveni, the action by parliament against his government by opposing the country's oil bill is designed to undermine the firm stand of Uganda in defense of exhaustible resources of the country especially oil and gas.

The Uganda's President in his address to the country's lawmakers expressed concern over foreign funded Non-Governmental Organizations who he says are working against the development of his government, saying they offend the bitter history of Africa and Uganda's constitution.

Diplomatic moves needed to halt Uganda anti-gay Bill

The Irish Times /Friday, December 14, 2012

OPINION: Passage of the 'Kill-the-Gays' Bill will lead to mass arrests, imprisonment, and killing with impunity, writes KATHERINE ZAPPONE

I visited Kampala in April to attend an inter-parliamentary union conference, as one of many hundreds of public representatives. While there I spoke with a dead man.

Or he is likely to be soon if the current Anti-Homosexuality Bill is passed by the Ugandan parliament. The Bill is known as the "Kill the Gays" Bill and has been on the books since 2009. The speaker of parliament, Rebecca Kadaga, has described it as a "Christmas gift" to Ugandans for this year, as it is due to be voted on imminently.

Julian (not his real name) is a gay man, a lawyer and an advocate for human rights as they apply to lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people. The risks he operates under are immense, entirely akin to those of a leading Ugandan LGBT activist, David Kato, who was murdered in January 2011.

Julian and I met at the conference hotel. He told me he was being watched by state security and I realised that I was being watched, too. He told me how his phone was tapped, and I shuddered at the thought of our phone conversations prior to meeting. For a moment I felt the fear, a feeling of utter exposure I will never forget.

However, I was leaving Uganda three days later, but he, of course, was not. He told me that when the Bill is passed there will be a “stampede of arrests” of LGBT people throughout the land. They will be incarcerated and may be killed with impunity. In a population of more than 30 million, there are at least half a million LGBT Ugandans and they are all at risk.

The Bill has some outrageous terms that build on the existing Penal Code 120 allowing for the punishment of homosexuality with 14 years’ imprisonment (the code itself is a remnant of British rule in Uganda).

The new Bill explicitly frames homosexuality as a threat to traditional society and family, and describes it as an offence, not an innate feature of a person. It seeks to impose lengthy imprisonment (life) on anyone found guilty. Under article 14, “a person who aids, abets, counsels or procures another to engage in acts of homosexuality commits an offence and is liable on conviction to imprisonment for seven years”; does this include an LGBT person’s family members?

NGO staff affected

Among its provisions, under article 13(1) and (2), the Bill targets anyone who “promotes” homosexuality in any way with imprisonment up to seven years. This would apply, for example, to staff of an NGO such as Amnesty International or Trócaire should they assist an LGBT person who might be HIV-positive or who is being discriminated against on account of their sexual orientation.

Further, this will also apply to Ugandans who are living abroad, including those fleeing persecution on the basis of their sexual orientation or gender identity. One wonders if the UN High Commissioner for Refugees staff, or Irish Embassy staff who offer protection to human rights defenders who are LGBT, would be subject to this law.

Of great relevance to Uganda’s friends and supporters, article 18 nullifies what it calls any “inconsistencies” or contradictions in international legal instruments – conventions, treaties, protocols and declarations – that Uganda has signed or ratified. Over the years on the world stage, these very instruments have been the sites where the human rights of LGBT people have been recognised and elaborated.

This Bill expressly states that language such as “sexual orientation” and “gender identity” cannot be allowed to “legitimise” homosexuality. But, at the international level, it is this very language that embodies a recognition of the innate nature of us humans, and outlaws discrimination based upon it – everyone has a sexual orientation, be that lesbian, gay or straight, just as every human has a gender identity.

Crucially, if this Bill becomes law, the impact on non-governmental organisations working for human rights, women’s empowerment and HIV and Aids particularly will be profound. Civil society organisations are the backbone of democracy – through their concentration on specific issues, they mobilise and organise to hold a government to account, and they also provide support to vulnerable populations generally forgotten by government. Therefore, they are a threat to oppressive governments.

Clearly from a human rights perspective this Bill should not become law and all diplomatic efforts need to be focused on halting the passage this Bill.

When the state is the instigator of persecution and oppression of a particular population through its laws and policies, it is incumbent on that state’s friends and supporters to actively and urgently help

find ways to terminate such abuse.

Sometimes the duty of friends is to say the hard thing and challenge their behaviour when it is harmful, and take action accordingly. We have the global collective logic of human rights through which to speak, a codification of decency and dignity learned from the atrocities of the second World War, lest we should ever forget what silence generates.

Redesign funding strategy

In the case of Uganda, which suffered so brutally under Idi Amin throughout the 1970s when hundreds of thousands were murdered, Irish Catholic missions and the Irish State have been an important contributor to that country's transition into functionality and rule of law, and helped stem the tide of HIV throughout the 1980s and 1990s.

Due to corrupt practices emanating from the prime minister's office, Ireland has suspended all aid to Uganda (over €33 million each year) while we review our monitoring systems. Despite the theft of funds, we should not abandon Uganda now, but we should take the opportunity to redesign a significant portion of our funding strategy so that the resources go directly to civil society organisations, including LGBT ones.

I also suggest we consider initiating a strategic dialogue directly with civil society organisations in Uganda. Much like the approach described by Hillary Clinton at last week's Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe meeting in Dublin, the front line we should focus on is building durable change grounded in Ugandan civil society.

When dead men talk, we have to listen. And we have to act.

Katherine Zappone is an Independent Senator and director of the Centre for Progressive Change

Uganda has the youngest population in the world

Publish Date: Dec 14, 2012/By Taddeo Bwambale/newvision.co.ug

Uganda is the leading country with the youngest population in the world, the State of Uganda Population Report 2012 reveals.

A total of 78% of Ugandans are below the age of 30 years and 52% below 15 years. There are 6.5million Ugandans in the age group 18-30 years and these constitute 21.3% of the population. This age group is projected to grow to 7.7million young people in 2015.

The report urges the Government to involve youth in development programmes to reduce the growing dependency syndrome.

Launching the report at Golf Course Hotel yesterday, finance minister, Maria Kiwanuka warned that Uganda risked experiencing a 'demographic disaster' if the high population growth rate is not matched with provision of quality social services.

"We should plan to transform this group into a future productive force. We need the private sector to help government to flesh out the infrastructure framework," she said.

She noted that the rapid population growth rate was putting pressure on available resources in all sectors of the economy.

She promised that the Government would put in place the supporting infrastructure to encourage investment, and appealed to the private sector to support the delivery of key health services.

She said the Government was faced with competing needs and urged donors to increase funding for family planning services.

Charles Ziraremwa, the acting executive director of Population Secretariat said scaling up family planning services and providing employment to youth would improve their quality of life.

"So many youth today spend most of their time in sports betting and discussing Man-U and Arsenal. The country's planning should be focused on youthful population to realize social-economic progress," he said.

Janet Jackson, UNFPA country representative said Uganda would save up to \$118m every year in costs associated with unplanned pregnancies, by scaling up family planning.

She appealed to Government to extend family planning services in rural and hard-to-reach areas, saying it would help reduce the high rate of unsafe abortions.

"Simply put, everyone who wants family planning should have a right to it. The right to family planning and reproductive health is inalienable and states have the obligation to respect them," she stated.

She appealed to the Government to scale up family planning services through budget allocation. She also urged districts to involve young people in the budgeting process, to ensure their concerns are catered for.

The report was launched alongside the State of the World Population 2012 report, which shows that world population grew to 7.06 billion people in 2012, up from 7 billion. It also estimates world population will reach 9 billion by 2050.

The report notes a general decline in birth rates worldwide, but highlights gaps in delivery of family planning services, especially among young people.

The state of Uganda Population report shows a significant reduction in the fertility rate among women of child-bearing age that was noted at 6.2 children, down from 6.7. However, a high unmet need for family planning services was noted at 34% for married women.

Uganda's population grew by at least 1.7 million people in 2012, reaching 34.1 million. At a growth rate of 3.2 % per year, the country's population will reach 54 million in 2025, and 130 million by 2050.

The report compiled by the Population Secretariat with the theme: "Uganda at 50 years, Population and Service Delivery: Challenges, Opportunities and Prospects", puts the female population at 17.4 million, higher than that of males at 16.7 million.

It shows a reduction in infant mortality rate at 54 deaths per 1,000 live births, compared to 76 in 2006.

The report based on projections made by the Uganda Bureau of Statistics (UBOS), further shows that under-five mortality rate reduced to 90 per 1,000 live births, down from 130 per 1,000 births in 2006.

However, the maternal mortality ratio did not improve but shows a rise from 435 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2006 to 438 deaths per 100,000 live births in 2012.

At the ceremony, Vision Group journalists were among scribes who scooped prizes in the 2012 media awards for their coverage of population and development issues.

The winners are Carol Natukunda (New Vision), Deusdedit Ruhangariyo (Orumuri), Godfrey Ojore (Etop Radio), Frank Walusimbi (NTV), Florence Naluyimba (NTV) and Gabriel Adrapi (Radio Pacis). Each of the winners received a plaque and an i-pad.

Kenya: Uganda's Umeme Gets Approval to List On NSE

By Charles Gichane/Capital FM (Nairobi)/ 13 December 2012

The Capital Markets Authority (CMA) has given the green light for the listing of Ugandan power distributor Umeme Limited's shares on the Nairobi Securities Exchange, barely weeks after the firm went public in Kampala.

CMA authorised Umeme to list on the Main Investment Market Segment of the Nairobi Securities Exchange (NSE) by introducing 1,623,878,005 ordinary shares.

The listing follows a recent Initial Public Offer of 273.37 million shares on the Uganda Securities Exchange, which was oversubscribed by 36.9 percent.

"The authority has granted approval following thorough review of the applicant's documents and is satisfied that Umeme Limited has adequately disclosed all material information in accordance with the requirements of the Capital Markets Act and the Capital Markets (Securities) (Public Offers, Listing and Disclosures) Regulations, 2002," the CMA pointed out in a statement released to newsrooms.

Listing by introduction and initial public offers are two ways in which companies can participate at the NSE and an introduction is an application for listing of shares already in issue where no marketing arrangements or offer for subscription are required.

Umeme was formed in 2004 when the Government of Uganda sold Uganda Electricity Distribution Company Limited (UEDCL) to a consortium belonging to Globeleq (56 percent), a subsidiary of the Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC) of the United Kingdom and Eskom (44 percent), the electricity generating company of South Africa.

In 2006, Eskom sold its 44 percent investment in Umeme to Globeleq, making it the sole shareholder with 100 percent ownership by the end of December 31, 2006 and in October 2009, the ownership of Globeleq was transferred to CDCGroup plc and it was renamed Umeme Holding Limited.

Umeme took over the distribution system and licence to distribute and supply power in Uganda under a Concession arrangement with effect from March 1, 2005 for a period of 20 years.

Under the Concession, Umeme is also required to repair, upgrade and expand the distribution systems.

Umeme's shared purpose is "electricity retail and distribution business providing exceptional

customer services in a safe, reliable and cost effective manner with a workforce that is well motivated and skilled, generating sufficient profits to sustain and build the business while providing value to shareholders."

The power distribution company will list its shares by introduction at the NSE from Friday.

MTN's case in Uganda nullified

14 Dec 2012/bizcommunity.com

Judge Lameck N. Mukasa of the Criminal Division of the High Court of Uganda has declared that the criminal summons alleging tax evasion against the senior management and directors of MTN Uganda is null and void.

The Judge set aside all orders previously issued by the Chief Magistrate of the Buganda Road Magistrate Court dated 10 October, 6 November and 19 November, aimed at allowing criminal summons against the senior management and the board of directors of MTN Uganda despite the lack of prima facie evidence.

MTN had approached the High Court to review the Chief Magistrate's decision to issue summons for its directors and executives to plead on tax evasion charges, yet the court had no record of formal charges or proceedings.

MTN had earlier expressed grave concern about the Magistrate's professional misconduct, evident in her contradictory rulings and disregard for due process, in a formal complaint to the Judicial Service Commission. MTN complained that the summons dated 6 November was issued a day after the same Magistrate had transferred the case to the Director of Public Prosecutions (DPP) to investigate the allegations, yet the DPP had not applied for any criminal summons.

MTN Uganda's chief executive, Mazen Mroué, has welcomed the judgment, saying the private prosecution initiated by former MTN employee Naphtali Were, had no merit.

Mroué said MTN was forging ahead with its criminal prosecution and civil claim against Were and directors of Threeways for their active involvement in allegedly defrauding MTN Uganda.

"The judgment is a strong affirmation of MTN's corporate values of ethical behaviour and integrity. We took the magistrate's ruling for review by the High Court because we view any allegations of unethical conduct against MTN in a very serious light.

"Similarly, MTN has zero tolerance for fraud. For this reason, we will prosecute those who defraud MTN and propagate false information to the detriment of MTN Uganda and the MTN Group," said Mroué.

SOUTH AFRICA :

SA suspends Brazil beef imports

December 14 2012 /By SAPA

Brasilia -

South Africa and China have joined Japan in suspending imports of Brazilian beef meat over an atypical case of mad cow disease, an official source said on Thursday.

"We received official notification from China and South Africa announcing the decision," said an official from the agriculture ministry who spoke on condition of anonymity.

The ministry earlier this week said the case was detected in an animal that died in 2010 in the southern state of Parana and posed "no risk whatsoever to public health or to animal hygiene".

The ministry official said Brasilia, as it did with Japan earlier this week, contacted China and South Africa to set the record straight over the atypical case of bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE).

In its statement issued on Tuesday, the ministry said: "Brazil does not have cases of BSE" and noted that it launched a "preventive action" to preempt similar measures by key importers.

"We are in touch with countries to reaffirm that the atypical case of the disease carries no risk for exports," the ministry said then.

Authorities also said the World Organisation for Animal Health had been notified of the case and in response indicated it was "maintaining Brazil's status as a country with an insignificant risk of BSE, the best existing risk classification."

With nearly 200 million head of cattle, Brazil is a leading beef exporter.

From January to October, it exported one million tons of beef, mainly to Russia, the ministry said

Brazil is a member of the BRICS bloc of emerging powers, which also includes China, India, Russia and South Africa. - Sapa-AFP

Confusion rises over where South Africa's Nelson Mandela is being treated for lung infection

By Jon Gambrell, The Associated Press /December 13, 2012

JOHANNESBURG - South Africa's presidency declined to directly address reports Thursday that anti-apartheid icon Nelson Mandela was being treated at a different hospital than previously identified by a senior government official, raising questions about who was caring for the 94-year-old.

Mandela, admitted Saturday to a hospital, had been thought to have been at 1 Military Hospital near the capital, Pretoria, after Defence Minister Nosiviwe Mapisa-Nqakula said she visited the leader there Monday. But as local media suggested Mandela wasn't at that hospital Thursday night, presidential spokesman Mac Maharaj issued a statement seeming to indicate the politician wasn't there.

"President Mandela is being treated at a Pretoria hospital as said from the first statement we issued," Maharaj said. "We have refrained from disclosing the hospital in order to ensure privacy and also to allow doctors space to do their work of caring for (him) without interruptions or undue pressure."

It was not immediately clear if Mandela had been moved or if he had been at a different facility during his entire six-day hospitalization, his longest since 2001, when he underwent radiation therapy after being diagnosed with prostate cancer. On Monday, addressing journalists after her visit, Mapisa-Nqakula said: "We confirm that former President Mandela is in (the) hospital, 1

Military Hospital, and he's doing very, very well."

Government officials could not be immediately reached for comment Thursday night.

South Africa's government has said Mandela, initially admitted for medical tests, was being treated for a lung infection. Mandela has a history of lung problems, after falling ill with tuberculosis in 1988 toward the tail-end of his 27 years in prison before his release and being elected president. While doctors said at the time the disease caused no permanent damage to his lungs, medical experts say tuberculosis can cause problems years later for those infected.

Mandela had an acute respiratory infection in January 2011 and the chaos surrounding Mandela's stay at a public hospital saw the South African military take charge of his care and the government control the information about his health.

On Thursday, President Jacob Zuma honoured Mandela by unveiling a statue of him in the city of Bloemfontein, also called Mangaung, which next week hosts the governing African National Congress political party's convention. Mandela once served as an iconic figurehead of the party while in prison, later becoming its leader and the nation's president. The party still honours him today.

"As we meet, Madiba is recuperating from a lung infection at a Pretoria hospital," Zuma said, calling the leader by his clan name, often used here as a sign of affection. "We wish him a speedy recovery and assure him yet again of the love and support of many in the country and abroad."

Each day Mandela is hospitalized causes growing concern in South Africa, a nation of 50 million people that reveres the aging leader for being the nation's first democratically elected president who sought to bring the country together after centuries of racial division.

Mandela largely retired from public life after serving one five-year term as president, and lived a private life, although he did publicly campaign to raise awareness and fight the nation's AIDS and HIV epidemic. He last made a public appearance when his country hosted the 2010 World Cup soccer tournament. The Nobel laureate has also grown more frail in recent years, with his grip on politics in the nation ever slackening.

Associated Press writer Thomas Phakane in Bloemfontein contributed to this report.

Questions raised over Mandela's whereabouts

abc.net.au/2012-12-14

There is growing uncertainty about the whereabouts of ailing former South African president Nelson Mandela.

South African government officials say Mr Mandela, 94, has suffered a recurrence of a lung infection, but is responding to treatment.

But while it has generally been accepted that he was being treated at a military hospital in Pretoria, it has now emerged that that may not be the case.

Reporters and media crews have been camped outside the hospital in the belief the icon of the

struggle against apartheid was inside.

But official statements from the government have not used the words "military hospital", and some in South Africa are questioning whether Mr Mandela is really inside.

"The inference has been all along that he is at the military hospital," the ABC's Africa correspondent Ginny Stein told AM.

"We have seen the defence minister walk out of the military hospital and address the media and give an update on the former president's health - and at no point did they let on that in fact he probably wasn't there at all."

Stein said she had spoken to president Jacob Zuma's spokesman Mac Maharaj, who "pleaded with me as he said he has done with all other media not to say which hospital Nelson Mandela is actually in for his own sake, for his own health, for his recovery".

"But," she added, "I asked, 'Is he in the military hospital,' and he said, 'Well I'm not going to say. I won't confirm one way or the other but I'm asking you please not to say what hospital he is in'."

Mr Mandela has a long history of lung problems. He was diagnosed with tuberculosis while a prisoner on Robben Island.

He became South Africa's first black president in 1994 after 27 years of incarceration.

He left office more than a decade ago and has since retired to his rural childhood village of Qunu in the south-east of the country, but he retains a prominent place in the national psyche.

He retired from public life in 2004 famously saying, "Don't call me, I'll call you".

The revered statesman has not appeared in public since South Africa hosted the FIFA World Cup final in 2010.

ABC/wires

TANZANIA :

Tanzania: Mtabila Refugee Camp for Closure This Year

14 December 2012/Tanzania Daily News (Dar es Salaam)

THE 16th Tripartite Commission Meeting between the Governments of Burundi and Tanzania, together with UNHCR has agreed on the closure of Mtabila refugee camp for Burundian refugees in Kigoma by 31 December, this year.

The Commission reached the decision in Bujumbura after their meeting last week to discuss lasting solutions for the remaining 38,000 refugees in Mtabila camp who have been living in Kigoma Region since 1993.

A statement released by UNHCR's Public Information Associate, Austin Makani said the Commission noted that the in-depth interview exercise to determine those in continued need for

international protection in the Mtabila camp successfully completed on 15 December 2011.

Mr Makani said the interviews concluded that some 2,045 individuals still needed international protection, 33,708 were not in need of international protection and 2,625 cases are pending determination to be further reviewed and finalised before the closure of the camp.

"The tripartite decided that those in need of international protection will remain in Mtabila camp where they will be accommodated in a separate zone and suitable durable solutions will be identified for them," he said. He said in line with international protection standards, persons found not in need of international protection will be given an opportunity to appeal or directly apply for voluntary repatriation.

The tripartite also agreed that persons found not to be in need of international protection and who are unwilling to return to Burundi without justifiable grounds, will find themselves liable to be dealt with under the relevant Tanzanian laws, including those for immigration control and management.

Minister of Home Affairs, Mr Shamsi Vuai Nahodha appealed to the international community and development partners to support Burundi's efforts in the return and reintegration programme, while emphasizing the definitive closure of Mtabila camp by the proposed date.

"It is time now for refugees to return home. I strongly believe that Burundi authorities share the same sentiments as Tanzanian authorities," said Ms Clotilde Niragira, Burundi's Minister of National Solidarity, Human Rights and Gender. She said it is time for Burundians to return home to join their fellow citizens in nation building.

UNHCR strongly supports the request by the Tanzanian government, noting that successful return of Burundian refugees is linked to the smooth and effective reception and reintegration of all returnees. To actively promote repatriation, UNHCR and its partners, supported by the international community, are providing a comprehensive package of assistance to all Burundian refugees opting to return to their home country.

The package includes a cash grant, food and non-food items for their reintegration. The returnees are also benefiting from additional educational and free health services being provided for them on return.

KENYA :

ANGOLA :

Angola: Austria May Sell Angolan Natural Gas in EU Territory
13 December 2012/AngolaPress

Luanda — The Government of Austria may become official seller of the Angolan natural gas in the European Union (EU) territory, under the partnership on the LNG project located in Soyo, northern Zaire province.

This was revealed Thursday in Luanda by the Austrian ambassador to Angola, Martin Gartner.

Resident in South Africa, Martin Gartner, who paid a three-day working visit to the country, said that the matter is currently being negotiated between the governments of the two countries.

The talks are in good track, despite the preliminary aspects, said the diplomat that did not add further data on the agreement to be signed by the two states.

Martin Gartner stressed that "currently the national oil and gas company in Austria is interested in trading the Angolan natural gas in the EU zone, hoping to set up a partnership with the LNG project.

The ambassador met, among others, with vice-president of the Republic, Manuel Vicente, State secretary of Foreign Affairs, Manuel Augusto and Health minister, José Van-Dúnem.

Angola and Austria enjoy normal cooperation relations, special in the domains of politics, diplomacy, transport, education and health.

AU/AFRICA :

MALI. Le départ du 1er ministre, "bonne et mauvaise nouvelle"

Créé le 12-12-2012/Sarah Halifa-Legrand/Nouvel Observateur

Par Sarah Halifa-Legrand

Le nouveau coup de force de l'armée, qui vient de déposer le Premier ministre de transition, pourrait paradoxalement aider à la sortie de crise... Interview du chercheur Gilles Yabi (*).

Comment expliquez-vous l'éviction soudaine du Premier ministre de transition Cheikh Modibo Diarra par l'ex-junte qui avait fait tomber en mars dernier le président malien Amadou Toumani Traoré ? Vous a-t-elle surpris ?

- On savait depuis plusieurs mois que Cheikh Modibo Diarra était politiquement affaibli. Déjà en juillet, il avait subi des pressions internes et externes, y compris de la Communauté économique des Etats d'Afrique de l'Ouest (Cédéao), pour le faire partir.

Il n'avait alors réussi à se maintenir qu'en allant chercher des soutiens dans la société civile, notamment auprès des forces religieuses. Son départ n'est donc pas une surprise – peu de personnes, au Mali et à l'étranger, souhaitent le voir rester.

Qu'est-ce qui lui était reproché ?

- La junte du capitaine Sanogo reproche sans doute à Cheikh Modibo Diarra d'une part d'avoir montré sa volonté d'indépendance, alors que c'est elle qui l'avait choisi à la suite de l'accord du 6 avril qu'elle avait négocié avec la Cédéao, et d'autre part d'avoir affiché ses ambitions personnelles présidentielles aux dépens de sa mission qui devait être de gérer la double crise que traverse le Mali : la crise au nord, tombé aux mains de groupes islamistes armés alliés d'Al-Qaïda, et au sud, en préparant les élections.

Le Premier ministre a perdu ainsi le soutien des militaires après s'être mis à dos la classe politique

maliennne. Depuis le début, cette dernière lui reprochait non seulement d'avoir été nommé par la junte, mais également de se montrer plus intéressé par son propre avenir politique que par la gestion de la crise. Il a réussi à faire l'unanimité contre lui. La junte l'a probablement démis avec l'assentiment tacite de la plupart des acteurs politiques.

Cette éviction manu-militari confirme donc l'influence des militaires...

- A l'évidence. Et ce n'est finalement pas le départ de Cheikh Modibo Diarra qui pose problème mais bien les circonstances de ce départ : elles montrent que le pouvoir militaire a la possibilité de choisir les autorités civiles de transition. Cette influence des putschistes, qui avait été actée par l'accord du 6 avril, n'a pas véritablement varié depuis. Certes, Sanogo a été nommé entre-temps par décret à la tête d'un comité de réforme des forces de sécurité, ce qui était une manière de le cantonner dans un rôle militaire, mais la garnison de Kati, qui abrite les militaires, demeure bel et bien un des pôles du pouvoir.

Que pensez-vous de la nomination du médiateur de la république Diango Cissoko à la place de Cheikh Modibo Diarra ?

- C'est une personnalité plus consensuelle. Premièrement, de par sa position de médiateur de la république, il a dû côtoyer tous les acteurs politiques maliens tout en maintenant une distance avec eux. Deuxièmement, il a une très longue expérience des rouages de l'Etat malien, dans lequel il a occupé différents postes, comme secrétaire général de la présidence ou au cabinet du Premier ministre.

Mais alors pourquoi ne pas avoir fait ce choix plus tôt ?

- On en revient à la manière dont l'après-coup d'Etat a été géré... et à l'accord du 6 avril. C'est à la junte qu'avait été donnée la responsabilité de nommer le Premier ministre et elle avait alors choisi quelqu'un qu'elle pensait pouvoir contrôler.

Diango Cissoko est-il lui aussi le choix de la junte ?

- On est dans une phase où les militaires semblent chercher à ne pas se mettre à dos la communauté internationale tout en préservant leurs intérêts. Ils vont affirmer, ou du moins essayer de faire croire, que le pouvoir est réellement entre les mains du président intérimaire Dioncounda Traoré et du nouveau Premier ministre. Cela se voit dans la manière dont le capitaine Sanogo a présenté l'éviction de Cheikh Modibo Diarra : il a cherché à se positionner comme une sorte de garant du bon fonctionnement de la transition. Avec bien évidemment une arrière-pensée : que les autorités civiles ménagent et protègent les militaires.

Vous ne craignez pas que les militaires se soient débarrassés de Cheikh Modibo Diarra, partisan d'un soutien militaire international, pour se lancer seuls dans la reconquête du Nord ?

- Cela aurait été en effet l'un des plus grands risques, que l'armée se lance derrière Sanogo dans une reconquête du Nord sans soutien international au prétexte que le Mali ne puisse pas attendre le déploiement d'une force internationale au deuxième semestre 2013. Mais je ne crois pas que ce soit un danger immédiat. Car bien qu'il y ait une impatience affirmée à libérer le Nord du pays, je ne pense pas, au fond, que les militaires maliens aient, quoiqu'ils en disent, une farouche envie d'aller se battre au Nord. Je ne pense pas non plus que les autorités de transition valideraient une opération militaire maliennne sans accompagnement ni validation de la communauté internationale.

Qu'attendre du nouveau Premier ministre ?

- Il a annoncé ses priorités, qui sont celles de la transition. A commencer par un dialogue national, dont le but est de formuler une feuille de route qui indique aux acteurs internationaux ce que les Maliens eux-mêmes pensent de la gestion de la crise et de ses modalités. Sont-ils d'accord ou non avec son volet diplomatique – la négociation avec les acteurs armés au Nord du pays qui se désolidarisent des terroristes – et son volet sécuritaire et militaire – la mission d'entraînement et de structuration de l'armée malienne par les formateurs européens qui doit débiter en début d'année et le déploiement d'une force militaire internationale ? Ils vont devoir répondre.

Je crois que le nouveau Premier ministre a la capacité de mener ce processus sans être soupçonné de visées personnelles. Contrairement à son prédécesseur. Je crois même que sa nomination va permettre de sortir de certaines impasses, de débloquent un peu la situation à Bamako. Je pense aussi – du moins il faut l'espérer – qu'il va avoir un discours plus modéré, plus clair et plus pédagogique afin de mieux expliquer à l'opinion publique malienne que la reconquête du Nord par la force sans penser aux risques et au lendemain ne peut être une solution viable de sortie de crise.

Pour ce qui est des négociations avec les groupes armés du Nord, je ne m'attends pas à ce qu'il change fondamentalement l'attitude adoptée par Bamako. D'ailleurs Cissoko a déjà annoncé comme l'une de ses priorités la mise en place de la commission nationale de négociations. Peut-être Bamako va-t-il même s'investir plus dans ces discussions.

Moralité, le changement de Premier ministre est finalement plutôt une bonne nouvelle ?

- Disons qu'il y a une bonne et une mauvaise nouvelle... La bonne nouvelle, c'est le départ de Cheikh Modibo Diarra. La mauvaise nouvelle, c'est que les militaires gardent le contrôle des affaires et demeurent une force incontournable. Au niveau international, il faut se saisir de ce moment pour le transformer en véritable opportunité. Premièrement, il faut aller appuyer très vite le nouvel exécutif de transition et le processus politique à Bamako et, deuxièmement, trouver un compromis avec l'armée : ne pas valider son rôle politique tout en reconnaissant son rôle militaire.

*Gilles Yabi est directeur pour l'Afrique de l'Ouest du think tank International Crisis Group

Egypt voices: Constitutional referendum

14 December 2012/bbc.co.uk

Egyptians are preparing to vote on a controversial draft constitution, on which opinion is deeply divided. Opponents have called for the referendum, drafted by an Islamist-dominated assembly, to be scrapped. Here, people in Cairo give their views. Interviews and pictures by BBC Arabic's Marwa Nasser.

Hazem Morsi, 31, lawyer

Hazem Morsi

I don't belong to the Muslim Brotherhood and I'm not politically involved with any group. But I will vote "Yes" to the constitution.

I have read the draft constitution. It's all very good. We need a constitution to help this country moving.

The president will no longer have all his powers if this constitution is approved and we will have a parliament to express our voices. Political life in Egypt will be quieter once we have a constitution.

We won't suffer any chaos if the result is "Yes". I completely object to protests because they lead to confrontations and eventually a civil war.

Eman, 46, accountant

I will say "No" to the draft constitution for the sake of my children. A constitution which is leading the country into this controversy will only bring more insecurity.

Eman

To be honest, I haven't read all the articles and I don't understand everything, but I will say "No" just in case.

There are articles guaranteeing housing and education, but how could that be granted to each citizen?

As a Christian Egyptian woman, I have no worries about the Islamic law articles. However, I'm concerned about those who could misuse liberty to force people to cover up.

In either case, "Yes" or "No", the country will erupt in renewed protests because both liberals and Islamists are equally strong.

Mohammed Said, 59, mechanic

Mohammed Said

I bought a copy of the draft constitution from an internet cafe around the corner. I decided I would vote "No", because the draft is filled with riddles I don't get.

We are simple people. We don't need that complicated language.

However, I'm still not absolutely sure if I should vote "Yes" or "No". I look up to what the well-educated people say, so I can follow their lead.

Everything is very expensive, and they want to increase prices even more. What does this constitution say about prices? What does it give to the poor people like me?

Islam Abul Magd, 25, auditor

If I have no time to finish reading the draft constitution, I will spoil my vote.

I still need to read some of the controversial articles so I can decide.

Islam Abul Magd

The only thing that will make me vote "No" is if the constitution gives the Brotherhood powers. But once I've checked that it doesn't, I will say "Yes".

However, I feel either result won't make a difference. I have no hope that things will change in Egypt.

The Brotherhood wants to dominate the country and will not accept anyone who opposes them. They will always have a plot to gain new powers.

I was a strong supporter of President Mohammed Morsi and the Brotherhood because they provided stability.

But I'm now strongly opposing them after my friend lost his eye when Brotherhood members attacked peaceful protesters outside the presidential palace.

Nadia, 49, housewife

I will boycott this referendum just like I boycotted the first referendum in March 2011.
Nadia

This country doesn't need more division. The majority doesn't agree on the draft constitution and that's why President Morsi needs to sit and talk with opposition figures.

Morsi didn't do anything for the people. I voted for him, but he has done nothing to help this country change for the better.

He should know he's the president of all Egyptians, not a specific group of people. He should get away from his group, they will bring him down.

Those who will vote "Yes" for the constitution are the Muslim Brotherhood and their supporters, not the rest of the people.

As a housewife, I'm concerned about the rise in prices. What I would hope to see in the constitution is the guarantee of safety for my children. I want them to walk on the streets without being attacked by thugs.

Hassan Sultan, 70, retired agriculture engineer

I don't know how I am supposed to vote on something I don't understand. Nobody has explained the articles of the draft constitution to us.

I watch all the programmes discussing the constitution on TV, but it is still unclear.

If I voted, I would vote "No".
Hassan Sultan

All the legal experts I trust will vote "No" - that means something is wrong with that constitution.

All the representatives of churches and liberal and civil powers have withdrawn? This tells me there's a problem.

If the result is "Yes", that means the will of the people has been influenced. They might not be able to forge the ballots, but they definitely can deceive people in the name of religion. Our fight is the constitution, not religion. We are all good Muslims.

The Brotherhood keeps talking about a conspiracy, but where is it?

The president should listen to the people and postpone the referendum. This is not a good time. We've waited for so long, we're not in a hurry. The country is divided.

Eman Mostafa, 21, student

Eman Mostafa

I can't read all the articles of the draft constitution. But I would vote "No" because all the revolutionary powers and the judges will vote "No".

The constitution should have been finished in two months, but they rushed the voting in 48 hours. This is worrying.

I voted for only one man - President Morsi, not for his whole group. They should not act as if their opponents understand nothing.

If the result is "Yes", that means it was forged.

Nazeera Deyab, 34, secretary

I will definitely vote "Yes". I haven't read the draft constitution, but all Islamic scholars on TV has advised we vote "Yes" and I trust their opinion.

We want to have a constitution, so we can live in stability. We need investors to come back to Egypt and life to go smoothly again.

The holy book should be our constitution, but we need a set of laws because other countries will not recognise our book.

Nazeera Deyab

I have a strong feeling the result will be "Yes". Voting "No" is a conspiracy against Egypt - just like the supreme guide of the Muslim Brotherhood says.

There's no need for articles in the constitution to guarantee equality between men and women. Men and women are different and they shouldn't be equal.

However, I have heard that the constitution gives the right to women to work in any position even as the president, though it's forbidden by the Islamic law.

The Islamic law article should come ahead of any other articles. I agree with our scholars that some people want to remove Sharia from the constitution. But by doing so, they just want to remove Islam.

Those slogans of equality and freedom are all wrong and were brought from the West to ruin Islam and especially women.

The president has the right to give himself powers - he's the ruler. But he's not trying to dominate the country - he has appointed people other than Muslim Brotherhood in the government.

Africa: Mugabe Expected to Address ACP Summit

By Tendai Mugabe/The Herald/14 December 2012

Malabo — President Mugabe is expected to address the 7th Heads of States and Governments Summit of the African, Caribbean and Pacific on behalf of Southern Africa here during the summit's closed door meetings.

The summit opened yesterday at the Sipopo International Conference Centre with member countries calling for a review of the trade partnership between ACP member states and the European Union.

The Economic Partnership Agreements between ACP and the EU also come under intense discussion at the summit.

In his opening remarks, secretary general of the ACP Group Dr Mohamed Ibn Chambas said serious financial challenges in Europe had tested and shaken the traditional economic giants, thereby bringing new world economic order.

As such, he said there was a need for ACP member states to "think outside the box" and devise means and ways of surviving.

"We also need to change the way we do business. Old attitudes need to be changed . . .," said Mr Chambas.

"In the world of increased uncertainties, we must be prepared to think outside the box to come up with bold alternatives to ensure that ACP does not only survive, but flourishes in the years ahead."

Dr Chambas said although Europe was the biggest donor to ACP countries, it was important to consider opportunities presented by other world emerging economic giants.

He said the emerging giants hinged their relationship with ACP countries on a more win-win situation.

"Europe remains the biggest donor to ACP countries . . . but we also have to acknowledge that the emergence of other economic giants such as the BRICS (Brazil, India, China and South Africa) offer a window of opportunity," said Mr Chambas.

"They (Brics) bring a fresh attitude and mind instead of seeing our nations as problems. They see ACP as an opportunity to explore for mutual benefit."

ACP, said Dr Chambas, was among the fastest developing regions in the world and should intensify efforts to claim a better position at international level.

He said the group's efforts were being hindered by constrained budgets.

Dr Chambas implored member states to pay their contributions to ensure effective running of the group.

Outgoing ACP President John Mahama of Ghana said it was time for member states to shoulder the future of their countries.

"The time has come to take our future in our hands," he said. "We must pursue new approaches to ACP-EU trade, while accelerating strategies that boost trade and investment."

President Mahama said EPAS were one of the thorny issues disturbing ACP-EU trade relationship.

He said although negotiations started way back between most ACP member states and the EU, no agreement was reached.

In the case of the Caribbean where agreements were reached, President Mahama said

implementation was still a challenge.

African Union chairperson and Benin President Yayi Boni said the ACP-EU partnership needed to be adjusted.

He said it was important to open new prospects of investment and future development.

Incoming ACP chair and Equatorial Guinea President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo said the ACP should reflect on its future within the purview of a dynamic world. He said the ACP should not only be a recipient of aid from the EU, but the relationship should benefit both parties.

As Egypt Votes, Many See 'Couch Party' Holding Sway

By MATT BRADLEY/online.wsj.com/December 13, 2012

CAIRO—The battle for Egypt's political future has pitted President Mohammed Morsi's Islamist supporters against a coalition of his opponents for three bloody and chaotic weeks.

But now, many Egyptians say, their country's fate lies largely in the hands of the "couch party."

On Saturday, Egyptians are set to begin voting on a national referendum on a draft constitution that President Morsi's critics see as an Islamism-infused charter.

While Egypt has no reliable opinion polling to handicap the poll, Islamists have emerged victorious in every national vote since the country's revolution nearly two years ago. Even opposition leaders acknowledge that the constitution is likely to pass.

That has focused politicians' and analysts' attention on the millions of Egyptians who eschew protests and harbor no political affiliation, including many in the one-third of the population that is illiterate. Many apolitical Egyptians ironically refer to themselves as part of an imagined Hezb Al-Kanaba, or party of the couch.

Whether these Egyptians turn out in strong numbers, and how they vote, could powerfully sway the country's politics.

"There's a 'yes' group and a 'no' group. Then there's a third group: People who just want to live," said Sayyid Mohammed, 40, who was smoking a water pipe in Cairo's middle-class Agouza neighborhood on Thursday.

A "yes" vote with a high turnout would confer a legitimacy on Egypt's Islamist rulers, something that has been absent in three weeks of massive protests and would allow them to silence secular-minded critics newly emboldened by Mr. Morsi's claims to broad political power.

A low turnout could fire up resistance to Islamist rule, allowing the recent public acrimony to damage the new constitution's legitimacy, analysts say.

The timing is crucial for both Egypt's Islamist-linked leaders and their increasingly unified opponents. With Egyptian parliamentary elections less than two months away, voter attitudes toward the constitution could offer an updated indicator of how the Egyptian polity views the Islamists' expansive attitudes toward power.

Over his water pipe, Mr. Mohammed said he believed that most Egyptians in the unaffiliated

political middle would vote in favor of the constitution for the sake of stability, as he said he intended to do, even if these people don't understand or haven't read the dense 236-article document.

Voters such as Mr. Mohammed have been largely left out of the political discussion in recent weeks, as commentators have focused on the political dogfight rather than the document's substance.

Mr. Mohammed and other Agouza residents said the debate amounts to little more than a bare-knuckle power struggle between Islamists and secularists.

That the opposition to Mr. Morsi is led by four failed presidential candidates smacks of sour grapes, said Ashraf Gado, 52, who owns a bakery in Agouza.

"The opposition didn't go out to protest because they didn't like the constitution," said Ashraf Gado, who owns a bakery in Agouza. "They went out because they didn't like Morsi in power."

Many of those who are familiar with the document have learned about it from the Muslim Brotherhood. By Thursday, Brotherhood canvassers had distributed pamphlets to Agouza residents that described the document's contents while highlighting its strong points.

Mr. Gado said he hadn't heard from the "no" camp, whose outreach efforts are concentrated on television and Internet advertisements.

Anti-Morsi activists complain that the draft's vaguely worded role for political Islam is ripe for Islamist manipulation. It also contains far too few protections for women and religious minorities, they say. Yet the new draft constitution also bears a striking resemblance to the document that has been governing Egypt since 1971.

If voters pass the constitution by an overwhelming majority and in huge numbers, several analysts say, Islamist politicians will feel empowered to interpret vague passages—such as one giving the government wide authority to enforce public morals—as the foundation to impose strict interpretations of Shariah, or Islamic law.

"The less turnout there is, the more difficult it will be to argue for the legitimacy of the process," said Mohamed Menza, a political-science professor at the American University in Cairo. "If there is less turnout and it passes with a slim majority, then it will make the Islamists' position much more difficult."

Egypt's liberal-minded opposition leaders already bolstered the vote's legitimacy when they told their followers Wednesday to vote "no" in the referendum. They had previously considered boycotting the vote.

But Ahmed Said, the chairman of the secular-leaning Free Egyptians Party, said the National Salvation Front—a recently formed umbrella of parties in opposition to President Mohammed Morsi—could still demand a boycott Friday if they have reason to believe the vote will be manipulated.

"There is a very big possibility that we are going to boycott the elections," he said. "The whole thing has a bad smell."

The Atlanta-based Carter Center, an international democracy watchdog group, said Thursday that its election monitors wouldn't oversee the vote because its preparations had been too hasty. A strike by

dissident judges has already forced the government to split the vote over two weekends, because Egyptian law requires the judiciary to oversee voting.

Questions about the referendum's integrity promise to fuel further debates.

"Even if a 'yes' vote prevails, it's not the end of the political crisis in Egypt," said Gamal Abdel Gawad, a political analyst at the American University in Cairo. "We are very unfortunate in that we will end up having a constitutional arrangement that is really lacking legitimacy. It will be contested for years to come."

Write to Matt Bradley at matt.bradley@dowjones.com

Le braconnage est devenu le 4e marché illégal au monde, selon WWF

Publié le 13 décembre 2012/ par Emmanuel Perrin/ maxisciences.com

Selon l'organisation environnementale WWF, le braconnage est devenu le 4e marché illégal au monde avec 19 milliards de dollars par an.

Alors que la situation de plusieurs espèces menacées inquiète de plus en plus les spécialistes, c'est un bilan préoccupant qu'a dressé l'organisation WWF au sujet du braconnage. "Le commerce des espèces est désormais le quatrième marché illégal le plus important dans le monde après le trafic de drogue, la fabrication de fausse monnaie et la traite des êtres humains", a annoncé l'ONG.

Ainsi, le braconnage génère un chiffre d'affaires estimé à 19 milliards de dollars par an, soit plus de 14 milliards d'euros. Et les choses ne s'améliorent pas. L'ONG ajoute en effet que ce commerce "se poursuit à une vitesse sidérante", qu'il "menace de nombreuses espèces animales", et "met en danger la stabilité et la sécurité de divers Etats africains". En 2012, plus de 10.000 éléphants ont ainsi été éliminés des forêts et des savanes en Afrique tandis que deux rhinocéros sont tués chaque jour dans le sud du continent (soit deux fois plus qu'en 2007).

Le WWF pointe du doigt "les responsables de la hausse fulgurante de la demande d'ivoire et de corne de rhinocéros", à savoir les pays asiatiques. Pour Jim Leap, directeur général de WWF International, le braconnage est un trafic "avec très peu de risques pour le crime organisé" dans la mesure où "il y a peu de chances de se faire attraper", et "peu de chances d'être puni, si l'on est pris". De fait, le braconnage est une activité "à très haut rendement". WWF demande donc aux gouvernements concernés qu'ils "punissent durement le crime de braconnage et que les organes judiciaires responsables appliquent mieux la loi".

Un trafic qui sert à financer les insurrections

De plus, comme le précise John Scanlon, secrétaire général de la CITES (convention sur le commerce international des espèces de faune et de flore sauvages menacées d'extinction), le marché du braconnage est "tenu par des braconniers professionnels". "Nous avons affaire à du crime organisé, à des groupes de milices rebelles, à des individus lourdement armés, bien connectés, ayant beaucoup de moyens, et plein de ressources pour tuer illégalement nos espèces et faire du commerce avec elles", a-t-il déclaré. L'argent généré sert à financer "les soulèvements, surtout en Afrique, c'est devenu la principale source de financement des pires insurrections" estime M. Leap cité par l'AFP.

En conséquence, ce trafic est également devenu "une menace pour les populations africaines", en plus d'être une "menace pour les espèces animales". Le responsable de la CITES va dans le même

sens en rappelant qu'il a dénoncé début 2012 le massacre de 450 éléphants par des groupes rebelles venant du Tchad et du Soudan entrés au nord du Cameroun. L'ivoire revendu leur a permis d'acheter des armes. M. Scanlon a aussi fait état d'informations assurant qu'il y aurait un lien entre le braconnage d'éléphants et le commerce illégal d'ivoire d'une part, et le financement des milices rebelles en République démocratique du Congo d'autre part.

UN/AFRICA :

US/AFRICA :

Susan Rice renonce à succéder à Hillary Clinton

le 14/12/2012 /lefigaro.fr

Aux États-Unis, les critiques acerbes des républicains, de nouvelles révélations et des sorties jugées peu diplomatiques rendaient de plus en plus difficile la nomination de Susan Rice comme secrétaire d'État.

Correspondante à Washington

Attaquée par les républicains et suscitant la controverse jusque dans son propre camp, Susan Rice a renoncé, jeudi, à briguer le poste de secrétaire d'État, pour lequel elle avait été pressentie en remplacement de Hillary Clinton. Une décision qui pourrait avoir été suggérée par la Maison-Blanche. Même si le président, son allié et protecteur, a fait jeudi un éloge vibrant de son ambassadeur à l'ONU, louant sans réserve ses qualités et regrettant «les attaques fallacieuses et infondées» dont elle avait été la cible dans la foulée de la crise de Benghazi.

En plein bras de fer avec l'Iran, l'Administration américaine ne pouvait visiblement se permettre le luxe d'une longue bataille avec les Républicains pour la confirmation de la diplomate, souligne-t-on dans les cercles washingtoniens bien informés. «C'est la bonne décision pour elle et pour le président», a noté, sur CNN, l'ancien envoyé spécial au Moyen-Orient, George Mitchell, notant que la polémique aurait été une «distraction inutile». Le sénateur John Kerry, qui rêve du poste depuis longtemps, «serait un formidable secrétaire d'État», a-t-il ajouté, évoquant aussi la possible candidature de Chuck Hagel, un ancien sénateur républicain très versé dans le domaine de la politique étrangère, qui siège actuellement à l'Atlantic Council.

C'est dans une lettre adressée à Barack Obama que Susan Rice a annoncé sa décision de retirer sa candidature. «Je suis tout à fait sûre que je pourrais servir notre pays efficacement et de manière adéquate à cette fonction... Cependant, si je suis nommée, je suis maintenant certaine que la procédure de confirmation serait longue, perturbante et coûteuse... Ces tractations ne sont tout simplement pas dignes de notre pays», a-t-elle écrit.

Des liens étroits avec le régime rwandais de Kagamé

Barack Obama a vanté une décision qui montre «la force de caractère» de l'intéressée et sa «détermination admirable à s'élever au dessus de la mêlée politique pour donner la priorité aux intérêts de la nation».

Mme Rice avait été la cible de critiques acerbes de parlementaires républicains - dont les voix auraient été nécessaires pour entériner sa nomination au Sénat - en raison de ses prises de position dans les médias juste après l'attaque meurtrière contre le consulat américain de Benghazi en Libye le 11 septembre. En disant s'appuyer sur les informations des agences de renseignement, elle avait affirmé que l'attaque contre le consulat avait été spontanée et suscitée par une vidéo anti-musulmane, version qui s'avérerait erronée.

Rice était notamment dans le collimateur des sénateurs John McCain et Lindsay Graham, dont les voix pèsent lourd sur les questions de politique étrangère. Ces élus soupçonnaient Mme Rice et la Maison-Blanche d'avoir délibérément cherché à tromper les Américains sur le caractère terroriste de l'attaque, pour ne pas ternir le bilan de M. Obama quelques semaines avant l'élection présidentielle du 6 novembre.

Les récentes révélations sur les liens étroits de Susan Rice avec le régime rwandais de Paul Kagamé (pour lequel elle avait fait du lobbying dans le passé), et les conséquences que ce biais pro-rwandais aurait pu avoir sur les décisions concernant le Congo à l'ONU, ont semble-t-il achevé d'affaiblir sa candidature.

Une amie proche de Michelle Obama

Nombre de diplomates ont aussi souligné en privé les sorties souvent peu diplomatiques de Mme Rice et sa manière brutale d'affirmer ses positions. «Ce qu'elle a dit sur le projet de la France au Mali a visiblement contribué à enfoncer les clous dans son cercueil», notait jeudi une source informée, qui la jugeait «non fiable». Rice avait déclaré que le plan français était «de la merde». Selon cette même source, c'était surtout Michelle Obama, dont elle était une amie proche, qui défendait sa candidature.

Le président a précisé jeudi que Susan Rice conserverait son poste aux Nations unies, vantant notamment son action récente pour mobiliser le Conseil de sécurité sur la menace du nucléaire nord-coréen.

Les experts à Washington soulignent à quel point le compte à rebours sur la question de la grande négociation à mener avec les Iraniens pour les empêcher d'accéder à l'arme nucléaire, obscurcit aujourd'hui l'horizon à la Maison-Blanche et a pu précipiter la décision. «L'Iran est la question qui me préoccupe», a confié Hillary Clinton il y a deux jours à la journaliste Barbara Walters.

Les Américains estimeraient avoir entre trois et quatre mois pour convaincre les Iraniens de renoncer à passer le seuil nucléaire, faute de quoi il deviendrait extrêmement difficile de convaincre les Israéliens de reporter d'éventuelles frappes militaires. Dans ce contexte à haute tension, le renoncement à une candidate affaiblie et controversée apparaît logique. «Beaucoup de gens, même chez les démocrates, n'ont jamais pensé qu'elle était irremplaçable», confiait jeudi une source influente.

CANADA/AFRICA :

AUSTRALIA/AFRICA :

EU/AFRICA :

Procès Lumumba : la famille sollicite l'aide de Kinshasa
vendredi 14 décembre 2012/Belga

La famille du premier Premier ministre congolais Patrice Emery Lumumba, assassiné en 1961, souhaite que le gouvernement de Kinshasa l'appuie dans le procès qui pourrait avoir lieu en Belgique, a affirmé jeudi l'un de ses fils, Roland Lumumba, à la radio onusienne Okapi.

Plus de cinquante ans après les faits, la justice belge a annoncé mercredi qu'elle allait lancer une enquête sur l'assassinat de M. Lumumba, un des héros des indépendances africaines toujours populaire aujourd'hui et dont la famille met en cause dans sa mort d'ex-responsables belges, estimant que l'ex-Congo belge était alors plongé dans un conflit armé et que la mort de M. Lumumba pouvait dès lors être considérée comme un crime de guerre.

La loi belge de "compétence universelle" autorise en effet les tribunaux belges à poursuivre une personne soupçonnée de crimes de guerre, de crimes contre l'humanité ou de génocide si les plaignants ou l'accusé ont un lien avec la Belgique. Après la prise du pouvoir par Joseph-Désiré Mobutu, M. Lumumba fut assassiné le 17 janvier 1961 après avoir été déporté au Katanga (sud-est), province minière qui fit un temps sécession avec le soutien de la Belgique, l'ancienne puissance coloniale. "Nous avons matérialisé l'affaire Lumumba en portant plainte (devant la justice belge, ndr), et il y a un début d'aboutissement. Ce n'est pas parce que le dossier est ouvert que l'affaire est résolue. Nous aimerions que ce ne soit pas seulement une histoire de famille, c'est l'histoire de toute une nation", a affirmé Roland Lumumba à Radio Okapi, parrainée par l'ONU. "Ca m'étonne que nos autorités n'aient pas initié quoi que ce soit depuis que les Belges avaient (reconnu) leurs responsabilités. Voilà le moment qu'ils peuvent se racheter et nous appuyer pour pousser ce dossier le plus loin possible", a-t-il ajouté en tant que président de la fondation portant le nom de son père, un des héros de l'indépendance de l'actuelle République démocratique du Congo (RDC). La famille de Patrice Lumumba avait déposé plainte contre une dizaine de Belges en juin 2011. Elle les accuse de complicité de cet assassinat.

Une commission d'enquête parlementaire belge avait conclu en 2001 à la "responsabilité morale" de la Belgique. Le gouvernement du Premier ministre Guy Verhofstadt avait alors présenté les excuses de la Belgique au Congo. Pour la famille Lumumba, "il faut aller plus loin que la reconnaissance d'une responsabilité morale et établir des faits toutes les conclusions, d'ordre pénal et juridique". Sa plainte vise une douzaine de survivants, des policiers, des politiciens et des fonctionnaires. Parmi ceux-ci, seulement huit vivent encore. L'un d'eux serait Jacques Brassinne, diplomate belge au Katanga en 1961. Les autres noms qui apparaissent sont ceux d'Etienne Davignon, alors jeune diplomate, et Charles Huyghé, à l'époque chef de cabinet du ministre de la Défense katangais. M. Lumumba a été élevé au rang de "héros national" à titre posthume en RDC. Son fils Roland déplore "un grand silence" des autorités nationales pour faire la lumière sur cette affaire. Le gouvernement congolais s'est toutefois engagé à soutenir la famille Lumumba jusqu'à l'aboutissement de ce dossier devant la justice. "Cela se fera le moment venu", a affirmé à Radio Okapi le porte-parole du gouvernement, Lambert Mende Omalanga.

Avec Belga

CHINA/AFRICA :

China Daily newspaper launches Africa edition

14 December 2012/bbc.co.uk

China Daily, China's biggest English-language newspaper, has launched an African edition - the latest of several Chinese media initiatives in Africa.

The state-run weekly, which also comes in digital form, aims to explain "the relationship between China and the African continent," its editor says.

China's CCTV and Xinhua news agency already have operations in the region.

The country has a growing economic role in Africa, including telecommunications and infrastructure investments.

The newspaper is being published in the Kenyan capital, Nairobi.

"The relationship between China and the African continent is one of the most significant relationships in the world today," said the paper's publisher and editor-in-chief, Zhu Ling.

"It is growing and complex and not always understood... We hope to set that straight."

Kenya Information Minister Samuel Poghiso was quoted by local media as saying that the paper would provide a platform for better understanding between China and Africa.

Earlier this year, China Central Television launched CCTV Africa, also headquartered in Kenya. Xinhua and Chinese radio are also expanding in the continent.

China has also implemented other innovative media projects, like giant news screens in Ethiopia's capital, Addis Ababa, and thousands of scholarships for African journalists, reports the BBC's Mary Harper.

Xinhua has also partnered with a Kenyan mobile firm to provide news service for mobiles.

China is now Africa's largest trading partner and in July, Beijing pledged \$20bn (£12.8bn) in credit for Africa over the next three years, in a push for closer ties and increased trade.

President Hu Jintao has also called for better co-operation with African countries on international affairs.

The expansion in Africa is part of China's push to increase its international media presence, including in the US.

This year, Xinhua advertised heavily in New York's Times Square to promote the news agency. Copies of China Daily have appeared as advertising supplements in the New York Times and Washington Post, and CCTV America has launched.

China, S.Africa suspend Brazil beef over BSE doubt

By Peter Murphy/Reuters/14/12/2012

BRASILIA (Reuters) - China and South Africa informed Brazil on Thursday that they were suspending imports of beef from the world's biggest exporter of the meat following a case of atypical BSE that was confirmed last week, Brazilian agriculture ministry officials said.

Including Japan, which suspended imports on Monday, three countries have now restricted purchases of beef from Brazil while seeking details about the death of an elderly cow in 2010 which never actually developed the disease.

None of these countries are significant buyers of Brazilian beef. Brazil's top customer, Russia, has so far imposed no such restrictions, though it said on Thursday that it was weighing its options.

Brazil has launched a diplomatic offensive to clarify the details of the case of suspected atypical BSE, which it has been at pains to differentiate from regular BSE - known as mad cow disease - which is usually caused by contaminated feed.

Atypical BSE can arise in elderly cattle due to a spontaneous genetic mutation that causes it to begin producing distorted proteins known as prions. The proteins can trigger BSE, which eventually destroys the animal's nervous system, and it is believed humans ingesting beef from a stricken animal can contract a fatal form of the disease.

The 13-year-old cow in southern Brazil tested positive for prions, a result confirmed by the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) last week. But it died of other causes in 2010 and never actually developed the disease.

The animal was buried on the farm where it had been used for breeding purposes and never entered the food chain.

Outbreaks of mad cow disease in Europe, North America and Japan in the past decade, following an epidemic in Great Britain in the late 1980s, prompted some importers to embargo shipments and roiled the industry on several occasions.

In April, the United States reported a case of atypical BSE in an animal which never entered the food chain, but the country escaped a backlash from importers.

The Brazilian agriculture ministry's secretary for animal and plant health, Enio Pereira, told Reuters this week that much of the two-year delay between the cow's death and confirmation of prions in its tissue was caused by a logistical anomaly at the laboratory.

INDIA/AFRICA :

Hitachi, Panasonic to make India base to access Africa, Middle East; plan Rs 5,700-cr investments

14 Dec, 2012/ Writankar Mukherjee,ET Bureau/economicstimes.indiatimes.com

KOLKATA: HitachiBSE 0.73 % and Panasonic, Japan's two biggest corporations, plan to invest more than Rs 5,700 crore in India as they have identified the country as one of their biggest bets for growth and a base to expand in Africa and Middle East markets.

Hitachi, which held its first board of directors meeting outside Japan in its 102-year history in New Delhi on Thursday, announced Rs 4,700-crore expansion plans that include building 5 manufacturing plants.

Japan's largest industrial power and electronics conglomerate has formulated a 'India business strategy 2015' plan to make the country one of its top markets and targets a three-fold jump in its India revenues to Rs 20,000 crore by 2015-16.

"With its market, human resources and business partnerships, India is an important strategic base for Hitachi," its global president Hiroaki Nakanishi said.

Panasonic too has lined up more than Rs 1,000 crore investment in a new plant at Haryana and targets Rs 20,000-crore revenues by 2014-15, a year earlier than Hitachi.

Yorihisa Shiokawa, Panasonic's managing executive officer and chief of the Asia Pacific, Middle East and African operations, said the firm wants to set up more such plants and become the country's largest appliances maker by 2018.

"Localisation will be the key for Panasonic's growth in India and the main objective has been that the products...should be specially conceptualised and customised for the Indian consumers, keeping the local needs in mind," Shiokawa said.

The development is in line with Japanese electronic companies' increasing dependence on India as one of their highest growth-potential markets at a time when sales in the US and Europe are slowing. In end-August, Sony Corp President and CEO Kazuo Hirai came to India within months of taking charge and announced plans to increase investment in the market and expand sales by more than 30% from last year's \$1.1-billion revenue (Rs 5,500 crore) to make India its fifth largest market.

Both HitachiBSE 1.26 % and Panasonic said they will make India their base to expand their business in Africa and the Middle East.

Hitachi on Thursday named Hitachi India as its regional headquarters, making India a separate management area outside Japan. The other such areas are China, Southeast Asia, Europe, and the Americas.

Hitachi has a wide range of businesses interest in India, including power and industrial systems, components and equipment, air conditioning and television. It recorded Rs 6,700 crore revenue last fiscal.

Both Hitachi and Panasonic said they will pursue growth in India by localising development and production of their businesses and products, and focus on developing Indian talent. Hitachi plans to double the number of its employees in India to 13,000 by 2015, while Panasonic plans to add 3,500 more to its over 12,500 people on the rolls.

Panasonic's Shiokawa said the company is committed to be an Indian company here instead of being a Japanese company operating in India.

He said the company plans to enter into several new product categories such as health, energy-related products and LED lights in India.

Panasonic's big plans for India comes at a time when globally it looks at selling or shutting down several of its factories and assets. The company is staring at a second consecutive year of record loss, with a forecast of around \$9.4 billion (Rs 51,200 crore) net loss for the year ending March 2013.

Credit rating agency Moody's last month cut Panasonic's long-term credit rating to one level above junk. Shiokawa, however, said the company is committed with its investment in India. "India has been one of the most important countries and potential growth market for Panasonic. The Indian operations has potential to be ranked amongst the top in the Asia Pacific region in terms of revenue contribution," he said.

Panasonic India last year clocked Rs 5,500-crore sales and targets to almost double it to Rs 10,000 crore this fiscal.

BRAZIL/AFRICA :

EN BREF, CE 14 Décembre 2012 ... AGNEWS/DAM,NY, 14/12/2012